KAMMA AND ITS FRUIT

ESSAYS BY

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CONTENTS

ACTION

Francis Story

KAMMA is simply Action, or a "deed." Actions are performed in three ways: by body, mind and speech. Every action of importance is performed *because there is desire for a result;* it has an aim, an objective. One wishes for something specific to happen as the result of it. This desire, no matter how mild it may be, is a form of craving. It expresses the thirst *(Taṇhā)* for existence and for action. To exist is to act, on one level or another. Organic existence consists of chemical action; psychic existence consists of mental action. So existence and action are inseparable.

But some actions, those in which mind is involved, are bound to have intention. This is expressed by the Pali word *Cetanā;* volition, which is one of the mental properties. There is another word, *Chanda*, which stands for wishing, desiring a result. These words all express some kind of desire. And some form of desire is behind practically every activity of life. Therefore "to live" and "to desire" are one and the same thing. (There is one ultimate exception to this statement, which we shall come to later. It is that of the Arhat.)

An action (Kamma) is morally unwholesome when it is motivated by the forms of craving that are associated with Greed, Hatred and Delusion (Lobha, Dosa, Moha.) It is morally wholesome (in ordinary language, good) when it is motivated by the opposite factors, Disinterestedness (Greedlessness), Amity and Wisdom. An act so motivated is prompted by "intention" rather than "craving." Yet in every act of Craving, intention is

included. It is that which gives direction and form to the deed.

Now, each deed performed with intention is a *creative act.* By reason of the will behind it, it constitutes a force. It is a force analogous to the other great unseen, yet physical, forces that move the universe. By our thoughts, words and deeds we create our world from moment to moment in the endless process of change. We also create our "selves." That is to say, we mould our changing personality as we go along, by the accumulation of such thoughts, words and deeds. It is the accretion of these, and the preponderance of one kind over another, that determines what we shall become, in this life and/or subsequent ones.

In thus creating our personality, we create also the conditions in which it functions. In other words, we create also the kind of world we are to live in. The mind, therefore, is master of the world. As a man's mind is, so is his cosmos.

Kamma, then, as the product of the mind, is the true and only real force in the life-continuum, the flux of coming-to-be. From this we come to understand that it is the residue of mental force which from the point of death kindles a new birth. It is the only actual link between one life ("reincarnation") and another. And since the process is a continuous one, it is the *last* Karmic thought-moment at the point of death which forms the rebirth-linking consciousness — the Kamma that re-produces. Other Kamma, good or bad, will come into operation at some later stage, when external conditions are favourable for its ripening. The force of weak Kamma may be suspended for a long time by the interposition of a stronger Kamma. Some kinds of Kamma may even be inoperative; but this never happens

with very strong or weighty Kamma. As a general principle, all Kamma bears some kind of fruit sooner or later.

Each individual's Kamma is his own personal act; its results his own personal inheritance. He alone has complete command over his actions, no matter to what degree others may try to force him. Yet an unwholesome deed done under strong compulsion does not have quite the same force as one performed voluntarily. Under threat of torture or of death a man may be compelled to torture or kill someone else. In such a case it may be believed that the gravity of his Kamma is not so severe as it would be had he deliberately chosen to act in such a way. The heaviest moral responsibility rests with those who have forced him to the action. But, in the ultimate sense he still must bear some responsibility, for he could in the most extreme case avoid harming another by choosing to suffet torture or death himself.

This brings us to the question of *collective Kamma*. As we have seen, each man's Kamma is his own individual experiences. No one can interfere with the Kamma of another beyond a certain point; therefore no one can intervene to alter the results of personal Kamma. Yet it often happens that numbers of people are associated in the same kind of actions, and share the same kind of thoughts; they become closely involved with one another; they influence one another. Mass psychology produces mass Kamma. Therefore all such people are likely to form the same pattern of Kamma. It may result in their being associated with one another through a number of lives, and in their sharing much the same kind of experiences. "Collective Kamma" is simply the aggregate of individual Kammas, just as a crowd is an aggregate of individuals.

It is in fact this kind of mass Kamma that produces different kinds of worlds — the world we live in, the states of greater suffering and the states of relative happiness. Each being inhabits the kind of cosmic construction for which he has fitted himself. It is his Kamma, and the Kamma of beings like himself, that has created it. This is how it comes about that in multi-dimensional space-time there are many *lokas* — many worlds and modes of being. Each one represents a particular type of consciousness, the result of Kamma. The mind is confined only by the boundaries it erects itself.

The results of Kamma are called *Vipāka* ("the ripening"). These terms, Kamma and Vipāka, and the ideas they stand for, must not be confused. Vipāka is predetermined (by ourselves) by previous Kamma.

But Kamma itself in the ultimate sense (that is when resisting all external pressures and built-up tendencies) is the product of *choice* and free will: choice between wholesome and unwholesome deeds, good or bad actions. Hence the Buddha said: "Intention constitutes Kamma." Without intention a deed is sterile; it produces no reaction of moral significance. One reservation, however, is here required: if a deed done in "culpable negligence" proves harmful to others, the lack of mindfulness, circumspection or consideration shown, will constitute unwholesome kamma and will have its Vipāka. Though the harm done was not "intended", i. e. the deed was not motivated by hate, yet there was present another "unwholesome root", that of Delusion (moha), which includes, for instance, irresponsible thoughtlessness.

Kamma is Action: Vipāka is Result. Therefore Kamma is the active principle; Vipāka is the passive mode of coming-to-be. People believe in predeterminism,

fatalism, merely because they see results, but do not see causes. In the process of Dependent Origination (Paṭicca-samuppāda) both causes and effects are shown in their proper relationship.

A person may be born deaf, dumb and blind. That is the consequence of some unwholesome Kamma which manifested, or presented itself to his consciousness, in the last thought-moment of his previous death. Throughout life he may have to suffer the consequences (Vipāka) of that deed, whatever it may have been. But that fact does not prevent him from forming fresh Kamma of a wholesome type, to restore the balance in his next life. Furthermore, by the aid of some good Kamma from the past, together with strong effort and favourable circumstances in the present life (which of course includes the compassionate help of others) the full effects of his bad Kamma may be mitigated even here and now. Cases of this kind are seen everywhere, where people have overcome to a great extent the most formidable handicaps. The result is that they have turned even the bad Vipāka to profit for themselves and others. One outstanding example of this is the famous Dr. Helen Keller. But this calls for almost superhuman courage and will-power. Most people in similar circumstances remain passive sufferers of the effects of their bad actions until those effects are exhausted. Thus it has to be in the case of those born mentally defective, or in the lower states of suffering. Having scarcely any capacity for the exercise of free will, they are subject entirely to predeterminism untill the bad Vipāka has run its course.

So, by acknowledging some element of predeterminism, yet at the same time maintaining the *ultimate* ascendancy of will, Buddhism resolves a moral problem which

otherwise seems insoluble. Part of the personality, and the conditions in which it exists, are pre-determined by the deeds and the total personality of the past; but in the final analysis the mind is able to free itself from the bondage of past personality-constructions and launch out in a fresh direction.

Now, we have seen that the three roots of unwholesome actions, - Greed, Hatred and Delusion, produce bad Vipāka; the three roots of wholesome actions, Disinterestedness, Amity and Wisdom, produce good results. Actions which are performed automatically or unconsciously, or are incidental to some other action having an entirely different objective, do not produce results beyond their immediate mechanical consequences. If one treads on an insect in the dark one is not morally responsible for its death. One has been merely an unconscious instrument of the insect's own Kamma in producing its death.

But while there is a large class of actions of the last type, which cannot be avoided, the more important actions in everyone's life are dominated by one or other of these six psychological roots, wholesome and unwholesome. Even where a life is physically inactive, the thoughts are at work; they are producing Kamma. Cultivation of the mind therefore consists in removing (not suppressing) unwholesome mental states and substituting wholesome ones. Modern civilisation develops by suppressing unwholesome (the "anti-social") instincts. Consequently they break out from time to time in unwholesome eruptions. A war breaks out and the homicidal maniac comes into his own: murder is made praiseworthy. Buddhism, on the other hand, aims at *removing* the unwholesome mental elements. For this, the special techniques of meditation *(Bhāvanā)* are

necessary.

Good Kamma is the product of wholesome states of mind. And to be certain of this, it is essential to gain an understanding of the states of consciousness and one's most secret motives. Unless this is done, it is next to impossible to cultivate exclusively wholesome actions, because in every human consciousness there is a complex of hidden motivations. They are hidden because we do not wish to acknowledge them. In every human being there is a built-in defence mechanism which prevents him from seeing himself too clearly. If he should happen to be confronted with his subconscious mind too suddenly he may receive an unpleasant psychological shock. His carefully-constructed image of himself is rudely shattered. He is appalled by the crudity, the unsuspected savagery, of his real motivations. The keen and energetic social worker may find that he is really actuated by a desire to push other people around, to tell them what is best for them and to force them to his will. The professional humanitarian, always championing the under-dog, may find to his distress that his outbursts of high moral indignation at the injustices of society are nothing more than an expression of his real hatred of other humans, made respectable, to himself and others, by the guise of concern for the victims of society. Or each may be compensating for hidden defects in his own personality. All these facts are well known to present-day psychologists; but how many people submit themselves to the analyst's probings? Buddhism teaches us to do it for ourselves, and to make ourselves immune to unpleasant or shocking revelations by acknowledging beforehand that there is no immutable personality, no "Self" to be either admired or deplored.

An action (Kamma), once it is performed is finished

so far as its actual performance is concerned. It is also irreversible.

> The moving finger writes, and having writ
> Moves on; nor all your piety nor wit
> Can lure it back to cancel half a line —
> Nor all your tears wash out one word of it.

(Edward FitzGerald: *The Rubaiyyat of Omar Khayyam.*)

The moving finger is no mys:ery to one who understands Kamma and Vipāka. Ask not Whose finger writes upon the wall? It is thine own.

What remains of the action is its potential, the inevitability of its result. It is a force released into the stream of time, and in time it must have its fruition. And when, for good or ill, it has fructified, like all else its force must pass away — and then the Kamma and the Vipāka alike are no more. But as the old Kammas die, new ones are being created — every moment of every waking hour. So the life-process, involved in suffering, is carried on. It is borne along on the current of Craving. It is in its essence nothing but that Craving, that desire — the desire that takes many forms, is insatiable, is self-renewing. As many-formed as Proteus; as undying as the Phoenix.

But when there comes the will to end desire, a change takes place. The mind that craved gratification in the fields of sense now turns away. Another desire, other than that of the senses, gathers power and momentum. It is the desire for cessation, for peace, for the end of pain and sorrow. The desire for Nibbāna.

Now this desire is incompatible with all other desires. Therefore, if it becomes strong enough it kills all other desires. Gradually they fade out; first the grosser cravings springing from the three immoral roots; then

the higher desires; then the attachments, all wilt and fade out, extinguished by the one overmastering desire for Nibbāna.

And as they wilt and fade out, and no more result-producing actions take their place, so the current of the life-continuum dries up. Unwholesome actions cannot be performed, because their roots have withered away; there is no more basis for them. The wholesome deeds in their turn become sterile; since they are not motivated by desire they do not project any force into the future, In the end there is not any craving force left to produce another birth. Everything has been swallowed up by the desire for the extinction of desire.

And when the object of that desire is gained, can it any longer be a desire? Does a man continue to long for what he has already got? The last desire of all is not self-renewing; it is self-destroying. For in its fulfilment is its own death. Nibbāna is attained.

Therefore the Buddha said, "For the final cessation of suffering, *all* Kammas, wholesome and unwholesome, must be transcended, must be abandoned. Putting aside good and evil, one attains Nibbāna. There is no other way."

The Arhat lives then only experiencing the residuum of his life-span. And when that last remaining impetus comes to an end the aggregates of his personality come to an end also, never to be reconstructed, never to be replaced. In their continual renewal there was suffering; now there is release. In their coming together there was illusion — the illusion of Self. Now there is Reality.

And Reality is beyond conception.

KAMMA AND CAUSALITY*

Francis Story

THE question that has been posed as the subject of this evening's talk. "Does everything happen in our lives according to Kamma?" is not one that can be answered by a plain affirmation or denial, since it involves the whole question of free-will against determinism, or, in familiar language, "Fatalism." The nearest that can be given to a simple answer is to say that most of the major circumstances and events of life are conditioned by Kamma, but not all.

If everything, down to the minutest detail, were pre-conditioned either by Kamma or by the physical laws of the universe, there would be no room in the pattern of strict causality for the functioning of free-will. It would therefore be impossible for us to free ourselves from the mechanism of cause and effect; it would be impossible to attain Nibbāna.

In the sphere of everyday events and the incidents of life such as sickness, accidents and such common experiences, every effect requires more than one cause to bring it about, and Kamma is in most cases the predisposing factor which enables the external influences to combine and produce a given result. In the case of situations that involve a moral choice, the situation itself is the product of past Kamma, but the individual's

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* A talk given to Buddhists, Christians, Hindus and Muslims of the Rotary Club of Colombo, May 25th 1954.

reaction to it is a free play of will and intention. For example, a man, as the result of previous *akusala kamma* (unwholesome action) either in the present life or some past birth, may find himself in a situation of desperate poverty in which he is sorely tempted to steal, commit a robbery or in some other way carry into the future the unwholesome actions of the past. This is a situation with a moral content, because it involves the subject in a nexus of ethical potentials. Here his own freedom of choice comes into play; he has the alternative of choosing further hardship rather than succumb to the temptation of crime.

In *Paṭicca Samuppāda*, the cycle of Dependent Origination, the factors belonging to previous births, Avijjā and Saṅkhāra (that is, Ignorance and the Actions conditioned by it) are summarised as Atīta Kamma Bhava, the Kamma-process of the past. This Kamma produces Consciousness, Name and Form, Sense-perception Fields, Contact and Sensation as its resultants, and this is known as Paccuppanna Vipāka Bhava, or present effect. Thus the physical and mental make-up (Nāma-Rūpa) is the manifestation of past Kamma operating in the present, as also are the phenomena cognised and experienced through the channels of sense. But running co-incidentally with this is another current of action, that which is controlled by the will, and this is known as Paccuppanna Kamma Bhava, or present volitional activity; it is the counterpart in the present of the Atīta Kamma Bhava, the Kamma-process of the past. It governs the factors of Craving, Grasping and Becoming. This means, in effect, that the current of "Becoming" which has its source in the past Kamma, at the point where it manifests as individual reaction—as for example in the degree of Craving engendered as the result of

pleasurable Sensation—comes under the control of the will, so that while the subject has no further control over the situations in which he finds himself, having himself created them in the past, he yet has a subjective control over his response to them, and it is out of this that he creates the conditions of his future. The present volitional activity (Paccuppanna Kamma Bhava) then takes effect in the form of Anāgata Vipāka Bhava (future resultants), and this Anāgata Vipāka Bhava is the counterpart in the future of the Paccuppanna Vipāka Bhava of the present. In an exactly similar way it dominates the future birth-state and conditions, which in Paṭicca Samuppāda are expressed as Jāti (Arising), Old-age and Death etc. The entire cycle implies a dynamic progression in which the state conditioned by past actions is at the same time the womb of present actions and their future results.

Kamma is not only an integral law of the process of becoming; it is itself that process, and the phenomenal personality is but the present manifestation of its activity. The Christian axiom of "hating the sin but loving the sinner" is meaningles from the Buddhist standpoint. There is action, but no performer of the action; the "sin" and the "sinner" cannot be dissociated; we are our actions; and nothing apart from them.

Modes of Conditioning

The conditioned nature of all mental and physical phenomena is analysed under 24 heads, called in Pāli "Paccaya" (Modes of Conditioning). Each of the 24 Paccaya is a contributing factor to the arising of conditioned things. The thirteenth Paccaya is Kamma-Paccaya, and stands for the past actions which form the base, or condition, of something arising later. The six sense-

organs and fields of sense-cognition — that is, the physical organs of sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch and mental awareness — which, as we have seen, arise at birth in association with Name and Form, provide the condition-base for the arising of subsequent consciousness, and hence for the mental reactions following upon it. But here it should be noted that although Kamma as volition is associated with the mental phenomena that have arisen, the phenomena themselves are not Kamma-results. The fourteenth Paccaya is Kamma-result condition, or Vipāka, and stands as a condition by way of Kamma-result to the mental and physical phenomena by establishing the requisite base in the five fields of sense-consciousness.

That there are events that come about through causes other than Kamma is demonstrable by natural laws. If it were not so, to try to avoid or cure sickness would be useless. If there is a predisposition to a certain disease through past Kamma, and the physical conditions to produce the disease are also present, the disease will arise. But it may also come about that all the physical conditions are present, but, through the absence of the Kamma-condition, the disease does not arise; or that, with the presence of the physical causes the disease arises even in the absence of a Kamma-condition. A philosophical distinction is therefore to be made between those diseases which are the result of Kamma and those which are produced solely by physical conditions; but since it is impossible to distinguish between them without a knowledge of past births, all diseases must be treated as though they are produced by merely physical causes. When the Buddha was attacked by Devadatta and was wounded in the foot by a stone, He was able to explain that the injury was the result of some violence

committed in a previous life, *plus* the action of Devadatta which enabled the Kamma to take effect. Similarly, the violent death of Moggallāna Thera was the combined result of his Kamma and the murderous intention of the rival ascetics whose action provided the necessary external cause to bring it about.

Causality

The process of causality, of which Kamma and Vipāka are only one action-result aspect, is a cosmic, universal interplay of forces. Concerning the question of free-will in a causally-conditioned universe, the view of reality presented by Henri Bergson, which when it was postulated was new to the West, throws considerable light on the Buddhist concept. Life, says Bergson, is an unceasing becoming, which preserves the past and creates the future. The solid things which seem to able and endure, which seem to resist this flowing, which seem more real than the flowing, are periods, cuts across the flowing, views that our mind takes of the living reality of which it is a part, in which it lives and moves, views of the reality prescribed and limited by the needs of its particular activity.

Here we have a Western interpretation of Avijjā (Ignorance)—"views of the reality prescribed and limited by the needs of its particular activity"—and of Anicca, the unceasing becoming, the principle of change and impermanence. Bergson also includes in his system Anattā (No-Self), for in this process of unceasing change there is the change only—no "thing" that changes. So, says Bergson, when we regard our action as a chain of complementary parts linked together, each action so viewed is rigidly conditioned, yet when we regard our whole life-current as one and indivisible, it may be free. So also with the

life-current which we may take to be the reality of the universe; when we view it in its detail as the intellect presents it to us, it appears as an order of real conditioning, each separate state having its ground in an antecedent state, yet as a whole, as the living impulse (Kamma) it is free and creative. We are free, says Bergson, when our acts spring from our whole personality, when they express that personality. These acts are not unconditioned, but the conditions are not external, but in our character, which is ourself. In other and Buddhist words, our Saṅkhāra, or Kamma-formation of the past, is the personality, and that is conditioned by nothing but our own volition, or Cetanā. Bergson details an elaborate philosophy of space and time to give actuality to this dynamic view, which he calls "Creative Evolution", and his general conclusion is that the question of free-will against determinism is wrongly postulated; the problem, like the indeterminate questions of Buddhism, cannot be answered because it is itself a product of that peculiar infirmity, that "special view of reality prescribed and limited by the needs of a particular activity", which in Buddhism is called Avijjā, the Primal Nescience.

The concept of causality in the world of physics has undergone modifications of a significant order in the light of quantum physics and the increase of our knowledge regarding the atomic structure of matter. Briefly the present position may be stated thus: while it is possible to predict quantitatively the future states of great numbers of atomic units, it is not possible to pre-determine the state or position of any one particular atom. There is a margin of latitude for the behaviour of the individual unit which is not given to the mass as a whole. In human terms, it may be possible to predict from the

course of events that a certain nation, Gondalia, will be at war by a certain date; but it is not possible to predict of any individual Gondalian that he will be actively participating in the war. He may be a conscientious objector, outside the war by his own decision; or he may be physically disqualified, outside the war because of conditions over which he has no control. We may say, "Gondalia will be at war", but not "That Gondalian will be in the war." On the other hand, if we know that one particular Gondalian is not physically fit we may say confidently that he will not be in the war; the element we cannot predict with any degree of certainty is the free-will of the Gondalian individual, which may make of him a chauvinjst and national Gondalian hero, or a pacifist and inmate of a concentration camp.

How Kamma operates

Coming to the details of the ways in which Kamma operates, it must be understood that by Kamma is meant volitional action only. *"Cetanāham bhikkhave kammam vadāmi"* — "Volition, intention, O Bhikkhus, is what I call Kamma", is the definition given by the Buddha. Lobha, Dosa and Moha (Greed, Hatred and Delusion) are the roots of unwholesome Kamma; Unselfishness, Amity and Wisdom are the roots of wholesome Kamma. As the seed that is sown, so must be the tree and the fruit of the tree; from an impure mind and intention, only impure thoughts, words and deeds can issue; from such impure thoughts, words and deeds only evil consequences can result. The results themselves may come about in the same life-time; when this happens it is called *Ditṭha dhamma vedaniya kamma*, and the line of causality between action and result is often clearly traceable, as in the case of crime which is followed by punishment.

Actions which bear their results in the next birth are called *Upapajja vedaniya kamma*, and it frequently happens that people who remember their previous life remember also the Kamma which has produced their present conditions. Those actions which ripen in successive births are known as *Aparāpariya vedaniya kamma;* these are the actions which have, by continual practice, become habitual, and tend to take effect over and over again in successive lives. The Repetition-condition (Āsevana paccaya) is the twelfth of the 24 paccayas, and relates to that Kamma-consciousness in which the preceding impulse-moments, or javana-citta, are a condition by way of repetition to all the succeeding ones. This is known to modern psychology as a habit-formation, and is a very strong conditioning factor of mind and character. *Buddhism urges the continual repetition of good actions, deeds of Mettā and charity, and the continual dwelling of the mind on good and elevating subjects, such as the qualities of the Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha, in order to establish a strong habit-formation along good and beneficial lines.*

The three kinds of Kamma described above, however, may be without any resultants if the other conditions necessary for the arising of the Kamma-result are lacking. Rebirth among inferior orders of beings, for instance, will prevent or delay the beneficial results of a habitual Kamma. There is also *counteractive Kamma* which, if it is stronger than they, will inhibit their fruition. Kamma which is thus prevented from taking effect is called *Ahosi kamma.* Just as there are events which occur without Kamma as a cause, so there are actions which, as potentials, remain unrealised. These actions, however, are usually the weak and relatively unimportant ones, actions not prompted by any strong impulse and

carrying with them little moral significance.

Functionally, the various kinds of Kamma operate according to four classifications. The first is *Generative Kamma* (*Janaka kamma*), which produces the Five Khandha complex of Name and Form at birth and through all the stages of its arising during the life-continuum. The second category is that of *Sustaining Kamma* (*Upatthambhaka kamma*), which itself is void of kamma-results and is only capable of sustaining kamma-resultants that have already come into being. In the third category comes *Counteractive Kamma* (*Upapīḷaka kamma*) which, by reason of its moral or immoral force, suppresses other Kamma-results and delays or prevents their arising. Last in this classification according to functions comes *Destructive Kamma*(*Upacchedaka kamma*); this is Kamma of such potency that it utterly destroys the influence of weaker Kamma and substitutes its own Kamma-results. It may be strong enough to cut short the life-span so that it is Destructive Kamma in the literal sense.

The light and insignificant actions which we perform in the course of our daily lives have their results, but they are not dominant factors unless they become part of the habit-formation. Important actions which become habitual, either wholesome or unwholesome, are known as *Bahula Kamma*, and their effects take precedence over those of actions which are morally insignificant or rarely performed. Those actions which are rooted in a very strong moral or immoral impulse, and take some drastic form, are known as *Garuka Kamma;* they also tend to fall into the Diṭṭha dhamma vedaniya kamma class and take effect in the same lifetime, or else in the next existence. Such actions are: drawing the blood of a Buddha, murder of an Arahat, the killing of parents

and attempts to disrupt the Sangha. Although these are the chief demeritorious actions, there are many others of lesser weight which bear results in the next birth in the absence of Garuka Kamma. The same applies to good Garuka Kamma.*

Diṭṭha dhamma vedaniya kamma provides us with data for studying the operation of the law of cause and effect objectively. In the usual course of things crime brings its own consequences in the same lifetime, by a clearly-traceable sequence of events, but this does not invariably happen. For a crime to receive its due punishment a complicated machinery of causes has to be brought into operation. First there has to be the act of crime, the Kamma. Its punishment then depends upon the existence of criminal laws, of a police force, of the circumstances which enable the criminal to be detected and many subsidiary factors. It is only when all these combine that the crime receives its due punishment in the same lifetime. If the external factors are missing, the Kamma alone will not bring about its consequences immediately, and we say the criminal has gone unpunished. This, however, is not the case; sooner or later, either in the same lifetime or a subsequent one, circumstances will link together, albeit indirectly, and give an opportunity for the Kamma to produce its results. Hence from the Buddhist standpoint the question of capital punishment rests not on considerations of mercy to the murderer, which must always be a source of contention, since mercy to a criminal implies a social injustice to the victim, and lack of protection to

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* Niyata Micchādiṭṭhi (Chronic Scepticism and tenaciously held pernicious views) is also a demeritorious Garuka Kamma.

potential victims; it rests on a consideration of the Kamma-resultants to those who are instrumental in punishing him with death, since it is Kamma of the worst order to kill or cause another to take life. It is not possible here to enter into a discussion of the moral difference between the action of one who kills another from greed or anger and one who carries out a sentence of death in the course of his duties to society. That there is a difference cannot be doubted, yet from Buddhist psychology it is clear that no act of killing can be accomplished without the arising of a hate-impulse in the mind. To take life quite disinterestedly, as advocated in the Bhagavad Gīta, is a psychological impossibility; there must, in any case, be desire for the accomplishment of the act, or the act itself could never be carried out. This applies to every action except those performed by the Arahant; since there is no "unchanging Atman" no distinction can be made between the deed and the doer.

Rebirth

The mode, circumstances and nature of the next birth are conditioned by what is known as the *Death-proximate Kamma (Maraṇāsanna kamma)* which is the volition, wholesome or unwholesome, that is present immediately before death. With this is associated the *Paṭisandhi Viññāṇa, or Connecting Consciousness* between one manifestation and another. At the moment just preceding death the Maraṇāsanna kamma may take the form of a reflex of some good or bad deed performed during the dying person's life. This sometimes presents itself to the consciousness as a symbol, like the dream symbols of Freudian psychology. It may bring with it an indication of the future existence, a glimpse of the

realm, or Loka, in which rebirth is about to take place. It is due to the arising of some unwholesome consciousness from past kamma that the dying sometimes exhibit fear, while others, experiencing wholesome Death-proximate Kamma, die with a smile on their lips, seeing themselves welcomed by celestial beings or their friends who have passed away before them. Everyone who has been present at death beds can recall examples of both kinds.

When none of these Kamma-manifestations is present, however, as in the case of those who die in a state of complete unconsciousness, the next birth is determined by what is called *Reserved Kamma* (*Kaṭattā kamma*). This is the automatic result of whatever Kamma of the past is strongest, be it good or bad, and has not yet borne fruit or exhausted its force. This may be Weighty or Habitual Kamma.

Heedfulness in dying and when living

The importance of keeping the consciousness active and faculties alert up to the moment of death is stressed in Buddhist psychology. Part of the benefit of Maraṇānussati, the meditation on death, is that it enables one to approach the thought of death undismayed, in full possession of one's faculties and with control of the mental impulses. Instead of charging us to remember our sins and approach death in fear, Buddhism instructs us to call to mind our good actions, put aside terror and meet death with the calm confidence of one whose destiny is under his own control. It is a positive attitude, in place of the negative and depressing mental state encouraged by other religions. Modern psychology advises the cultivation of such an optimistic attitude throughout life: Buddhism goes further, and shows it to be a necessary safeguard when we stand on the threshold

of a new existence.

It has already been said that those who are able to remember previous lives can trace the course of Kamma and Vipāka from one birth to another. They are the only people who are in a position to differentiate clearly between the events that occur because of Kamma and those that are caused by external agencies. It is certain, however, that predominantly good Kamma will save us from most of the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, or help us to rise above whatever obstacles are set in our path. *The need for human endeavour is always present*, for in the very enjoyment of the fruits of good Kamma we are generating a new series of actions to bear their own results in the future. It cannot be too often or too emphatically repeated that the true understanding of the law of Kamma is the absolute opposite of fatalism. The man who is born to riches on account of his past deeds of charity cannot afford to rest on his laurels. He is like a man with a substantial bank balance; he may either live on his capital until he exhausts it, which is foolish, or he can use it as an investment and increase it. The only investment we can take with us out of this life into the next is good Kamma: it therefore behoves every man who is, in the common phrase, "blessed" with riches, to use those riches wisely in doing good. If everyone understood the law of Kamma there would be an end to the greed of the rich and the envy of the poor. Every man would strive to give away as much as he could in charity — at least spend his money on projects beneficial to mankind. On the other hand there would be no burning feeling of injustice on the part of the "have-nots," since they would recognise that their condition is due to their own past Kamma, while at the same time its crushing effects would be alleviated by the

generosity and social conscience of the rich. The result would be a co-operative scheme of sharing, in which both would prosper.

This is the practical plan of living that Buddhism suggests to us; it is sane, ethical and inspiring, and it is the one answer that a free world can make to the anti-religious materialistic ideologies. To put it into practice would be the greatest step forward in mankind's social as well as spiritual progress, and one that must be made if we are to save our civilisation from the terrible consequences of greed, hatred and delusion. *It is not enough to have a knowledge of the law of Kamma; it must be used as applied science in the ordering of personal and national life for the realisation of a happier, more stable and more regulated phase of human history.*

KARMA — THE RIPENING FRUIT*

Bhikkhu Ñāṇajīvako

I

WITH the decline of newtonian physics and the emergence of quantum theory and relativity, the physical world-picture in the West became centered around a *process-concept*. Natural sciences and 19th century scientifically oriented philosophy were in quest of new criteria that could be better adjusted to their specific aims than the crude causal interpretation of the whole world, "with its men and gods" (as the Buddha would say) in bare analogy to "dead matter" in its macroscopic common-sense aspect. This was the end of the stiff mechanistic absolutism based on the *substance-view*, and the corresponding conception of causality as the universal pattern of blind determinism in nature. The dominant role of physics was about to be replaced by a prevalently biological orientation. This at least was the tendency of the new vitalistic philosophy, whose most preeminent representative was Henri Bergson.

By this essential turning, modern philosophy seemed to return to pathways that closely, though not explicitly, resembled certain specific features of Buddhism, which have arisen out of different contexts and much earlier in time. The first to advert to this analogy explicitly, in

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* Reprinted from *Main Currents in Modern Thought*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (1972).

terms of a new philosophy of culture, was Friedrich Nietzsche. The idea of the "eternal recurrence" of cosmic and historical cycles, taken over from early Greek philosophy, was not sufficient for his dynamic "transvaluation of all values." Yet the way from the early Ionian world-view to the Indian heritage in the dissolving civilizations of the Near East—out of which ultimately the Ionian Renaissance had arisen—was not very long. Thus Nietzsche discovered in the teaching of the Buddha an archetypal model for his own vitalistic attitude in philosophy. His interpretation of Buddhism became a paradoxical counterpoint accompanying Nietzsche's antithetic position to Christianity.

Despite its rather strange position in the structure of Nietzsche's own thought, his interpretation of Buddhism is neither vague nor unauthentic. Nietzsche found his access to Buddhism through the basic text of *Dhammapadam* (probably Fausböll's masterly Latin translation of 1855, the first in Europe). In Chapter I, 5, the Buddha is quoted as saying: "Enmities are never appeased by enmity, but they are appeased by non-enmity. This is the eternal law." In Nietzsche's interpretation, this statement is "the moving refrain of the whole of Buddhism ... and quite rightly: it is precisely these emotions [of ressentiment] which would be thoroughly *unhealthy* with regard to the main dietetic objective," since Buddhism "no longer speaks of 'struggle against sin' but, quite in accordance with actuality, 'the struggle against *suffering*.'" Suffering is in Nietzsche's existential interpretation "a state of depression arisen on the basis of *physiological* conditions: against this depression Buddha takes hygienic measures." The Buddha was a "deep physiologist, whose 'religion' should more properly be called a *hygiene* ... whose effect depends on the victory

over ressentiment: to make the soul free from it—this is the first step towards health. 'Enmity is not ended by enmity ...' — this is not a moral advice, this is an advice of physiology."[1]

As brutally partial as this interpretation may seem even to Buddhists, it nevertheless singled out an essential point whose deeper implications will remain characteristic for the development of the later philosophical thought on the main subject of the present paper.

On the other hand, at the end of the 19th century, and also much later, missionaries of more popular versions of Buddhism, still unaware of the essential purport of the new scientific and philosophical world-view emerging in their own cultural ambience, were praising Buddhism for its eminently rational advantages as a religion founded on the "solid scientific basis" of the universally valid "principle of causality," almost in its Newtonian meaning. For at that time the term *paṭiccasamuppādo*, or "interdependent origination" of all phenomena (*dhammā*) used to be interpreted in analogy to the "hard facts" of physics and physically oriented "positive" sciences. This understanding of the principle of causality seemed sufficient to account for the generally Indian teaching on *karma*, the basic principle of moral determinism, and for its peculiarly Buddhist version, distinguished by the Buddha's negation of a permanent soul-principle (*anattā*) in the *process* of becoming, visualized as a "stream" (*samsāro*) of life-experience, and corresponding most closely, as we shall see, to Bergson's *flux du vécu*.

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1 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ*, §20 (Penguin Classics) pp. 129-130, and *Ecce Homo*, §6 (my translation).

It seems that at that time, and for a long time after, nobody except Nietzsche was interested in taking note of another humble historical fact, namely that the Buddha's attitude to the world as a whole was emphatically negative: *sabba-loke anabhirati*, "disgust with the whole world"—not only because the world, whose overlord is Death (*Māro*), is essentially anguish or suffering (*dukkhaṃ*), but also because the deeper reason for this existential anguish is the "nullity" (*suññaṃ*) of our-self-being-in-the-world, or "nihilation" as we might express it in 20th century terms:

> ...since in this very life such a being [as the Buddha] cannot be identified by you as existing in truth, in reality, is it proper for you to state that such a being is the superman, the most excellent man who has attained the highest aim, and that such a being, if he has to be designated, should be designated in other than these four terms: "Such a being exists after death"; or "he does not exist after death"; or "he both does and does not exist after death"; or "he neither does nor does not exist after death"?
>
> Surely not, reverend sir.
>
> Good, Anurādho. Both formerly and now, it is just suffering that I proclaim, and the ceasing of suffering.[1]

II

In the oldest Buddhist texts of *abhidhamma* ("about

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1 *Saṃyutta-nikāyo*, XXII, 86 and 85. Quotations from Pāli texts are adapted mainly from the Pāli Text Society (London) editions of the Translation Series.

phenomena"), the central conception of phenomenological analysis (*vibhajjavādo*) was concentrated on the idea of a "stream of existence" (*bhavaṅga-soto*): articulation (*aṅgam*) of the existential (*bhavo*) flux (*soto*), or, in a free translation, emergence of fluctuating articulation. Thus, in early Buddhism as in modern philosophy, "substance-thought" had to be replaced by "process-thought." Long before the Buddha, substance-thought was formulated in the Vedantic conception—contained, among so many other world-views, in the earliest *Upanishads* as the teaching of an absolute, all-encompassing being, *Brahman*, conceived as "changeless, all-pervading, unmoving, immovable, eternal." In negating all these attributes, the Buddha challenged Vedantic absolutism by adopting the alternative solution of resolving all "being" into flux and nullity (*suññatā*), in negating even a permanent or static soul-principle (*anattā*, or the negation of *ātmā*, the Vedantic Self).

Thus the core of the *abhidhamma* conception of the "stream of existence" consists in its theory of momentariness (*khaṇikavādo*). Its modern analogy has found its first and best formulation in the philosophy of William James, especially in his essay, *Does "Consciousness" Exist?*, where the "stream of consciousness" or "stream of thinking" (which, "when scrutinized, reveals itself to consist chiefly of the stream of my breathing") is elicited from his basic theory of "pure experience," defined as "the instant field of the present... this succession of an emptiness and fullness that have reference to each other and are of one flesh"—succession "in small enough pulses," which "is the essence of the phenomenon." In the same connection, as "the result of our criticism of the absolute," the metaphysical and metapsychical idea of a "central self" is reduced by James to "the

conscious self of the moment.'"[1] Compare this with Whitehead's further elaboration in his metaphysical conception of "actual occasions" and "throbbing actualities" understood as "pulsations of experience," whose "drops" or "puffs of existence" guided by an internal teleology of their "concrescence" (analogous to the Buddhist *saṅkhārā* in karmic formations) join the "stream of existence."[2]

All this was summarized by Bergson in a statement which to a Buddhist sounds like a formulation in the simplest and most authentic terms common to all schools and periods of Buddhist thought:

> There are changes, but there are underneath the change no things which change: change has no need of a support...movement does not imply a mobile.[3]

In his introduction to the French translation of *Pragmatism* by William James, Bergson says that "from the

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1 Quotations from *Classic American Philosophers*, (New York, Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1951), pp. 160, 155, 161, 163n,

2 Some analogies between Whitehead and Buddha have recently been discussed by Kenneth K. Inada, "Whitehead's 'Actual Entity' and the Buddha's Anātman," in *Philosophy East and West*, July 1971. Prof. Inada mentions at the beginning that Whitehead "especially in his later works makes several references to the Buddha," though his knowledge of Buddhism was rather superficial and on certain points basically wrong. Independently of such occasional direct references, Whitehead's philosophy in its original structure "shows strains of thought remarkably similar to those of the Buddha." Some of Inada's implicit references could be of much use also for a wider comparison with Bergson from the same Asian standpoint. The article does not deal with the subject of *karma*.

3 "The Perception of Change" in *The Creative Mind* (N. Y., Philosophical Library, 1946). p. 173.

point of view taken by James, which is that of pure experience or of 'radical empiricism,' realtiy ... flows without our being able to say whether it is in a single direction, or even whether it is always and throughout the same river flowing."[1] And in his own *Introduction to Metaphysics*, he says, "All reality is, therefore, tendency, if we agree to call tendency a nascent change of direction "[2]

Bergson's approach to a biologically oriented philosophy of life was entirely different from Nietzsche's intentions. He did not explicitly consider cultural implications of the biological reorientation of the new philosophy of nature until the last period of his activity (*The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, 1932). Bergson's most important work, *Creative Evolution*, which appeared in 1907, begins with the question, "What is the precise meaning of the word 'exist'?" The answer, at the end of the first section is:

> We are seeking only the precise meaning that our consciousness gives to this word "exist," and we find that, for a conscious being, to exist is to change, to change is to mature, to mature is to go on creating oneself endlessly.[3]

In such maturing and "creation of self by self," which "is the more complete, the more one reasons on what

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1 Cf. *The Creative Mind*, p. 250.
2 *Ibid.*, p. 222:
3 H. Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, translated by A. Mitchell (N. Y., Modern Library, 1944), pp. 3, 10. (Quoted in the continuation as *C. E.*)

one does,"[1] consists the *problem of freedom.* In this process, each individual self-consciousness "lives and develops itself as an effect of its own hesitations until a free action is detached from it as if it were an overripe fruit."[2]

The Buddha also speaks of the guidance, or protective care, "of self by self" in the same process of "the ripening fruit of action," thus, "One oneself is the guardian of oneself. What other guardian would there be?" (*Dhammapadam*, 160).

> — If, Ananda, there were no *kamma* [*karma*, action] ripening in the sphere of sense existence, would there appear any sensual becoming?
>
> — Surely not, Lord.
>
> — ... and wherever the action ripens, there the individual experiences the fruit of that action, be it in this life, or in the next life, or in future lives.
>
> — The results of kamma are unthinkable, not to be pondered upon.[3]

Here is Bergson's explanation of the thesis:

> What are we, in fact, what is our *character*, if not the condensation of the history that we have lived from our birth—nay, even before our birth, since we bring

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1 *Ibid.*, p. 9.
2 *Essai sur les Donnees Immediates de la Conscience*, 68th ed., (Presses Universitaires de France), p. 132.
3 *Aṅguttara-Nikāyo*, III,76,33, IV,77.Cf. translation by Nyanaponika Thera (Kandy, The Wheel Publication No. 155-158), pp. 51, 23 92.

with us prenatal dispositions? Doubtless we think with only a small part of our past, but it is with our entire past, including the original bent of our soul, that we desire, will and act. Our past, then, as a whole, is made manifest to us in its impulse... From this *survival of the past* it follows that consciousness cannot go through the same state twice. Our personality, which is being built up each instant with its accumulated experience, changes without ceasing ... That is why our duration is irreversible ... Thus our personality shoots, grows and ripens without ceasing.[1]

Bergson's conception of causality and motivation departs from the classical theories of determinism and freedom of action, and approaches the Indian (not exclusively Buddhist) idea of *karma* in two essential points: its psychological origin and its creative character. It is based on Bergson's critique of both mechanistic and finalistic theories in biology:

> Evolution will thus prove to be something entirely

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1 *C. E.*, p. 8. Sartre has reformulated this problem on a deeper existential level, in his *Being and Nothingness*, translated by H. R. Barnes (N. Y., The Citadel Press, 1966), p. 114f.: "There is no absolute beginning which without ever having past would become past. Since the For-itself, qua For-itself, has to be its past, it comes into the world *with* a past. These few remarks may permit us to view in a somewhat different light the problem of birth... There is a metaphysical problem concerning birth in that I can be anxious to know how I happen to have been born from that *particular* embryo..." Bergson's emphasis is also always on the concreteness and uniqueness of each creative act, even on the lowest biological level.

different from a series of adaptations to circumstances, as mechanism claims; entirely different also from the realization of a plan of the whole, as maintained by the doctrine of finality... Such a philosophy of life ... claims to transcend both mechanism and finalism, but ... it is nearer the second doctrine than the first.[1]

As for this second doctrine, Bergson maintains that "the finalistic interpretation, such as we shall propose it, could never be taken for an anticipation of the future... How could we know beforehand a situation that is unique of its kind, that has never yet occurred and will never occur again? Of the future, only that is foreseen which is like the past or can be made up again with elements like those of the past. Such is the case with astronomical, physical and chemical facts, with all facts which form part of a system in which elements supposed to be unchanging are merely put together, in which the only changes are changes of position... But an original situation, which imparts something of its own originality to its elements..., how can such a situation be pictured as given before it is actually produced? All that can be said is that, once produced, it will be explained by the elements that analysis will then carve out of it. Now, what is true of the production of a new species is also true of the production of a new individual, and more generally, of any moment of any living form."[2]

Compare the simpler statement of the Buddha, with

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1 *Ibid.*, pp. 113, 57.
2 *Ibid.*, pp. 59, 33.

strict reference to the karmic, i.e. the morally relevant, act:

> If any one were to say, "this person commits an act and he *will* suffer accordingly"—if that were the case, there would be no [use of leading a] life of holiness, and there would be no opportunity of putting an end to suffering. If any one were to say: "this person commits an act for which he *deserves* to suffer accordingly"—if that were the case, there would be a use of leading a life of holiness, and there would be an opportunity of putting an end to suffering.[1]

The vitalist attempt to re-examine the problems of causality, finality and freedom of will, from Bergson's standpoint of "transformalism"[2] brought us to a wider epistemological problem of establishing adequate relations between science, history and philosophy—a problem extensively discussed by the later philosophies of existence:

> *Science* can work only on what is supposed to repeat itself... Anything that is irreducible and irreversible in the successive moments of a *history* eludes science. To get a notion of this irreducibility and irreversibility, we must break with scientific habits which are

1 *Aṅguttara-nikāyo*, III, 99. Sartre's analysis of "human reality" as "a project of being" brings him to the conclusion: "We can ascertain more exactly what is the being of the self: it is *value*." (*Being and Nothingness*, p. 92)

2 Cf. *C. E.*, pp. 27–35.

adapted to the fundamental requirements of thought, we must do violence to the mind, *go counter to the natural bent* of the intellect. But this is just the function of *philosophy*.[1] Modern science is the daughter of astronomy; it has come down from heaven to earth along the inclined plane of Galileo, for it is through Galileo that Newton and his successors are connected with Képler... Each material point became a rudimentary planet... Modern science must be defined pre-eminently by its aspiration to take time as an independent variable.[2]

But to the artist who creates a picture by drawing it from the depths of his soul, time is no longer an accessory... The duration of his work is part and parcel of his work. To contract or to dilate it would be to modify both the psychical evolution that fills it and the invention which is its goal. The time taken up by the invention is one with the invention itself. It is the progress of a thought which is changing in the degree and measure that it is taking form. It is a vital process, something like the ripening of an idea.[3]

Compare with this the statement of Buddhaghosa, in *Atthasālini:* "By time the Sage described the mind, and

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1 *Ibid.*, p. 34f. Italicizing in this and following quotations are partly mine.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 364.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 370.

by mind described the time."[1]

The "scission" of *intellect* from *intuition*[2] is explained by Bergson (and later existentialists) by the "practical nature of perception and its prolongation in intellect and science"; we could almost say, by the *lack of contemplative interest* in modern, technically oriented science. Thus, in a deduction which reminds us of Heidegger's basic thesis on the scope of metaphysics, Bergson formulates the question:

> But has metaphysics understood its role when it has simply trodden in the steps of physics, in the chimerical hope of going further in the same direction? Should not its own task be, on the contrary, to remount the incline that physics descends, to bring back matter to its origins, and to build up progressively a *cosmology*, which would be, so to speak, a *reversed psychology*?[3]

> Everything is obscure in the idea of creation, if we think of *things* which are created and of a *thing* which creates, as we habitually do, as the understanding cannot help doing... It is natural to our intellect, whose function is essentially practical, made to present to us things and states rather than changes and acts. But *things-and-states are only views, taken*

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1 Compare the discussion of "The Problem of Time" from this standpoint in Chapter V of Nyanaponika Thera's *Abhidhamma Studies* (Kandy, Buddhist Publication Society, 1965) pp. 104ff.

2. *C. E.*, p. 380.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 227f.

by our mind, of becoming. There are no things, there are only actions.[1]

Epoche', refraining from judgments based on such "views" (Greek *doxa*, Sanskrit *drishti*, Pāli *diṭṭhi*), the philosophical method brought from India by Pyrrho of Elis at the time of Alexander the Great, has become in the 20th century the fundamental method of Husserl's "meditating philosopher" in phenomenological analysis. It is a "science of phenomena, which lies far removed from our ordinary thinking, and has not until our own day therefore shown an impulse to develop ... so extraordinarily difficult ... a new way of looking at things, one that contrasts at every point with the natural attitude of experience and thought," whose development is felt, however, as an "urgent need nowadays."[2]

The teaching of the Buddha was, with a still wider purpose, the expression of "the right effort" (*sammā-vāyāmo*) to "swim against the stream" of such world-views, i.e. "...the type of views called the thicket of views, the wilderness of the contortion of views, the vacillation of views, the fetter of views..."[3]

In Bergson's theory of intuition, the act of "swimming against the stream" is interpreted with his basic French term *Torsion*:

> Let us try to see, no longer with the eyes of the intellect alone, which grasps only the already made

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1 *Ibid.*, p 270.
2 E. Husserl, *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, translated by W. R. Boyce Gibson (N. Y., Macmillan, 1931), pp. 41–43.
3 *Majjhima-nikāyo*, 2, *Sabbāsava-suttam.*

and which looks from the outside, but with the spirit, I mean with that faculty of seeing which is immanent in the faculty of acting and which springs up, somehow, by the *twisting of the will on itself*, when action is turned into knowledge, like heat, so to say, into light.[1]

By intuition I mean instinct that has become disinterested, self-conscious, capable of reflecting upon its object and of enlarging it indefinitely. That an effort of this kind is not impossible is proved by the existence in man of an *aesthetic faculty* along with the normal perception... This intention is just what the artist tries to regain, in placing himself back within the object by a kind of *sympathy*, in breaking down, by an effort of intuition, the barrier that space puts up between him and his model.[2]

The ultimate metaphysical consequences implied in a theory of causation based on the biological phenomenon of the "ripening fruit" were taken into adequate consideration only in some later philosophies of existence. Yet the preparatory vitalistic stage of modern philosophy remains more important for an Indian reinterpretation of the theory of *karma* than can be assessed within strictly European limits, where the importance of the missing link between the vitalist and existentialist stages—the link of a new theory of causality—has not yet been fully and explicitly realized. Let us therefore conclude the survey of this cycle of ideas by returning to the lowest

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1 *C. E.*, p. 273.
2 *Ibid.*, p. 194.

level on which Bergson's vitalistic interpretation of cosmic matter had to establish a new starting point:

> Let us merely recall that extension admits of degrees, that all sensation is extensive in a certain measure, and that the idea of unextended sensations, artificially localized in space, is a mere view of the mind, suggested by an unconscious metaphysic much more than by psychological observation. No doubt we make only the first steps in the direction of the extended, even when we let ourselves go as much as we can. But suppose for a moment that matter consists in this very movement pushed further, and that *physics is simply psychics inverted.*[1]

The conception of "a cosmology which would be a reversed psychology," or of physics understood "simply as psychics inverted," was destined to become the fulcrum for a transition from a physical to an historical orientation in other contemporary philosophies. This transition is also clearly marked in Whitehead's later works: "Physical endurance is the process of continuously inheriting a certain identity of character transmitted through a historic route of events."[2]

Bergson expressed this emphasis in terms which brought him still closer to a specific aspect of later existentialist thought: the predominant importance of the future for (karmic) shaping of the present by the past. Though Heidegger's critique of Bergson's idea of the "stream of experience" was concentrated on this point,

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1 *Ibid.*, p. 221.
2 *Science and the Modern World*, p. 156.

where in an initial metaphor Bergson compares a "mental state, as it advances on the road of time, continually swelling with the duration which it accumulates" with "a snowball on the snow, rolling upon itself" and thus increasing—we can read a few pages later in the opening chapter of *Creative Evolution* another statement, anticipating Heidegger's objection to some extent: "Duration is the continuous progress of *the past which gnaws into the future* and which swells as it advances."[1]

III

Martin Heidegger, in his basic work, *Being and Time*,[2] seems to take over the meditation on "the ripening fruit" at the critical point reached by Bergson's analysis of its wider biological scope: the karmic predicament of human existence. It can be seen from Heidegger's numerous critical references to Bergson (though in many cases I would not agree with them) that in the meantime it had become obvious that there was more to elicit by the process-philosophy than the biologically oriented thinkers of the vitalist period could realize. The philosophy of existence undertook this work in essentially different dimensions. Heidegger in particular was very careful and explicit in critically adapting new methods of independent historical thinking in the philosophy of culture introduced by Dilthey, and above all the new

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1 *C. E.*, pp. 4, 7.

2 Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, translated by J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson (N. Y., Harper and Row, 1962). Quoted in the following notes as *B. T.*

structure of transcendental logic laid down by his teacher Husserl, for phenomenological analysis independent of natural science. Within the scope of this new framework, similarities with Buddhist thought emerge still more strikingly, especially in the domain of the "suffering/ concern" theme and the need for the notion of *karma* in a process-multiple causality structure.

The second part of Heidegger's *Being and Time* deals in particular with problems of human reality and temporality (*Dasein und Zeitlichkeit*). The possibility for human being to attain to full ripeness in an existence conditioned by man's "being-towards-death," is discussed in the first chapter ("Dasein's authentic potentiality-for-being-a-whole and its being-towards-death"). Chapter Five is dedicated to "temporality and historicality" as essential constituents of the human being[1] involved in this ambiguous process.

When, for instance, a fruit is unripe, it "goes toward" its ripeness. In this process of ripening, that which the fruit is not yet is by no means pieced on as something not yet present-at-hand. The fruit brings itself to ripeness, and such a bringing of itself is a characteristic of its being as a fruit. Nothing imaginable which one might contribute to it would eliminate the unripeness of the fruit, if this entity did not come to ripeness *of its own accord*. When we

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1 Heidegger's designation of human being as *Dasein* ("being here" i.e. in the world, which is always "one's own") has been interpreted by Sartre, in *Being and Nothingness*, as "human reality," a term which will be occasionally used in the continuation.

speak of the "not-yet" of the unripeness, we do not have in view something else which stands outside, and which—with utter indifference to the fruit—might be present-at-hand in it and with it. What we have in view is the fruit itself in its specific kind of being . The ripening fruit, however, not only is not indifferent to its unripeness as something other than itself, but it is that unripeness as it ripens. *The "not-yet" has already been included in the very being of the fruit*, not as some random characteristic, but as something constitutive. Correspondingly, as long as any Dasein is, it too *is already* its "not-yet."[1]

The implicit emphasis laid on the difference from the "classical" European mechanist theory of causality is obvious enough.

The karmic process, in its Buddhist meaning, can be defined as a vicious circle of "interdependent origination" (*paticca-samuppādo*), consisting of a chain of twelve rings (*nidānam*), the first of which is *avijjā*, "ignorance," or better, metaphysical nescience of a human being (defined by Heidegger as a "being there"—*Dasein*) about his own emergence in the flux of existence. The last ring of the chain is "death." Heidegger's analysis of human reality as a "being there" in the world is not less distinctly determined and delimited by the tension of the same polarity—ignorance and death:

> If the term "understanding" is taken in a way which is primordially existential, it means to be *projecting towards a potentiality-for-being for the sake of which*

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1 *B. T.*, p. 243. (Marginal German page numbers used here and following.)

any Dasein exists. In understanding, one's own potentiality-for-being is disclosed in such a way that one's Dasein always knows understandingly what it is capable of. It "knows" this, however, not by having discovered some fact, but by maintaining itself in an existential possibility. The kind of *ignorance* which corresponds to this, does not consist in an absence or cessation of understanding, but must be regarded as a deficient mode of the projectedness of one's potentiality-for-being. Existence can be questionable... When one understands oneself projectively in an existential possibility, *the future underlies this understanding*, and it does so as a coming-towards-oneself out of that current possibility as which one's Dasein exists . Projection is basically futural... Temporality does not temporalize itself constantly out of the authentic future. This inconstancy, however, does not mean that temporality sometimes lacks a future, but rather that the temporalizing of the future takes various forms.[1]

This seems to explain one step further the "hesitation" of the self "until a free action is detached as an overripe fruit," as Bergson expressed the limits of freedom as release (*mokṣa*) within the scope of a karmic determinism.

> With ripeness, the fruit *fulfills* itself. But is the death at which Dasein arrives, a fulfilment in this sense? With its death, Dasein has indeed "fulfilled its course." But in doing so, has it necessarily exhausted its specific possibilities? . For the most part,

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1 *Ibid.*, p. 336.

> Dasein ends in unfulfilment, or else by having disintegrated and been used up. Ending does not necessarily mean fulfilling oneself. It thus becomes more urgent to ask *in what sense, if any, death must be conceived as the ending of Dasein.*[1]

Arising out of this situation, the problem of *karma*, implicitly felt as an "anticipatory resoluteness" in "concrete working out of temporality" aiming at "an authentic historizing of Dasein," is further discussed as the existential problem of "Dasein's potentiality-for-being-a-whole."[2]

Since "those possibilities of existence which have been factically disclosed are not to be gathered from death we must ask whence, in general, Dasein can draw those possibilities upon which it factically projects itself." The answer is

> The resoluteness in which Dasein comes back to itself, discloses current factical possibilities of authentic existing, and discloses them *in terms of the heritage* which that resoluteness, *as thrown, takes over.* In one's coming back resolutely to one's thrownness, there is hidden a *handing down to oneself* of the possibilities that have come down to one, but not necessarily as having *thus come down.*[3]

We shall take for granted that the coincidence of the expression (underlined by me) "thus come down" with

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1 *Ibid.*, p. 244.
2 *Ibid.*, p. 309.
3 *Ibid.*, p. 383.

the literal meaning of the most common attribute of the Buddha—*tathāgato*—is another of many casual cases where a modern philosophy of essentially the same trend as our archaic one will, to some extent, come to use the same terms in expressing ideas of the same kind. What is meant here by the same trend will be explicated later. Let us first single out the specific meaning of this important term in the specific context.

The word *tathāgato*, in its widest sense in the early Pāli literature, is used as a designation of "human being" in general. Its logical connection with Buddha's best known definition of the human being as "heir of his owa actions" is obvious, even when it is used as the highest epithet of the Buddha.

What Heidegger wishes to point out is that the "heritage" of a *tathāgato* has not to be understood here as a passive facticity of historically "objectified" social tradition or collective behavior, which in Heidegger's terms would be designated as "inauthentic heritage." Unlike the social study of external history, Dasein in its intimate ripening "never comes back behind its thrownness" in the "situationality" of its world. In other words, in a personal history there is no possibility of statically objective repetition of one and the same situation. This is the basic law of karmic development that both Bergson and Heidegger try to confirm on different levels of their investigations.

On this point, in Heidegger's philosophy, "thrownness" appears as a critical term whose meaning has to be better determined, in view of the fact that it denotes an obvious Christian "cypher" for a karmically determined situation. This historical implication in basic existentialist terminology could even be interpreted by some critics as revealing an apparent deficiency of our analogy, had not Heidegger,

fortunately for us, explained it, in the same context, by an "attribute" synonymous with the basic First Truth of the Buddha, *dukkham*, "anguish" or "worry": "Before we decide too quickly whether Dasein draws its authentic possibilities of existence from thrownness or not, we must assure ourselves that we have a full conception of *thrownness as a basic attribute of care*."

The translation of the German word *Sorge* by "care" may often diminish the full meaning of "Dasein's character" of this fundamental "*existentiale*" or practical category on which Heidegger's entire ontology is built. From our standpoint, "worry" would often seem a preferable translation. Yet Heidegger himself has left no doubt about the meaning of this term. At the end of the first part of *Being and Time*, whose aim it was to "exhibit Care (*Sorge*) as the Being of Dasein," i.e. "of that entity which in each case we ourselves are, and which we call 'man,'" the basic "ontical" meaning of *Sorge* is interpreted (and illustrated by an ancient fable) as "worry" and "grief."[1]

The continuation of the inquiry shows how the karmic phenomenon has to be comprised within the scope of this central theme—how the essence of worry and grief is revealed in response to the "call of conscience." First of all Heidegger's philosophy is no longer a philosophy of *consciousness*, but a philosophy of *conscience*. (The word "consciousness" is never used by Heidegger except in critical disputes, mainly with the Kantians.) Here conscience discloses itself as the awakening call which alone can liberate us from our lost condition (*Verlorenheit*)

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1 Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 196–200.

and thrownness in *avijjā* (ignorance), or metaphysical "nescience." Only in giving heed to the awakening call does "Dasein understand itself with regard to its potentiality-for-being" in man's mindfulness and resoluteness "to take over in his thrownness—right under the eyes of Death—that entity which Dasein is itself, and to take it over wholly," as his karmic load. In Heidegger's words, "Resoluteness is defined as a projecting of oneself upon one's own being-guilty—a projecting which is reticent and ready for anxiety."[1] This is the ultimate moral aspect of the "hesitation in the ripening fruit" of the Bergsonian "creative activity."

The last metaphysical (or better, eschatological) question to which Heidegger's inquiry into the phenomenon of *karma*, or "ripening fruit," arrives, concerns the origin of that strange experience, the primeval phenomenon of all religion: being-guilty.

> [The call of conscience] is the call of care. Being-guilty constitutes the being to which we give the name of "care." In uncanniness Dasein stands together with itself primordially. Uncanniness brings this entity face to face with its *undisguised nullity*, which belongs to the possibility of its own-most potentiality-for-being.[2] ... *The appeal calls back by calling forth:* it calls Dasein *forth* to the possibility of taking over, in existing, even that thrown entity which it is.[3]

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1 *Ibid.*, p. 382.

2 Cf. Nāgārjuna's statement in *Madhyamaka-kārikā*, 24, 14: "For him who admits nullity all appears to be possible. For him who does not admit nullity nothing appears to be possible."

3 *B. T.*, p. 286f.

The statement underlined by me ("*Der Anruf ist vorrufender Rueçkruf*") is the best shortcut definition of *karma* that I can imagine, even if it had to be formulated by the greatest master of Zen art in Japan (an art not at all unknown to Heidegger). The next one is not less pregnant with deep oriental meaning:

> We have seen that care is the basic state of Dasein. The ontological signification of the expression "care" has been expressed in *the definition: ahead-of-itself-being-already-in*[*the world*] as being-alongside entities which we encounter [within-the-world].[1]

Heidegger insists on an implicit consciousness of *karma*[2] in the experience of care, or worry, as Dasein's "understanding of itself in being-guilty."[3] He equally insists on the fact that even "phenomena with which the vulgar interpretation has any familiarity point back to the primordial meaning of the call of conscience when they are understood in a way that is ontologically appropriate" and that "this interpretation, in spite of all its obviousness, is *by no means accidental.*"[4]

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1 *Ibid.*, p. 249.

2 As we shall see in the continuation, for lack of a better word in European tradition, Heidegger uses the word "destiny" (*Schicksal*) in the meaning which comes closest to *karma*. Schopenhauer, who was aware of the specific meaning of this category in Indian philosophy (in Vedānta and Buddhism) could not find a better term in European languages, and made efforts to adjust the meaning of "destiny" to the basic Indian idea of *karma*, An analogous effort is often made by Heidegger.

3 *B. T.*, p. 292.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 294.

And yet, the call of conscience is "a keeping silent.... Only in keeping silent does the conscience call; that is to say, the call comes from the soundlessness of uncanniness, and the Dasein which it summons is called back into the stillness of itself, and called back as something that is to become still."[1] A Japanese student in Heidegger's seminar once interpreted this course of thoughts in terms of a few Zen *kōans*.[2] A follower of Ramana Maharshi in India could do it just as well to Heidegger's full satisfaction.

Having, unfortunately, no better word than "destiny" wherewith to designate the full range of the category of *karma* (though fully conscious of the wide horizon it encompasses), Heidegger brings us ultimately to the following summary of essential questions on this subject:

> But it remains all the more enigmatic in what way this event as destiny is to constitute the whole "connectedness" of Dasein from its birth to its death. How can recourse to resoluteness bring us an enlightenment? Is not each resolution just *one* more single "experience" in the sequence of the whole connectedness of our experience?... Why is it that the question of *how the "connectedness of life"* is constituted finds no adequate and satisfactory answer? Is our investigation overhasty? Does it

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1 *Ibid.*, p. 296.

2 Tsujimura Koichi (University of Kyoto), in 1957. I have published the translation of his seminar paper on "The Nothing in Zen" in my Yugoslav book on Oriental Philosophy (cf. C. Veljacic, *Filozofija Istocnih Naroda*, Vol. II, Zagreb 1958).

not, in the end, hang too much on the answer, without first having tested the legitimacy of the *question*?[1]

Speaking of the problem of re-emergence or "recurrence" of existential situations in their essential dependence on "destiny" in Dasein's "historizing" course, Heidegger does not even indirectly attempt to formulate any hypothesis analogous to "rebirth" (as, e.g. Nietzsche did in his own way) in Indian religious thought (*punarbhava*), though his sensitivity for the "enigmatic" remainder of the problem, as traced above, permits a still closer approach to this complex issue: "Dasein can be reached by the blows of destiny only because *in the depth of its own being Dasein is destiny*... a possibility which it has inherited and yet has chosen."[2]

In suggesting the categorial designation of *karma* for the *whole range of problems concerning the organic connectedness of vital processes whose ripening results in creative activity*, my intention remains far from any attempt to propose any overhasty solution or pattern that could be discovered readymade in the transcendental schematism of some specific type of Asian philosophy or religion, such as Buddhism. Though, for the purpose of the present survey, Buddhism was chosen as the *tertium comparationis*, it was presumed as a well-known fact that the historical origin of the categorial designation of *karma* in Indian philosophy is considerably older than its specific interpretation by the Buddha.

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1 *B. T.*, p 387.
2 *Ibid.*, p. 384.

ACTION AND REACTION IN BUDDHIST TEACHINGS

Leonard A. Bullen

THE whole universe is governed by law, and the unbroken sequence of action and reaction occurs in mental and moral operations just as strictly as in physical processes. In consequence, the Buddha-doctrine emphasises that morally skilful thought, speech, and action bring happiness to the doer at some time or other, while in the same way activities which are morally unskilful give rise to future suffering.

That which determines the moral skill of an activity—whether it be in thought, speech, or bodily action—is the volition or mental purpose which motivates it. Where it is based on generosity, on goodwill, or on selfless motives, it is morally skilful, whereas when the purpose which motivates it springs from greed, hatred, or delusion it is regarded as morally unskilful.

Thus the Buddha-doctrine stresses the need for developing a clear comprehension of the purpose behind every activity at every level, at the levels of thought, of speech, and of bodily action. Some of these activities build up forces within the mind which eventually lead to an increase in well-being, while others, being aimless or unskilful, result in sorrow or frustration. Thus, if you take on almost any form of mental culture, one of your most important aims should be to comprehend more clearly the ultimate purpose behind all these activities.

In this scientific and technological age, you are familiar with the idea that physical effects have causes, that

these effects also become causes in their turn, and that in the ordinary course of physical things there is no room for chance or luck.

But while you accept this invariable sequence of action and reaction in the material realm, you don't always recognise it in the moral sphere. The Buddha-doctrine affirms, however, that the law of cause and effect applies just as invariably and just as exactly in the moral sphere as it does in the physical realm.

This doctrine emphasises the fact that everything in the universe acts according to various laws, and that no being in the universe can set aside or invalidate these laws. It defines five systems of laws.*

The first of these is the law-system which concerns the rise and fall—that is, the growth and decay—of physical phenomena under the action of heat. Secondly, there is the group of laws relating to the generation or growth of vegetation and of the bodies of living beings. The third law-system relates to mental action and reaction, that is, to the action of the will and its results in terms of happiness and suffering. Fourthly, there are the various laws governing the processes of the mind, the laws which are studied and applied by psychologists. Finally, the fifth law-system groups together the multiplicity of laws which relate to physical and mental phenomena in general which are not embraced by the other systems of laws.

Of these five groups, you'll find that it is the third law-system that interests us in the present context. This, the law-system governing the action of the will and

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* *pañca-niyāma.*

its consequences, is only one of the five groups of laws, but it is the one that is most directly connected with your own happiness and sorrow, your own pains and pleasures.

The original Buddhist terms that are sometimes translated as moral and immoral, or as good and bad, may also be rendered as wholesome and unwholesome. However, the terms skilful and unskilful are often used to convey the meanings of the original terms, for a moral or wholesome action is considered to be skilful because it eventually brings enjoyment as a result, and an immoral or unwholesome action, since in time it brings suffering to the doer, is regarded as unskilful.

Any activity — morally good or otherwise — produces, of course, its normal physical result. If you throw a stone through a window it will break the window, whether the motivation behind it be morally skilful or otherwise. The broken window is the normal physical result of the stone-throwing action.

But assuming that the action is motivated by some morally unskilful volition (such as hatred) there will be a mental effect as well. The exercise of hatred will strengthen the hatred which already exists within the mind, just as the exercise of a muscle will strengthen its own tissues. In consequence, hatred will become a more dominant factor in your mental make-up.

Now hatred is one of a group of mental factors which lead to suffering. In some way or other, at some time in the near or distant future, this mental factor will bring you suffering of some kind. The basic cause of the suffering is not the action of throwing the stone, but the hatred or ill-will present in the volitional act of throwing the stone.

Now it is conceivable that the action of throwing the

stone through the window might be motivated, not by hatred, but by some form of good-will. You might, for example, use this action as a means of letting air into a smoke-filled room in a burning house in order to rescue someone in the room. In such circumstances, the unselfishness you exercise in your wholesome volitional action would strengthen your existing mental factor of good-will, and this strengthened mental factor would eventually bring you into circumstances that would yield happiness.

Thus a morally-skilful will-action brings enjoyment at some future time, while an unwholesome volition eventuates in suffering. On the other hand, an action which is not volitional (while of course it gives rise to normal physical effects) does not produce any effects in terms of strengthened mind-factors, and no effects in terms of future happiness and suffering. Where there is no volition there is no moral or immoral element.

The personal will or volition in its primal form is the urge to live, the urge to survive as a self and to assert this selfhood. From this fundamental will to live arise various tendencies, which we know as urges, instincts, and desires, and which are accompanied by emotions.

In Buddhist psychology, the instincts and desires are all regarded as manifestations of the fundamental will to live. This will to live, as a rule, is simply called craving: it is the craving or thirst for personal existence, the craving to live and survive as a self for eternity. But the final freedom from unhappiness can be found only by transcending personal existence.

The thirst for personal existence, rooted as it is in ignorance, is said to be a primary condition on which all suffering depends. Thus the ultimate aim of the practising Buddhist is to overcome craving by the attainment of enlightenment.

This means, of course, to overcome desire, but only insofar as desire is personal or self-centred. It has been said:

> "To start from where we are now and unequivocally let go of every desire would be to die, and to die is not to solve the problem of living." (Huston Smith).

The type of desire to be overcome, then, is what may be called ignorant desire or irrational desire. To quote again:

> "The desires for the basic necessities of life can be satisfied, whereas the selfish desires of the ego can never be allayed. These do not spring from the chemistry of the body but are purely mental constructions—to be more and more, to have more and more: money, possessions, power, prestige, love: to outstrip and outshine all others: to be supreme. It is an impossible dream which, if realised, would not bring in its train either peace or happiness.
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> The greedy, the jealous, the envious can never be satisfied because their dissatisfaction and unhappiness do not spring from any real deprivation of the essentials of life, but from the defects and distortions within their character." ("Metta.")

From all this you'll see that in Buddhism the first and last enemy is considered to be ignorance — ignorance, not in the sense of lack of education, but in the sense of lack of the capacity for true discernment.

You'll appreciate, too, that the final victory to be won is the victory of discernment or enlightenment, and that the principal weapon in the battle is the weapon of right mindfulness in its various forms.

The personal will, then, is an aspect of the will to live, the blind thirst for personal existence which, in human life, expresses itself by way of various instinctive and emotional factors. These collectively constitute the dynamic elements in mental life.

Buddhist psychology adopts a system of classifying the dynamic mind-factors which is somewhat different from the classifications you'll meet in Western psychology. It includes not only instinctive elements but also mental habits developed from the instincts, as well as thought-patterns deliberately cultivated in opposition to the instincts.

This classification generally appears in Buddhist literature as a list of fifty active mental factors (in contrast to the receptive mental factors known as feeling and perception), and together these fifty constitute the dynamic components of the mind. Some of them are directly derived from the fundamental urge towards personal survival, while others are cultivated in opposition to the egotistic tendencies, but all of them help to determine behaviour. For this reason they can be conveniently referred to as the fifty determinants.

There is no need to deal here with the determinants in detail. All that we need to mention in the present context are three which are called the roots of unskilful will-activity and their opposites, or the three roots of skilful volition.

The three roots of unskilful volition are greed, hatred, and delusion, while the opposite three — generosity, goodwill, and discernment — are the roots of skilful will-activity.

Such activity may take the form of bodily action, it may take the form of speech, or it may take the form of thought; but it is the motive behind the activity, the

mental determinant that gives rise to it, that is all-important.

Thus if you think, speak, or act from motives of greed, whether in an obvious and intense form or in a subtle and disguised way, you thereby strengthen greed as a factor in your mental make-up. On the other hand, when you act from generosity you thereby strengthen this determinant in your own mind.

It is the same with hatred and its opposite factor of goodwill. One who allows himself to become angry or irritable immediately builds up in his own mind the factor of hatred, whereas when he makes an effort to be tolerant and patient with irritating people or annoying things he increases the mental factor of goodwill within his mind.

Again, if you think, speak, or act in a self-centred way, you are allowing yourself to be motivated by delusion, for delusion in the present context means primarily the delusion of self, together with the self-deceit and feelings of superiority and inferiority that go along with it. As a result you become more and more governed by this delusion, for it becomes a stronger determinant than before.

When on the other hand you endeavour to discern the true nature of the illusory self and to break free from self-deceit, you strengthen the opposite factor of discernment. Thus discernment — or non-delusion, as it is often called — becomes a stronger determinant of your subsequent thought-processes.

Now the morally-unskilful determinants that exist as parts of your mental make-up, as you can see, retard your progress towards the final liberation; thus we can speak of them as the "retardants."

In the same way, you can see that the morally-skilful

mind-factors help you in your progress towards the final liberation; and therefore we can call them also the "progressants."

You'll see from this that from the exercise of a particular determinant there is an immediate effect within the mind. This immediate effect is a strengthening of that determinant, which of course makes it easier to operate it in the future.

However, there is more to it than that. Each of the determinants that we have been discussing, each of the active or dynamic factors that help to make up the mind as a whole, can be visualised as an accumulation of energy within the mind. You can regard each particular determinant — generosity, for example, on the one hand, or greed on the other — as an accumulation of a specific sort of force within the mind, and each such force will eventually bring about its own kind of experience at some time in the future.

This future experience is the result of the original will-activity — the reaction to the original action. The volitional action in the first place causes an accumulation of a specific mental force, and this force in its turn brings about its reaction in terms of enjoyment or suffering. The accumulated force, therefore, can be termed a "reaction-force."

An accumulation of the reaction-force of generosity will at some time give rise to enjoyment of some kind, just as the accumulation of energy within an electrical torch battery may at some time give rise to light. The energy within the battery can give rise to light only when the conditions are favourable: there must be an electric-light bulb, and the switch of the torch must be turned on. The current can then flow through the filament, which then glows with light. In the process —

unless the current is switched off or unless some replenishment of the battery takes place — the energy will be eventually completely discharged.

In much the same way, the accumulation of the reaction-force of generosity can give rise to enjoyment only when the environment provides suitable conditions; and, until the requisite environmental conditions come about, the reaction-force remains in storage, so to speak. When the suitable conditions do eventually appear, this particular reaction-force will give rise to the enjoyment of happy experiences, and in the process the accumulation will become less and less until completely discharged, unless of course it is replenished by further generosity.

In general, some sort of replenishment may be going on while the discharge is taking place. If, whilst you're enjoying happy experiences you continue to exercise your generosity, then the accumulation of this particular reaction-force will be replenished even while it is being discharged. It is then like a water-tank from which you're drawing off water but which is being replenished by rain at the same time.

However, if whilst enjoying the fruits of previous generous actions you become selfish and greedy, then your mind is like a water-tank during a drought: as the water is all drained off and never replenished, so your accumulation of happiness-producing reaction-force is drained off until fully discharged.

As with the mind-factor we know as generosity, so with its opposite determinant, greed. When one gives way to self-desire in any form, the accumulation of the reaction-force of greed is increased in one's mind. When at some future time the external conditions are suitable, this accumulation will discharge by way of suffering. During suffering, one may give way to further adverse states of

mind, such as self-pity, and this will add to the accumulated reaction-force. On the other hand, one may develop patience and other favourable qualities of mind, and thus this particular sorrow-producing accumulation will eventually be fully discharged.

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While each type of mind-factor is a particular reaction-force, in general we can group them into two broad classes — firstly, reaction-forces that lead to happiness, and secondly, reaction-forces that bring about suffering. Often these are spoken of respectively as merit and demerit, and thus we say that while one person who has a great stock of merit will enjoy great happiness in the future, another who has stored up much demerit will have to endure great suffering at some later time.

The reaction-forces that exist within the mind are stored, so to speak, below the consciously-accessible level of the mind. The subconscious aspect of the mind, in Buddhist terminology, is called the life-subcurrent. It is the current of mental energy which exists below the threshold of consciousness, and it is thus the repository of the resultants of all past actions and past experiences.

This life-subcurrent may for convenience be called the store-house of the residual reaction-forces from all previous will-actions; but you mustn't take the idea of a storehouse too literally. The experiences in our lives are not in any real sense stored anywhere in the same way that water is stored in a tank, any more than apples are stored in an apple tree.

You don't believe, of course, that apples are stored in an apple tree. Given the right external conditions of climate, soil, and nutrition, the forces within the

apple-tree will cause apples to grow on its branches; and in the same way, given the right external conditions, the forces within the life-subcurrent will project or precipitate experiences in accordance with the nature of these forces.

Wind is not stored somewhere in the air, but under the right conditions of heat or cold, the air will expand or contract and give rise to wind. In the same way, fire is not stored in the head of a match, but under the right conditions of friction the match will give rise to fire.

Again, sound is not stored in a gramophone record; but given the necessary conditions — when placed on a turntable of a record-player — the formation of the record gives rise to sound.

Thus the experiences of life, together with their corresponding happiness and suffering, are not stored in a literal sense in the life-subcurrent, but under the right conditions these events will develop as the apples develop on the branches of the apple-tree.

Thus you can see that no reaction-force can take effect unless there exist suitable conditions for its operation or discharge. As the suitable conditions may not arise within your present life time, it follows that you may not reap the enjoyment and suffering resulting from these activities within your present life-time.

You can see, then, that at the end of your present life-time there will exist many undischarged reaction-forces, and for many of your actions the appropriate reactions will not have occurred as yet. In other words, when you die there'll be an unexpended residue of reaction-forces both progressant and retardant which have had no opportunities to discharge during your present life-time.

What happens to these unexpended or undischarged

reaction-forces? When you die, your body will disintegrate, of course; but the Buddha-doctrine teaches that various components of the mind survive in the form of a life-current, a current of mental energy, and that this current of energy consists of undischarged reaction-forces. This is what the life-current actually is, an ever-changing stream of reaction-forces, and at your death this life-current will initiate a new life and thus bring about the birth of a new being.

The new being is you yourself, being an unbroken continuation of the life-current. The new being inherits all the reaction-forces — all the potentialities for happiness, for suffering, and for further volitional activity — from the old being, who is also you yourself. From the point of view of continuity, the new being is the same as the old being (although in another body) for the continuity of the life-current is not broken in any way by the phase of death and rebirth.

You've seen that the moral law of action and reaction, as set out in the Buddha-doctrine, states that we each experience happiness and suffering in exact proportion to the moral and immoral qualities of our past activities. You've seen also that this same doctrine teaches that moral and immoral activities build up forces within the mind, and these forces — reaction-forces, we have called them — eventually precipitate experiences of happiness and suffering.

This is perhaps an oversimplification of the matter, for in more exact terms the Buddha-doctrine says that every cause has a number of effects, while every effect arises from a number of causes. In other words, nothing arises from only one cause, and nothing gives rise to only one effect: everything is interwoven with many other things. However, the main point is that morally-

skilful activity brings enjoyment of some kind in its train while morally-unskilful activity brings suffering.

The concept of the reaction-force enables us to see how the Buddhist idea of rebirth differs from non-Buddhist beliefs in reincarnation, for what is reborn in Buddhist teachings is a life-current, not a soul in the ordinary sense.

This brings us to the matter of the time at which a particular reaction-force (generated by a specific will-activity) operates. If you rob a bank and bungle your escape, you'll be caught immediately and soon punished. If you plan your escape well and make a success of it, but nevertheless leave a few clues, you may not be caught for five years, but when you are eventually punished you'll be able to see the connection between the cause (your immoral action) and the effect in the shape of punishment. However, you may execute the robbery and your escape so well that you will evade suspicion and punishment within your present life-time, and the punishment (a convenient word in the present context but not a very exact one) may not come until several life-times afterwards. Then you won't be able to see the connection between cause and effect.

Here again we are over-simplifying the position by talking as if one cause brings about only one effect, but the question at issue is the time at which a particular reaction-force operates.

As we have already seen, a reaction-force cannot discharge its energy until the conditions appropriate to its operation are suitable; and by conditions we mean both the external or environmental conditions as well as conditions within the mind itself. That means that if you carry out a morally unskilful activity — such as a robbery — during a time when you are reaping the

benefits of a past series of morally-skilful actions, you may not reap the adverse effects of the immoral act until the opposite kind of reaction-force has run its course. You say you're enjoying a run of good luck, and this is true enough so long as you realise that good luck is really the fruition of past good activity.

Similarly if you carry out some act of generosity you can expect the enjoyment of some sort of happiness as a result, but this may not be in the near future or even in your present lifetime. You may perhaps be in the midst of a long period of frustration and failure, the effect of some past phase of morally-unskilful activity whose reaction-force must first run its course and exhaust its energy.

Thus the Buddha-doctrine teaches that some actions are immediately-effective, since their resulting reaction-forces are discharged soon after their inception; but many will-actions are remotely-effective, for the reaction-forces they generate may not produce their reactions in terms of happiness or suffering until many life-times afterwards.

The effects of weak volitional actions may be neutralised by stronger reaction-forces of an opposite nature. Thus, if a weak retardant reaction-force is opposed by a stronger one of a progressant nature, then the stronger may render the weaker ineffective, losing some of its own energy in the process.

This does not apply, however, to a strong reaction-force generated by a very definite morally-skilful or a very definite morally-unskilful activity. The reaction-forces built into the mental structure by such activities can never be neutralised, and even though the suitable conditions for their discharge don't arise until many life-times afterwards they invariably become effective at

some time. They are therefore called indefinitely-effective reaction-forces, and whilst dormant they are classed as reserve reaction-forces.

In contrast to indefinitely-effective reaction-force, there is a kind called weighty reaction-force, which is generated either by very serious retardant will-activity or else by very exalted states of mind. The operation of weighty reaction-force, the Buddha-doctrine states, takes precedence over all other kinds.

You can see that, however long may be the time-lag between the cause and its effect, the end-result of volitional activity is inevitable.

At first sight you might take this to imply that the present and the future are completely and inflexibly governed by the past, and that you can experience only what your past actions have determined for you.

This fatalistic view, however, is really not a part of the Buddhist doctrine of cause and effect. It is true that you are largely — very largely — influenced by reaction-forces generated by your past volitional activities, but they are not the only forces in the mind: there is also the possibility of present volition. The volition or will exists as a force within the mind, just as attention and one-pointedness exist as forces within the mind. We're not entering into any discussion on free will, beyond mentioning that everything we do is conditioned by internal and external factors; but we must recognise that the volition does exist in the sense that it consists of the force of desire directed towards an objective.

Since the volition does exist as desire-force directed towards an objective, we can see that we can use this volition to handle the present results of past activity. By "handling" the present results of past activity I don't mean that we can cancel these results; I mean that we

can utilise our present experiences to help us to make progress, or we can let these same experiences — pleasant as well as unpleasant — retard our progress. But to handle our present experiences — to utilise them as a means of making progress — we must develop the necessary moral skill.

Although the present is conditioned by the past as the future is conditioned by the present, the future is not unalterably fixed by the past, for the future is dependent also on what we do with our present powers of volition. In many circumstances, it is true that there may be little or no scope for a constructive or progressant course of action, for the pressure of reaction-forces from the past may be too great and the present volition too weak.

However, in general, even if you have no choice of external action, at least it's possible to regulate your mental and moral responses to a situation, even to a slight extent. Thus, under a difficult set of conditions that you are unable to alter, you can at least exercise patience and tolerance, facing the situation without allowing it completely to overwhelm you.

In this way, whilst going through a difficult period of painful reaction-force results, you're at least building up within your mental structure new progressant reaction-forces, thus using the situation to its best advantage.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT KAMMA RESULT

Nina van Gorkom

Part I

A. WHEN people have an unpleasant experience they are inclined to ask: "Why did this have to happen to me?" One might be very good and kind to other people and yet receive unkind words in return. Could you tell me whether it is true that good deeds will bring a good result. I sometimes doubt it.

B. People ask this question because they do not always understand the reason why they have to suffer in life. It is difficult to know which cause in the past brings about this or that unpleasant experience at the present moment.

The Buddha said that everything which happens must have a cause. When we suffer it must have a cause either in the far past, or in the past which is nearer to the present moment. If we know how causes and effects in our life are interrelated, it will help us to have the right attitude towards unpleasant experiences and towards sorrow.

A. Are the bad deeds one did in the past the cause of unpleasant experiences at the present moment? But the deeds which are already done belong to the past, how can those deeds bring a result later on?

B. In order to have a deeper understanding how cause and effect are interrelated it is necessary to know

first what motivates good and bad deeds; moreover we should know how we accumulate wholesome tendencies in doing wholesome deeds and how we accumulate unwholesome tendencies in doing unwholesome deeds.

A. Why do you use the words "wholesome" and "unwholesome" instead of good and bad?

B. The words "good" and "bad" generally include a moral judgment. The Buddha never spoke about sin, he would not judge people as "good" or "bad."

An unwholesome deed is a deed which brings harm to oneself or to other people, either at the moment the unwholesome deed is done or later on. Whereas wholesome is that which will lead to happiness. Unwholesome is in Pali "akusala", and wholesome is in Pali "kusala."

With unwholesome mental states or "akusala cittas" one might perform unwholesome deeds or "akusala Kamma" and with wholesome mental states or "kusala cittas" one might perform wholesome deeds or "kusala Kamma."

A. What is a citta, is it a soul or "self" which directs the deeds? Is it under one's control whether one will have a kusala citta which can perform kusala Kamma, or is it beyond control?

B. A citta is not a soul or "self." There are many different cittas which succeed one another, there is not one citta which lasts. Each citta which arises falls away immediately. We can experience at one moment that we have an akusala citta. However this does not last, it falls away again. At another moment we might experience that we have a kusala citta, this does not last either, it falls away again. There can be only one citta

at a time, we cannot have an akusala citta at the same moment as a kusala citta. Cittas replace one another continuously. How can we take something for "self" if it does not even last for a second?

Being without the Saint's perfect mindfulness, it is not in our power to have wholesome cittas whenever we want to. People would like to be good the whole day but they cannot have kusala cittas continuously; it is beyond their control.

We cannot help it that we like certain people and certain things, and that we dislike other people and things. As unliberated worldlings (puthujjana) we cannot always control our thoughts. Not two people can have the same thoughts, even if they think of the same object, for example of a country where they both have been. One's thoughts depend on many conditions, for example experiences and karmic accumulations in the past, on the object which presents itself at the present moment, on good or bad friends, or on the food one has eaten.

As, generally, it is not in one's power to have a certain citta at a certain moment, we cannot say that there is a "self" which directs our deeds. Our actions depend on our karmic accumulations in the past and on many other conditions.

A. I notice that some people always seem to do the wrong thing in life, whereas for other people it is not difficult to be generous and honest. What is the reason that people are so different?

B. People are so different because of different karmic accumulations in the past. People who are angry very often, accumulate anger. When the accumulation of anger is strong enough they will perform unwholesome

actions (akusala kamma) through speech or deeds. Everybody has both unwholesome and wholesome accumulations.

A. Is it right that good and bad deeds performed in the past are never lost, that they continue to have influence in the present moment?

B. That is generally true.* All one's experiences in the past, and all one's good and bad deeds may exert a certain influence on each citta. The citta which arises at the present moment adds a new accumulation to what has been accumulated already. If the citta of the present moment is an akusala citta, there is a new accumulation of unwholesomeness; if the citta of the present moment is a kusala citta there is a new accumulation of wholesomeness.

Therefore cittas which arise are not only conditioned by the object one can perceive through eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body or mind, but they are conditioned as well by one's accumulations of experiences in the past. Our experiences of the past are beyond control. Cittas which arise at the present moment are conditioned by the object which presents itself at the present moment, by our accumulations of the past and by many other conditions.

Cittas are beyond control, they are, as the Buddha

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* Deeds, however, may also be "ineffectual" (*ahosi-kamma*) "if the circumastances required for the taking place of the Karma-result are missing, or if, through the preponderance of counteractive Karma and their being too weak, they are unable to produce any result" (Nyanatiloka, Buddhist Dictionary). — (Editor)

said, "Anattā." When the Buddha said that everything is "Anattā," he meant that one cannot have power over anything at all. Everything in our life occurs because there are conditions, and everything falls away again.

Good deeds and bad deeds which we performed will bring their result accordingly. The result will take place when it is the right time, when there are the right conditions for the result to take place. It is not in anyone's power to have the result arise at this or at that moment. Cause and result are beyond control, they are "Anattā".

A. I understand that akusala cittas which perform akusala Kamma are cause and that those cannot bring a pleasant result, they are certain to bring an unpleasant result. Whereas kusala cittas which perform kusala Kamma will bring a good result.

Each cause will bring its result accordingly. Could you explain how the result is brought about? Is it a punishment or a reward for one's deeds?

B. There is no question of punishment or reward because there is no one who punishes or rewards. It is the course of nature that one reaps what one has sown.

Accumulated akusala Kamma produces at the right time a citta which experiences an unpleasant object; this citta is the result of a bad deed one did in the past. Accumulated kusala Kamma produces at the right time a citta which experiences a pleasant object; this citta is the result of a good deed one did in the past. The citta which is the result is called a "Vipāka-citta". There will be different results at different moments. For most people it is not possible to find out which deed of the past it is that produces the result one receives at the

present moment. However, it is of no use to know in detail what happened in the past, we should only be concerned about the present moment. It is enough to know that akusala Kamma produces an unpleasant result and that kusala Kamma produces a pleasant result. The Vipāka is produced either shortly afterwards or later on.

We cannot blame other people for an unpleasant result we receive, an unpleasant result is the consequence of our own bad deeds.

A. How often during the day is there Vipāka? Is there Vipāka at this moment?

B. Yes, there is Vipāka now, because you are seeing and hearing. Every time you are seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and feeling through bodily contact there is Vipāka. All impressions which we experience through the five senses are Vipāka.

A. How can I find out whether there is pleasant or unpleasant Vipāka? I am seeing right now but I have no pleasant or unpleasant feeling about it.

B. It is not always possible to find out whether the object is pleasant or unpleasant. Sometimes we are so used to certain pleasant or unpleasant objects that we do not realise whether they are pleasant or unpleasant.*

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* There are also numerous sense—impressions which cause a neutral, or indifferent, feeling (called in Pali: neither-pleasant-nor-unpleasant). They are, of course, likewise, Karma-results (Vipāka) but the perception of them is not associated with pleasant or unpleasant feeling and, hence, also not with likes or dislikes. — (Editor).

When we see or hear we cannot always find out whether there is kusala Vipāka or akusala Vipāka. When we feel pain or when we are sick we can be sure that there is akusala Vipāka.

The moment of a Vipāka-citta is very short, it falls away immediately.

When we see, we first receive colour through the eyes, we only see colour. Then we like or dislike it, we recognize it, we think about it. Vipāka are only the cittas which receive colour through the eyes. Like or dislike and thinking about the object are no longer Vipāka, those functions are performed by other cittas which are akusala cittas or kusala cittas. The cittas which like or dislike and the cittas which think about the object are not results, but they are causes which will again bring about a result.

All cittas succeed one another so rapidly that there only seems to be one citta. We are inclined to think that like or dislike and thinking are still Vipāka, but that is a delusion.

A. Does everyone receive both akusala Vipāka and kusala Vipāka?

B. Everyone has accumulated both unwholesome deeds and wholesome deeds, therefore everyone will receive both akusala Vipāka and kusala Vipāka.

However, we can develop understanding of cause and effect and this helps us to take the right attitude towards the events of our life, even when we have unpleasant experiences. For instance, when we understand what is Vipāka we will be less inclined to feel sorry for ourselves or to blame other people when there is akusala Vipāka. If we feel sorry for ourselves or if we blame other people,

there is a new accumulation of unwholesomeness and this will bring us more sorrow in the future.

A. But I cannot help disliking unpleasant Vipāka, how can I change my attitude?

B. You can change your attitude by understanding what is Vipāka and what is no longer Vipāka. It is very important to know that the moment we feel dislike or regret is not the same as the moment of Vipāka. People are inclined to think that the dislike which arises after the Vipāka is still Vipāka. When they say: "This is just Vipāka" they think of their unpleasant feelings about the Vipāka as well. If they do not really know what is Vipāka and what is no longer Vipāka but akusala cittas, or akusala Kamma, they accumulate unwholesomeness all through their lives. By ignorance, by not knowing when the citta is akusala, one accumulates unwholesomeness.

A. I am inclined to blame people who speak harsh words to me, even when I am so kind to them. Are those people not the cause that I receive unpleasant Vipāka?

B. We are inclined to think in this way if we haven't yet understood what Vipāka is.

Let us analyse what is really happening when we hear harsh words spoken by someone else. When those words are produced by akusala cittas it is an unpleasant object we receive through our ears. It is not really we who receive the unpleasant object, but the Vipāka-citta receives the unpleasant object through the ears. The Vipāka-citta is the result of akusala Kamma performed in the past. All cittas are beyond control and thus Vipāka-cittas are beyond control as well. This was the right

moment that the akusala Kamma performed in the past, caused Vipāka-cittas to arise at the present moment. The person who speaks harsh words to us is not the cause of akusala Vipāka, the cause is within ourselves. Someone who speaks harsh words to us is only one of the many conditions for Vipāka-cittas to arise. Our own accumulated akusala Kamma is the real cause of akusala Vipāka.

A. It seems to me that Kamma is a fate which directs our lives.

B. Kamma is not an unchangeable fate outside ourselves, Kamma are our own unwholesome and wholesome deeds which we have accumulated. When it is the right moment, Kamma will produce its result in the form of Vipāka-cittas.

A. If a third person would pass and if he would hear harsh words spoken to me, he might have akusala Vipāka as well, although the words are not directed to him, is that right?

B. If it is the right moment for him to have akusala Vipāka, he will receive the unpleasant object as well, he might have akusala Vipāka through ears, he might share the same unpleasant object. The fact whether the words are addressed to him or to someone else does not make any difference.

A. Is it right that the Vipāka might not be so unpleasant for him as for the person to whom the harsh words are addressed?

B. Is it necessary to have aversion every time we hear an unpleasant sound?

A. No, it is not necessary.

B. Aversion has nothing to do with Vipāka. Considering whether the words are addressed to oneself or to another person and the unpleasant feelings about it are no longer Vipāka. If we feel aversion there are akusala cittas, conditioned by our accumulations of aversion and our experiences in the past. There are some short moments of Vipāka only at the moment we receive the sound, before the unpleasant feelings arise. Kamma conditioned the Vipāka-cittas right at that moment. Kamma is the real cause of Vipāka, not this or that person. If we want to have the right understanding of Vipāka, we should not think in terms of "I", "those people," and "harsh words," we should only think of cittas.

If we think of people and if we consider the fact whether harsh words are addressed to ourselves or to someone else, we will not see the truth. If we think in terms of cittas and if we understand conditions for cittas, we will come nearer to the truth. Someone who speaks harsh words has his own accumulations and at that moment there are conditions for him to speak harsh words. It is not really important whether he addresses those words to us or to someone else.

If we understand Vipāka we will take the unpleasant experiences of life less seriously. It will be of much help to us and to other people if we try to understand ourselves very well, if we know different cittas arising at different moments. After we have had akusala Vipāka we should try not to think much about it. When we think about Vipāka it belongs already to the past, it is therefore better to forget about it immediately.

A. I still do not understand why I have to receive

harsh words in return for my kindness. How can the result of kusala Kamma be akusala Vipāka?

B. This could never happen. Kusala Kamma has kusala Vipāka as its result, however the good result might arise later on. It is not possible to tell at which moments akusala Kamma and kusala Kamma produce results. Akusala Vipāka is not the result of one's kindness, it is the result of one's accumulated akusala Kamma. Kindness will certainly bring a good result, but that might take place later on.

A. I cannot help feeling sorry for myself when there is akusala Vipāka. What can I do to prevent the accumulation of more unwholesomeness?

B. We cannot easily stop akusala cittas from arising. They arise very closely after the Vipāka, they arise before we know it. We cannot do anything about them, they are "Anattā". However we will be able to see things more in their true perspective if we understand that the akusala cittas which arise after the Vipāka are not the same as the Vipāka-cittas and that they have conditions different from the conditions for the Vipāka-cittas.

If we understand that feeling sorry for ourselves and blaming other people is done by akusala cittas and that in this way we accumulate more unwholesomeness, we will be less inclined to do so. If we understand that we cannot at this moment do anything about the Vipāka which has its cause in the past, we will be able to forget about it more easily. At the moment we are aware of akusala Vipāka, it has fallen away already, it belongs to the past.

Life is too short to waste energy in worrying about things which already belong to the past. It is better to

accumulate kusala Kamma in doing wholesome deeds.

In the Samyutta Nikāya (Chapter III, Kosala) old age and death are compared with a great mountain which moves along very fast and which threatens to destroy everything. The Buddha asks King Pasenadi what he thinks is best to do as life is so very short. The King answers as follows: "Since old age and death, Lord, are rolling in upon me, what else can I do save live righteously and justly, and to work good and meritorious deeds."

Part II

A. I understand that the active side of our life consists of unwholesome states of mind or akusala cittas and wholesome states of mind or kusala cittas. Akusala cittas can perform unwholesome deeds and kusala cittas can perform wholesome deeds. All through one's life one accumlates both unwholesomeness and wholesomeness.

There are other cittas which are the result of one's deeds: those are called Vipāka-cittas. The result of unwholesome deeds or akusala Kamma is akusala Vipāka, the result of wholesome deeds or kusala Kamma is kusala Vipāka. Vipāka is the passive side of our life, we undergo Vipāka. Seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and feeling through body-contact are Vipāka.

I can understand this, because sense-impressions are impressions which one undergoes. The cittas which think about those impressions, and which like or dislike them, are no longer result or Vipāka, they are cause. They are akusala or kusala cittas. However I still have doubts whether every time I see there is Vipāka, there is result of akusala Kamma or kusala Kamma I performed in the past. Could you prove this to me?

B. This cannot be proved in theory. Only in experiencing the truth one can know the truth.

There are three kinds of wisdom. The first kind of wisdom is thinking about the realities of life as impermanence, sickness, death, etc. The second kind of wisdom is studying the Buddhist teachings. The third kind of wisdom is the experience of the truth.

The first and the second kind of wisdom are necessary, but they are still theory, they are not yet the realisation of the truth. If one accepts the Buddha's teachings because they seem to be reasonable or if one accepts them on the authority of the Buddha, one will never have the deep understanding which comes from the experience of the truth. Only this understanding can eliminate all doubts.

In the "Kālāma-sutta" of the Anguttara Nikāya we read that the Buddha told people to find out for themselves whether something is true; "When you know for yourselves: these things are unprofitable, these things are blameworthy, these things are censured by the wise; these things, when performed and undertaken, conduce to loss and sorrow, then indeed do you reject them, Kālāmas."

The Buddha told them to refrain from bad deeds because they found by their own experience that doing bad deeds leads to sorrow, and doing good deeds leads to happiness.

We have to find the truth ourselves, in experiencing it in daily life. Being aware of all realities of daily life is the third kind of wisdom.

In the practice of Vipassanā or "Insight meditation," we learn to understand all realities of daily life. in being aware of them at the moment they occur. We learn to be aware of what happens at the present moment. We will

know what seeing, hearing, thinking etc. really are if we are aware of those realities at the moment they occur. Only the present moment can give us truth, not the past or the future. We cannot experience now the cittas we had in the past, we cannot experience the cittas which performed akusala Kamma or kusala Kamma in the past. We can only experience cittas of the present moment. We can experience that some cittas are akusala, some are kusala, and some cittas are neither, they have different functions. If we learn to experience the cittas of the present moment, we will gradually be able to see realities more clearly. If we realise "Enlightenment", or the experience of Nibbāna, all doubts about realities will be eliminated. Then we shall see the truth.

A. I would like to be enlightened in order to know the truth.

B. If you only have wishful thinking about Nibbāna, you will never attain it. The Path leading to Nibbāna is knowing the present moment. Only if we know the present moment we will be able to eliminate ignorance about realities, we will be able to eliminate the idea of "self", to which we are still clinging.

We should not cling to a result which might take place in the future. We should try to know the present moment and we should not speculate about the future.

A. Is it not possible for me to know whether seeing and hearing at this moment is akusala Vipāka or kusala Vipāka?

B. Sometimes you could find out. For instance hearing is kusala Vipāka when the sound is produced by kusala cittas. Someone who speaks to you with compassion,

produces the sound with kusala cittas. If you receive that sound you have kusala Vipāka. Many times it is not possible for us to know whether there is akusala Vipāka or kusala Vipāka. Moreover it is not of great use to know this, because we cannot do anything about our own Vipāka.

It is enough to know that akusala Kamma brings about akusala Vipāka, and that kusala Kamma brings about kusala Vipāka. It is important to remember that Vipāka is caused by our own Kamma, that the cause of Vipāka is within ourselves and not outside ourselves. In the Anguttara Nikāya (Tika Nipāta) we read that akusala Kamma is done by ourselves: "That evil action of yours was not done by mother, father, brother, sister, friends and comrades: not by kinsmen, devas, recluses and brahmins. By yourself alone was it done. It is just you that will experience the fruit thereof."

It is not important to know exactly at which moment there is akusala Vipāka or kusala Vipāka. However it is most important to know exactly at which moments there is Vipāka and at which moments we perform akusala Kamma or kusala Kamma. The moments we perform akusala Kamma and kusala Kamma will condition our future.

A. In order to know how and when one accumulates akusala Kamma and kusala Kamma one should know more about the cittas which perform Kamma. I notice that the Buddha always spoke about cittas, in order to help people to have more understanding about their life and in order to encourage them to perform kusala Kamma. Therefore I think that all through one's life one should develop a deeper understanding about cittas. Could you give me a definition of a citta?

B. It is not possible to give a definition which will explain to you what a citta is. You should experience cittas yourself in order to know them. There are so many different types of cittas at different moments that it is impossible to give one definition for all of them. The most general definition is: it knows something. A citta is not like the table which does not know anything. A citta which sees knows colour, a citta which hears knows sound, a citta which thinks knows many different objects.

A. Why are seeing and hearing cittas? You explained before that seeing is not thinking, but only the receiving of light or colour through eye sense and that hearing is the receiving of sound through ear sense. Are those not merely physical processes instead of cittas which know something?

B. Eye sense and ear sense in themselves are not cittas, they are physical organs. But eye sense and ear sense are conditions for cittas to arise. There is a citta whenever an object, as for example colour or sound, is received by something which knows the object.

We should try to be aware of the citta of the present moment if we want to know what a citta is. We should be aware of the seeing or the hearing which occurs right now.

Many people who are brought up in the occidental culture do not understand why it is not possible to give a clear definition of a citta, and of everything the Buddha taught. They want to prove things in theory. This is not the way to find the truth. One should experience the truth in order to know it.

A. I still think of a citta as a mind which directs seeing, hearing, thinking, etc. How can I find out that there is not a "self" which directs everything?

B. We can only find this out in being aware of different cittas. Thus we will experience that we cannot direct our thoughts. We are absentminded when we do not want to be so, many odd thoughts arise, inspite of ourselves. Where is the "self" which can direct our thoughts?

There is one citta at a time, which arises and falls away completely, to be followed by the next citta which is no longer the same. There is not one citta which stays. For example seeing-consciousness is one citta, but hearing-consciousness is another citta.

A. I don't understand why those functions are performed by different cittas. Why can there not be one citta which stays and which performs different functions and why is it not possible that different functions are performed at the same time? I can see, hear and think at the same time.

B. Seeing occurs when colour contacts the eye-sense. Recognizing it or thinking about it occurs afterwards. Seeing is not performed by the same cittas as thinking about what one saw, seeing has different conditions. Hearing has again different conditions. Thinking about what one heard has conditions which are different from the conditions for hearing-consciousness.

You would not be able to notice that seeing and hearing are different if those functions would be performed by one single citta at the same time. In that case you would only receive one impression instead of several impressions. We experience seeing and hearing as different impressions, even when they seem to occur at the same time. They have different places of origin and different objects. Seeing and hearing have to occur at different moments, although the moments can be so close

that it seems one moment.

Thinking about what one just saw occurs after the seeing-consciousness, thinking about what one just heard occurs after the hearing-consciousness. Seeing-consciousness occurs at a moment different from the moment the hearing-consciousness occurs. Therefore thinking about what one saw cannot arise at the same moment as thinking about what one heard. Thinking is done by many different cittas which succeed one another.

When we have learned to be more keenly aware of the citta which arises at the present moment, we will notice that seeing and hearing arise alternately, at different moments. We will notice that there is not one long moment of thinking but that there are different moments of thinking. We will notice that thinking is very often interrupted by moments of seeing and hearing which are again conditions for new thoughts. We will find out how much our thoughts depend on different experiences of the past, on unwholesome and wholesome tendencies we have accumulated, on the objects we see and hear and on many other conditions.

A. You said that all cittas are beyond control, that they are "Anattā", Akusala cittas and kusala cittas depend on one's accumulations. It is not in any one's power that they arise. You said that Vipāka-cittas are "anattā" as well.

Sometimes it seems that I can have power over Vipāka, that it is in my power to have kusala Vipāka through ears. Whenever I wish to hear a pleasant sound, I can put on a record of classical music on my grammophone.

B. You put the record on the grammophone because

you know the conditions for the pleasant sound. Everything happens when there are the right conditions for it. It is not possible to let anything happen without conditions. When there is fire we use water to extinguish it. We cannot order the fire to be extinguished. We don't have to tell the water to extinguish the fire, the water has the characteristic that it can extinguish fire. Without the right conditions we would not be able to do anything.

With regard to the beautiful music which you can play on the grammophone, there have to be many different conditions for this pleasant sound. And even when there is this pleasant sound, you have no power over the kusala Vipāka cittas. If you really could direct them, you could make them arise at any moment, even without the grammophone. We should remember that the music itself is not Vipāka, only the cittas which receive the pleasant object through ears are Vipāka. Can we really have power over those cittas?

There are many conditions which have to co-operate so that the Vipāka can arise. You have to have ear sense. Did you create your own ear sense? You received ear sense at birth, this also is a result for which you did not ask. Moreover, do you think that you can have kusala Vipāka as long as you wish and whenever you wish? When you have developed a keener awareness you will notice that the kusala Vipāka and the other types of cittas arise alternately.

The Vipāka citas are followed by cittas wsich are no longer Vipāka, for example when you like the music which you hear, and when you think about it. Or there might be cittas which think about many different things, perhaps with aversion, or with worry. Or there might be thoughts of kindness towards other people.

The kusala Vipāka will not only be interrupted by

akusala cittas and kusala cittas, but by akusala Vipāka as well. There is akusala Vipāka when there are loud noises outside, when the telephone rings loudly, or when one feels the sting of a mosquito. There cannot be kusala Vipāka at the moment there is an akusala citta, a kusala cittta or akusala Vipāka.

If you could let kusala Vipāka arise at will, you could have it without interruption, whenever you wish. This is not possible. Moreover if it would not be the right time for you to have any kusala Vipāka, you would not be able to receive a pleasant object: the grammophone would be broken, or something else would happen so that you could not have kusala Vipāka.

A. Is it not due to accident if the grammophone would be broken?

B. The Buddha taught that everything happens because of conditions. There is no accident. You will understand reality more deeply if you think of cittas, and if you do not think of conventional terms like grammophone, this person or that person. Vipāka are the cittas, not the grammophone or the sound in itself. The grammophone is only one of the many conditions for Vipāka. The real cause of Vipāka is not an accident, or a cause outside ourselves, the real cause is within ourselves.

Can you find another cause for akusala Vipāka but your own akusala Kamma, and for kusala Vipāka but your own kusala Kamma?

A. That is right, I can find no other cause. However I still do not understand how akusala cittas which performed akusala Kamma in the past and kusala cittas which performed kusala Kamma in the past can produce Vipāka later on.

B. It is not possible to understand how the events of our life are interrelated, without studying cittas in detail and without knowing and experiencing the cittas which arise at the present moment. When one can experience what the cittas of the present moment really are, one will be able to understand more about the past.

When the Buddha became enlightened he saw how everything which happens in life has many conditions and he saw how things which happen depend on one another.

The "Dependent Origination", in Pali "Paticcasamuppāda", is very difficult to grasp at once. In the Samyuṭṭa Nikāya (Chapter VI, Brahmasuttas) we read that the "Dependent Origination" is hard to accept for those who are not detached: "for a race devoting itself to the things to which it clings, devoted thereto, delighting therein, this were a matter hard to perceive, to wit that this is conditioned by that — that all that happens is by way of cause."

At first the Buddha had no inclination to teach Dhamma yet, as he knew that a doctrien which is "against the stream of common thought" will not be accepted by people who are not detached. The Sutta continues:

"Going against the stream,
"Deep, subtle, fine, and hard to see,
"Unseen't will be by passion's slaves,
"Cloaked in the murk (of ignorance)."

However the Buddha decided to teach Dhamma for the sake of those who would be able to understand it. Do you still have doubts about the accumulation of deeds?

A. Is the deed you see, a mental phenomenon or a physical phenomenon?

B. You can only see the action of the body, but the action is actually performed by cittas. We can never

see a citta, but we can find out what the citta is like, when the body moves in doing deeds.

With regard to your question how deeds, performed in the past can produce a result later on, the answer is that deeds are performed by cittas. They are mentality and thus they can be accumulated. All experiences and deeds of the past are accumulated in each citta which falls away and conditions the next citta. Whenever there is the right condition the Kamma which is accumulated and carried on from one moment to the next moment of citta, can produce Vipāka.

Part III

A. I would like to know whether we only receive Vipāka in this life? Or is there Vipāka in a future life as well?

B. According to the Buddhist teachings one receives the results of one's deeds in future lives as well.

In the Samyuṭṭa Nikāya (Chapter III, Kosala) we read about someone who had performed good and bad deeds. He had therefore to receive both kusala Vipāka and akusala Vipāka which he experienced in subsequent existences. He had given alms to a Pacceka Buddha of a former period. (A Pacceka Buddha is a Buddha who becomes enlightened by himself, but who has not accumulated as many virtues as the "Sammā Sambuddha", who could become enlightened by himself and help others as well to become enlightened). This good deed of almsgiving to a Buddha had as result that he was reborn seven times in heaven, where he could enjoy pleasant Vipäka. After his existences in heaven he was reborn a human being, which is kusala Vipāka as well. He was

born from rich parents, but his own accumulation of stinginess prevented him from enjoying the pleasant things of life. He had accumulated stinginess, because after he had given alms to the Pacceka Buddha he had regretted his gift.

Although he had the means to buy everything he wanted, he denied himself good food, cloths, etc. because of his stinginess. It was his attitude towards Vipāka which made him lead such a life. After his existence on earth he was again going to have a different rebirth. He had committed akusala Kamma in a heavy degree and this akusala Kamma would bring akusala Vipāka of a high degree. He had killed the only son of his brother because he wanted to have his brother's fortune. This very heavy Kamma caused him to be reborn in hell where he would be for many hundred thousands of years. The Sutta points out how one can receive different results in different existences.

A. Is the existence of heavens and hells not merely mythology?

B. People have different accumulations which make them perform different Kamma. Not one person acts in the same way as another person. Eaeh act brings its own result, either in this life or in the following existences. To be reborn in a heavenly plane or in the human plane is the result of a wholesome deed, to be reborn in a sorrowful plane is the result of an unwholesome deed. Heaven and hell are conventional terms to explain realities. They explain the nature of the Vipāka which is caused by one's Kamma. As both akusala Kamma and kusala Kamma have different degrees, akusala Vipāka and kusala Vipāka have to have different degrees as well.

Names are given to different heavenly planes and to different sorrowful planes in order to point out the different degrees of akusala Vipāka and kusala Vipāka.

"Deva", which means "radiant being", is a name given to those who are born in heavenly planes. In the "Anuruddhasutta" (Majjh. Nikāya, Suññatavagga) we read about many different kinds of Devas who have different degrees of brightness. A monk who was not very advanced in mental development was born as a Deva "with tarnished light." Those who were more advanced in mental development were born as Devas with a greater radiance.

A. I find it very difficult to believe in Devas and in different planes of existence.

B. You do not experience Devas and different planes of existence right at this moment. But is it right to reject what you cannot experience yet?

If one knows the cittas of the present moment very well, one will be able to understand more about the past and about the future later on.

Rebirth-consciousness can arise in any plane of existence. When a good or a bad deed which has been accumulated has the right conditions to produce a result, it can produce rebirth-consciousness in the appropriate plane.

A. What is the first Vipāka in this life?

B. There has to be a citta at the very first moment of life. Without a citta we cannot have life. A dead body has no citta, it is not alive. What type of citta would be the first citta? Would it be an akusala citta or a kusala citta, which could bring a result? Or would it be another

type of citta, for example a citta which is not cause but which is result, a Vipāka-citta?

A. I think it must be a Vipāka-citta. To be born is result, nobody asks to be born.

Why are people born with characters which are so different and in situations which are so different? Are the parents the only cause of birth and the only cause of the character of the child?

B. Parents are only one of the conditions for the body of the child, but they are not the only condition.

A. What about the character of the child? Are there not certain tendencies in a child's character he inherits from his parents? Is this not proved by science?

B. The character of a child cannot be explained by the character of the parents. Brothers and sisters and even twins can be very different. One child likes to study, another child is lazy; one child might be cheerful, another child depressed. Parents may have influence on the child's character after its birth in so far as a cultural pattern or a family tradition in which a child is brought up will be conditions for cittas to arise. But one cannot say that a child inherits its character from its parents. The differentiations in character are caused by accumulations of experiences in previous existences.

A. Are parents not the real cause of birth?

B. Parents are only one of the conditions for birth, Kamma is the real cause of birth.

A deed, done in the past, brings its result when it is the right time: it can produce the Vipāka-citta which is the rebirth-consciousness. In the "Discourse on the Lesser Analysis of Deeds" (Cūlakammavibhaṅgasutta, Majjh,

Nikāya, Vibhaṅgavagga) we read: "Beings of short lifespan are to be seen and those of long lifespan; those of many and those of few illnesses; those who are ugly and those who are beautiful; ..." The Sutta continues to say that there are poor people and rich people, those who have not much wisdom and those who are full of wisdom. Kamma is the cause of those different effects: "Beings are heirs to deeds" the Sutta says.

A. Is rebirth in a human plane the same as reincarnation?

B. If there would be reincarnation, a soul or "self" would continue to exist and it would take on another body in the next life. However there is not a soul or a "self". There are cittas which succeed one another from birth to death, from this life to the next life. One citta has completely fallen away when the next citta arises. There can only be one citta at a time, and there is no citta which lasts.

Cittas arise and fall away completely, succeeding one another. There is birth and death of cittas at every moment. Death is the conventional word for the end of one's lifespan on a plane of existence, but actually there is birth and death at each moment of one's existence, when a citta arises and falls away.

Not one citta one could take for a soul or "self", as there is no soul or "self" in this life how could there be a soul or "self" which is reborn in the next life? The last citta of this life is the death-consciousness. The death consciousness arises and falls away, it is succeeded by the rebirth-consciousness of the next life. The rebirth-consciousness is conditioned by the previous citta, the death-consciousness, but it is no longer the same citta.

A. I can see tendencies in people's character which seem to be the same all through their lives. Moreover there is rebirth in the next life. Therefore there must be continuity in life. However I do not understand how there can be continuity if each citta completely falls away before the next citta arises.

B. There is continuity because each citta conditions the next citta which therefore has the same accumulations as the previous citta. All accumulations of past existences and of the present life condition the next existences.

When people asked the Buddha whether it is the same person who is reborn or another person, the Buddha answered that it neither is the same person nor another person. There is nobody who stays the same, not even in this life, because there is no "self". On the other hand it is not another person who is reborn, because there is continuity.

Former existences condition this life, and this life also conditions the next lives.

A. What is the last Vipāka in this life?

B. The death consciousness or "Cuticitta" is the last Vipāka in this life.

Since there are many deeds in this life which have not yet produced a result, one of the deeds will produce rebirth-consciousness after death. As long as there is Kamma there will be Vipāka, continuing on and on. There will be next existences, so that the result of one's deeds can be received.

When the death-consciousness falls away, a deed of the past, or Kamma, produces immediately a Vipāka citta: the rebirth-consciousness of the next life, in Pali the "Patisandhicitta." When the death-consciousness

has fallen away the rebirth-consciousness arises immediately afterwards. The rebirth-consciousness has the same accumulations as the death-consciousness because it is conditioned by the death-consciousness. Thus one's former existences condition one's existences in the future.

A. What causes the rebirth-consciousness of the next life?

B. It can only be the result of one deed. Everyone has performed akusala Kamma and kusala Kamma. Each deed brings its own result. The Vipāka-citta which is the rebirth-consciousness, can therefore only be the result of one deed, of akusala Kamma or of Kusala Kamma.

A. Is birth in the human plane the result of kusala Kamma?

B. Birth in the human plane is always the result of kusala Kamma. Akusala Vipāka which arises afterwards in life is the result of Kamma which is different from the good deed which produced the rebirth-consciousness. After being born in the human plane there can be many moments of akusala Vipāka, every time one experiences an unpleasant object through one of the five senses. Those moments are the result of other unwholesome deeds performed in the past.

If the rebirth-consciousness is akusala Vipāka one cannot be reborn a human being. The rebirth has to take place in another plane of existence like the "animal world" or one of the "woeful planes," like the hells or the "ghost realm."

A. Can a human being be reborn an animal?

B. Some people behave like animals, how could they be reborn as human beings? Everyone will receive the result of his deeds accordingly.

A. Is it due to one's Kamma if one is born in favorable circumstances, as for instance in a royal family or in a rich family?

B. Yes, this is due to a wholesome deed, performed in the past.

A. I notice that even people who are born in the same circumstances, as for example in rich families, are very different. Some rich people are generous, others are stingy. How could this be explained?

B. People are different because they have different accumulations which make them behave in different ways. We read in the Sutta which I quoted before, about the person who was born from rich parents, but who could not enjoy the pleasant things of life because of the stinginess which he had accumulated. Some people do not enjoy the pleasant things they have received in life because of their own defilements. Other people are attached too much to the pleasant things of life and in this way they accumulate more unwholesomeness. Although they have the opportunity to accumulate wholesomeness in letting other people share in their own fortune, they do not think of this opportunity. The unwholesomeness which they accumulate will bring them an unpleasant result.

Other people again who have received pleasant things in life, grasp every opportunity to give things away to other people and thus they accumulate wholesomeness. This will bring them a good result.

People take different attitudes towards Vipāka. The attitude one takes towards Vipāka is more important than Vipāka itself because one's attitude conditions one's life in future.

A. Can kusala Vipāka be a condition for happiness?

B. The things which are pleasant for the five senses cannot guarantee a true and lasting happiness. Rich people who have everything which is pleasant for the five senses can still be very unhappy.

For instance when one is sitting in a beautiful garden with deliciously smelling flowers and with singing birds one can still be very depressed. At the moment one is depressed the cittas are akusala cittas.

One cannot always be happy when there are pleasant things around oneself. Unhappiness and happiness depend on one's accumulations of unwholesomeness and wholesomeness.

If one feels unhappy it is due to one's own defilements. Every unpleasant feeling is by attachment If one would have no attachment at all there would be no unhappiness. One can be perfectly happy if one is purified from one's defilements.

In the Anguttara Nikāya (Book of the Threes) we read that someone asks the Buddha whether he is happy, in spite of the hardship he has to bear. The winter nights are cold. There is snow, the floor is hard because of the frost, "thin the carpet of fallen leaves, sparse are the leaves of the tree, cold are the saffronrobes and cold the gale of wind that blows." The Buddha says that he lives happily, "I am one of those who live happily in the world." He points out that a person who has a house with a gabled roof, well fitting doors, "a longfleeced

woollen rug, a beautiful bed, four beautiful wives," can have lust, malice and delusion. Defilements will cause "torments of body or of mind," defilements are the cause of unhappiness. The Buddha had eradicated all defilements completely, and thus it was not important to him whether there was akusala Vipāka or kusala Vipāka. He could live perfectly happy no matter what the circumstances were.

A. How can we purify ourselves so that we take the right attitude towards Vipāka?

B. We can only purify ourselves if we know the cause of all defilements. The cause of all defilements is ignorance. Out of ignorance we believe in a "self", we cling to a "self". Ignorance is the cause of greed, of aversion or anger and of delusion. Ignorance causes all unhappiness in the world. Ignorance can only be cured by wisdom or "Paññā". In "Vipassanā" or "Insight meditation" we develop the wisdom which can eradicate the delusion of "self" little by little. Only when this delusion is completely eradicated, all defilements can be eradicated stage by stage.

The Arahat who has attained the fourth stage of enlightenment has eradicated all defilements completely. He has no more attachment, illwill or delusion. As he has no defilements he is perfectly happy. After he has passed away there will be no more Vipāka for him in a future life, there is no more rebirth for him.

In the "Discourse on the Analysis of the Elements" (Dhātuvibhaṅga sutta of the Majjh. Nikāya, Vibhaṅga-vagga) human life is compared to an oil lamp which burns on oil and a wick. If the oil and the wick come to an end the oillamp goes out. It is the same with human

life. As long as there are defilements there will be fuel for rebirth. ' When the defilements are eradicated completely there will be no more fuel for rebirth left. The Sutta continues, that this is "the knowledge of the complete destruction of anguish".

The knowledge or wisdom, developed in Vipassanā leads to Nibbāna which is the end of all sorrow.

KARMA AND FREEDOM*

Francis Story

Dear Friend,

YOUR problems in connection with Karma seem to be largely ones of meaning; particularly the meaning of causality and of such concepts as 'conditioning' and 'determining.' Buddhism does not deny that man is largely conditioned by his circumstances and environment. But the conditioning is not absolute. It may almost amount to determinism, and the margin of free-will may be very slight indeed, but it is always present. In Buddhist ethico-psychology great importance is given to the thought-moment of choice — that moment of conscious response to a situation in which we are free to act in a number of different ways. Now it may happen that the predominant propensities of the past impel almost irresistibly towards a particular course of action; but it must be remembered that our past habits of thought and deed are never all of the same kind. Human character is very fluid, and in the critical moment it is never absolutely certain what kind of urge will come uppermost. The whole point of any character development is to systematically cultivate the good urges and eradicate the bad ones.

Then again, some precise definition of the specifically Buddhist terms is necessary, in order to grasp what

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* From a letter written in 1966. Title supplied by the Editor.

is meant by Karma. Karma (Kamma) is simply action, a deed. Its result is called Vipāka, and the two should not be confused or telescoped into a single concept under the same word, as is done by Theosophists and some popular writers on Hinduism. But the two terms considered together, as Kamma-vipāka, or 'action-and-result,' do denote a moral principle in the universal order. Thus, a cruel action, because its genesis is mental (cetanā), will in course of time ripen as a painful experience of a similar kind for the same person who did the cruel deed — perhaps in this life (the murderer who is hanged) or in a subsequent one. As to whether it is the *same* person who experiences the result, that can neither be absolutely affirmed nor absolutely denied; its answer lies in the concept of personality and identity held by Buddhism, which you will find in writings dealing with rebirth. The sole identity that can be claimed for a personality, even through the course of one life-time, is the world-line represented by his Karmic continuity. As you have yourself stated, an individual at any given moment is simply the end-result of what his previous actions have made him. But he is also projecting himself into the future by his present acts, and it is in these that his freedom of choice lies. He is no more determined absolutely by his own past than he is by his environment or his heredity. Buddhism teaches the principle of multiple causality: that is to say, every phenomenon is the product of more than one cause. And the will, although it is greatly modified by these causes is itself free to choose between a number of different causes operating upon it from the past. *We are free to select the causes which shall determine our action in the moment of choice.* That is why conflicts arise which are sometimes so difficult and painful to

resolve. There is always the existential anguish in freedom of choice.

At any time we can see how this works out in concrete instances. A man may have been reared in an atmosphere of squalor, want and anxiety, in which everything pushes towards crime. But in the moment of deciding whether or not he shall commit a crime, other, perhaps latent, causes are at work within him. He may have been taught at some time that crime is morally wrong, or some good influence from a previous life may be stirring within him, or he may have realized, quite simply, that 'crime does not pay.' He may be deterred by some memory of a painful result, imprisonment or flogging, from the present life. Whether these deterrent factors are noble or ignoble, they are always present, and he has to make a choice between the causes which shall determine his present action. And very often he will choose not to commit the crime, If this were not so, the moral improvement of individuals and society would not be possible.

You pointed accurately to your own chief difficulty when you wrote: 'I cannot see... that an individual born in an environment of destitution, deprivation, ignorance, want and hunger can be said to be born in such circumstances due to past evil deeds.' But in fact what you 'cannot see' is precisely what the Buddha taught. I am afraid that all attempts to reconstruct the Buddha's thought, leaving out rebirth, are doomed to failure. We might be able to have rebirth without the moral order represented by Kamma-vipāka — in which case it would only be an infinite extension of the amoral, meaningless life-process envisaged by the epiphenomenalists — but we cannot have a moral order without rebirth.

Why so? Simply because not all murderers get

hanged! (And it may be added, neither do they get punished who by their indifference, selfishness and brutality help to make others criminals. At least, not in the same life. Too often they prosper — but the principle of Kamma-vipāka is never cheated. At some time they have to pay for it.)

The world is so dominated today by the concepts of materialism that some Buddhist Kierkegaard ought to write another 'Concluding Unscientific Postscript' to clear up the muddle. Not anti-scientific, be it understood, but simply *un*-scientific. Not bounded by the dogmas of 19th Century Darwin-Marx-Huxley materialism, which today are taken for science. We should be ready to accept what is true in this materialism, without fearing to go beyond it.

And what *is* true in that concept of man? That he is conditioned by his environment? Certainly: nobody in their senses would deny it, and the Buddha did not. But no man is *entirely* conditioned by anything, not even by his own accumulated habits of thinking and acting. No character is irrevocably fixed — except that of an Ariya, (Saint), whose destiny is assured. (It is necessary to make this exception, although here it is something of a digression.) The ordinary man is, as I have said, a fluid process; his identity from one moment to another is nothing but the world-line of his continuity as a process in time. Consequently he is always acting 'out of character.' Have not great and noble men arisen from the most sordid environments of want and deprivation? And conversely. have not criminals and degenerates appeared where all the social, economic and even hereditary factors were the most favourable that the world has to offer?

These are rhetorical questions, and I really feel

ashamed of setting them down! They are the most commonplace cliches of thought. Let it be granted, then, that *in the majority of cases* men are what their circumstances make them. Buddhism teaches that it is they who have created these circumstances by their past Karma. But their present Karma, which moulds their future, is in their own hands. However slight the margin of free-will, it is always there. Without it, life would be altogether without meaning, and it would be absurd to try to seek any meaning. In fact, it would be impossible, and you for example, would not be puzzling over Buddhism! The mere fact that these questions have presented themselves to you shows that you are not an automaton, not just a cybernetic mechanism, bound to run like a street car or a train along set lines, but a free-swimming organism — a thinking, willing personality, not a plant. I should doubt whether anything in your environment had conditioned you to take an interest in Buddhism — yet you are doing so, and in a most penetrating way. It would be an interesting experiment in self-analysis to search out the causes that prompted you to feel this interest in the Dhamma. I think you would find that there are several contributory streams, including some propensity in your own nature, something which cannot be accounted for by any conditioning. Maybe you are just one of those fortunate people who are interested in anything that presents a challenge to the intelligence. That in itself is the result of good Karma in the past.

But Karma is not solely responsible for every phenomenon and every experience. The physical aspects of life also have their share in the totality. Still, in the last resort, the mind and will are able to prevail over everything else. Not always by a single act of will, but

by repeated acts of the same nature, having the same final goal. Life without suffering is impossible, because of the conditions, physical and psychological, that our desire for personalized life imposes as the condition of our being-in-the-world. But the mind can develop itself — can stop creating and imposing those conditions. We must distinguish clearly between what we have to submit to — the circumstances of the present which we have made for ourselves by our past actions — and the future we can make for ourselves by our present thinking and doing. That distinction is most important: it represents the whole difference between absolute determinism and free-will. The root cause of phenomenal existence is the double one of ignorance conjoined with craving, each being dependent upon the other. When these two joint conditions are removed, all other conditioning comes to an end. That is the whole point of Paticca-samuppāda, the formula of conditioned arising — that it can be reversed, by repeated acts of decision. Man can always swim against the current; if he could not, his evolution would be impossible.

I hope you won't think, because of what I have written, that Buddhism *approves* of poverty, hunger and want. Buddhism approves of nothing in the world except the striving to gain release from it. Its view of the world is realistic. Poverty, hunger and ignorance exist in the world, and they will continue to do so as long as people, by their own infliction of these evils on others in previous lives, cause themselves to be born in such circumstances. We should try to diminish these evils, but it can never be done by purely physical means. The effort is good, merely because it represents a good volition, which will bear fruit in the future, than because of any likelihood of its succeeding completely. If all the world acted

according to Buddhist principles of unselfishness, generosity and compassion, there would be no more deprivation, no more slums, no more oppression or exploitation of man by man. Yet still, bad Karma of the past would have to produce its vipāka by some other means. In any case, I believe it to be axiomatic that if all the wealth in the world were to be equally distributed one morning, there would be the rich and the poor again by evening. Whether we like it or not, I believe that to be true. It is a fundamental fact of nature — which hates equality more than it hates a vacuum. There will be equality when all the past and present thoughts and deeds of all men are equal — and when can that be?

The economic structure of society accurately reflects man's muddled, illogical and selfish nature. It will be changed only when that nature is completely transformed. All improvement must come from within, for 'Mind creates all phenomena' out of the raw material of the Universe. The world-stuff is neither good nor bad; it is man's thinking which makes heaven or hell out of it.

The Buddha said: 'In this fathom-long body, equipped with sense organs and faculties, O Bhikkhus, I declare to you is the world, the origin of the world, the cessation of the world and the path leading to the cessation thereof.' Philosophically speaking, these words are the most profound, most comprehensive and most illuminating ever uttered. We create the world literally. The world, in turn, conditions us, but it does not create us. That is the great difference. Since we, each of us individually, are the creators of our world, even the conditioning it imposes is ultimately traceable to ourselves.

*

COLLECTIVE KARMA

Francis Story

FROM time to time the question of whether there is "Collective Karma," or not, keeps coming up. Is it possible for groups of people — whole nations or generations — to share the same Karma? Or is Karma a strictly individual and personal thing?

The Buddha treated Karma, everywhere and always, as a personal inheritance:

> "Owners of their Karma are the beings, heirs of their Karma, their Karma is the womb from which they are born, their Karma is their friend, their refuge. Whatever Karma they perform, good or bad, thereof they will be the heirs." (Majjhima Nikāya, 135)

None can suffer from the Karma of another, nor profit by the Karma of another.

But it may happen that large groups of people, through being guilty of the same misdeeds — as for instance racial persecutions, mass killings and tortures, etc.—come to make for themselves almost identical Karma. Can this be called "Collective Karma?"

In a sense it can: yet the term is deceptive. The so-called "collective Karma" is made up of individual Karmas, each of which must have its individual fruition. No man necessarily shares the Karma of others of his national or other group simply by reason of being one of that group. He is responsible only for his own particular share in its deeds. If he does not share them, his own Karma will be quite different.

Most of the confusion of thought arises from the misuse of the phrase "the Law of Karma;" and the spelling of the word betrays the source from which the idea of a "Law" of "Collective Karma" comes. The Pali word is KAMMA.

Kamma simply means "action" — a deed performed by bodily action, speech or thought Its result is "Vipāka". There is a law of Causality, and it is because of this law that Kamma, the cause, is invariably followed by Vipāka, the result. "The Law of Karma" has a mystical sound, and suggests a kind of fatalism. People who say, resignedly, "It is my Karma," are using the word wrongly. They should say, "It is my Vipāka." This would remind them that their KAMMA, the really important thing, is under their control: they are fashioning it from moment to moment. As their Kamma is now, so will their Vipāka be in the future. We should avoid confusing the cause with the effect.

Kamma is individual because it is Cetanā — volitional action of an individual mind.

> "Cetanā, O Bhikkhus, is what I call action; for through volition one performs actions of body, speech and mind." (Anguttara Nikāya 6; 63)

To what extent can one person dominate and direct the volition of another? Sometimes to a very dangerous extent: but only if there is a surrender of the will to the external influence. That itself involves an act of Cetanā, a voluntary submission to another person's will. Such a submission should only be made to a spiritual Guru; and even then the moral sense should not be suspended. The case of Angulimāla is a warning against a too unquestioning submission to the dictates of an unworthy teacher. Angulimāla was fortunate later in encountering the

greatest Teacher of all, who saved him. People of today have to protect themselves against spiritual quacks, and it is not always easy to discriminate.

Apart from this, there is the question of indoctrination, a very great problem in the modern world. We have seen the phenomenon, unknown before in history, of whole nations behaving under a compulsion imposed on them from without. We have seen the development of techniques for manufacturing a mass-mind, capable of incredible atrocities. Propaganda, brain-washing, mass-suggestion leading to mass-hysteria — all these are features of the new technique of power. Can these produce "Collective Karma?"

The answer is that they can certainly produce individual Kammas that are practically identical: but they still remain personal Kammas, even though they are instigated. No matter to what influences a man is subjected, his reaction to them, together with its Vipāka remains his own.

But supposing (not, alas, a very far-fetched supposition in these days) a man is forced on pain of torture or death to participate in mass atrocities?

To begin with, it must be his past Kamma that has placed him in such a terrible position; it is his Vipāka from some previous Akusala Kamma. He has two alternatives before him: either he can submit, and for the sake of preserving his life continue to make more bad Kamma for himself — or he can refuse and let his enemies do what they like. If he chooses the latter course he will probably exhaust the bad Vipāka in suffering, in his current life. His act of self-abnegation, his refusal to participate in deeds of violence and cruelty, will be a positive good. He will have perfected his Sīla, his moral purity.

In either case his Kamma, be it Kusala or Akusala, will be his own.

But what about the sharing of merits?

This again depends upon Cetanā, an act of will. When a good deed is performed and the merit is shared with others, there must be the will to share in it on their part. By approving the deed they produce a similar good Cetanā in themselves. Their attention must be drawn to the deed, so that they can rejoice in it and generate a good mental impulse connected with Dāna (liberality), or whatever the meritorious deed may be. Again, the "sharer" makes his own Kamma. We cannot share demerit, because nobody would be willing to share it with us!

The troubles we inherit from our parents' mistakes cannot be said to be sufferings resulting from their Kamma. A child that is born in a country devastated by war, if it suffers it is suffering because the situation in which it has been born makes it possible for the child's own bad Kamma to fructify. There must always be more than one cause to produce a given result. Another child, in precisely the same situation, and whose parents were even more directly responsible for the mistakes that led to the country's ruin, may be materially in a much better position. Its parents may have made a fortune in the war that brought others to destitution. That child, too, is experiencing the results of its own Kamma, not that of the parents. They will have to suffer for theirs.

There are different kinds of causes, and different kinds of effects. Kamma is one kind of cause; Vipāka is its corresponding effect. The important thing is to distinguish clearly between the individual cause-and-effect

that carries over from one life to another — the personal Kamma and Vipāka — and other chains of cause and effect that operate through circumstances in the external world.

REFLECTIONS ON KAMMA AND ITS FRUIT

Nyanaponika Thera

I

THE preceding pages have often and rightly stressed the strict lawfulness governing kammic action and its ripening fruit and the close correspondence of action and reaction which generally obtains. But it must be well understood that the lawfulness operating here is not a rigid and mechanical one and that the results of kammic action are often liable to a wide range of modifications. This fact is implied by types of Kamma called "supportive," "counteractive" and "destructive" and by a classification referring to the different ripening times of the reaction.[1] But the teaching that Kamma results are modifiable is so important that it deserves to be stressed and made more explicit.

If kammic action were always to have reactions of invariably the same magnitude and if modification or anullment of Kamma result were excluded, liberation from the saṁsāric cycle of suffering would be impossible, because an inexhaustible past would ever throw up new obstructive results of unwholesome Kamma. Hence the Buddha said:

> 'If one says that "in whatever way a person performs a kammic action, in that very same way he will experience the result,"

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1 See, in this volume, the essay "Kamma and Causality," p. 17 ff.

—in that case there will be no (possibility for a) religious life[1] and no opportunity would appear for the complete ending of suffering.

'But if one says that "a person who performs a kammic action (with a result) that is variably experiencable, will reap its result accordingly," — in that case there will be (a possibility for) a religious life[1] and an opportunity for making a complete end of suffering'.

Anguttara Nikāya, The Threes, No. 110.

Just as a physical event never exists in isolation and the efficacy of its force never depends on its own potential alone but is modified by the variable factors of its "field", similarly the effect of mental events, too, is variable in many ways. A kammic action (good or bad) may have its result either strengthened by supportive Kamma, or weakened by counteractive Kamma or even anulled by destructive Kamma. The occurrence of a reaction can also be delayed if the conjunction of circumstances required for its ripening is not complete; and that delay may again give a chance for counteractive or destructive Kamma to operate.

It is, however, not only the extraneous conditions (including circumstances as well as supportive, counteractive and destructive Kamma) which can cause modification, but also internal conditions — that is, the total qualitative structure of the mind from which the kammic action has issued, its "internal field." To him who is rich in moral or spiritual qualities, a single offence may not entail so weighty results as the same offence will have for one who is poor in such protective

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1 Commentary: "a religious life led for eradication of Kamma" (*kammakkhaya-brahmacariya*).

virtues. Also, analogously to human law, a first-offender's punishment will be milder than that of a reconvicted criminal.

Of this type of modified reaction the Buddha speaks in the continuation of the discourse quoted above:

> "Now take the case that a minor evil deed has been committed by a certain person and it takes him to hell. But if the same minor offence is committed by another person, its result might be experiencable during his life time and not even the least (residue of a reaction) will appear (in future), not to speak about a major (reaction).
>
> "Now what is the kind of person whom a minor offence takes to hell? It is one who has not cultivated (restraint of) the body, not cultivated virtue and thoughts, nor has he developed any wisdom; he is narrow-minded, of low character and even for trifling things he suffers. It is such a person whom even a minor offence may take to hell.
>
> "And what is the person by whom the result of the same small offence will be experienced in his life time, without the least (future residue)? He is one who has cultivated (restraint of) the body, of virtue and of his thoughts and who has developed wisdom; he is not limited (by vices), is a great character and he lives unbounded (by evil.)[1] It is such a person by whom the result of the same small offence will be experienced during his life time, without the least future residue.
>
> "Now suppose a man throws a lump of salt into a small cup of water. What do you think, monks: would that small quantity of water in the cup become salty and undrinkable through that lump of salt?" — "It would, lord." — "And why so?" — "The water in the cup is so little that a lump of salt can make it salty and undrinkable."

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1 According to the Commentary, this refers to the taint-free (*khīnāsava*) Arahat, with regard to offences he may have committed either in this life before attaining sainthood, or in former existences. In his case, he is unbounded by the limiting forces of greed, hatred and delusion.

"But suppose, monks, that lump of salt is thrown into the river Ganges. Would it make the river Ganges salty and undrinkable?" — "Certainly not, lord." — "And why not?" — "Great, lord, is the mass of water in the Ganges. It will not become salty and undrinkable by a lump of salt."

"Further. O monks, suppose a person has to go to jail for a matter of a halfpenny or a penny or a hundred pence. And another man has not to go to jail on that account.

Now, what is the kind of person that has to go to jail for a matter of a halfpenny, a penny or a hundred pence? It is one who is poor, without means or property. But he who is rich and a man of means and property has not to go to jail for such a matter.'[1]

Anguttara Nikāya, The Threes, No. 110.

Hence we may say that it is an individual's accumulation of good or evil Kamma and also his dominating character traits, good or evil, which will affect the greater or lesser weight of a kammic reaction and even its occurrence or non-occurrence.

But even this will not exhaust the existing possibilities of further modifications as to the weight of kammic reaction. A glance into the life histories of people we know may well show us a person of good and blameless character, living in secure circumstances, and yet one single, and perhaps minor, mistake happens to ruin his entire life, his reputation, his career, and his happiness; and it may even lead to a deterioration of his character. Though this seemingly disproportionate crisis might have been due to a chain-reaction of aggravating circumstances beyond his control which has to be ascribed to a powerful counteractive Kamma of his past, this chain of

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1 The application of these two similes to action-and-reaction, given in full in the original text, corresponds to the second and third para of this quote.

bad Kamma results may have been decisively triggered off not only by the person's initial mistake but also by subsequent carelessness, indecision or wrong decisions which, of course, are unskilful Kamma in themselves. This is an instance of a situation in which even a predominatingly good character is unable to prevent or to soften the full force of bad Kamma results. Though the good qualities and deeds of that person will certainly not remain ineffective, their future outcome might well be weakened by any presently arisen negative character changes or actions, which might form a bad counteractive Kamma.

Taking now a situation in the reverse: a person deserving to be called a thoroughly bad character may, on a rare occasion, have an impulse of generosity and kindness (as criminals, too, are certainly capable of) and this may turn out to have for him unexpectedly wide and favourable repercussions on his external life, and may even, to some extent, soften his character.

How complex, indeed, are situations in human life, even where they appear to be deceptively simple! This is so because the situations and their outcome mirror the still greater complexity of the mind which is the inexhaustible source of ever new life situations. As the Buddha himself has said: mind's complexity surpasses even the countless varieties of the animal kingdom (Samyutta Nikāya, XXII, 100).[1]

The currents and cross-currents running through countless existences of one single individual life-stream

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1 See 'The Wheel' 107/109: Samyutta-Nikāya, Anthology, Part I, p. 51.

are complex enough and beyond our ken. But even this complexity is still increased — and very much more so — by the fact that each individual life is more or less closely interwoven with many other individualised life-streams through the interaction of their respective Kamma. This intricate net of kammic conditioning was obviously the reason why the Buddha had declared Kamma-result (kamma-vipāka) to be one of the four Unthinkables (or Imponderables; *acinteyya*) and had warned against engaging in speculation about it.

This teaching of the modifiable nature of kammic reaction frees man from the bane of determinism and fatalism, its moral consequence. It keeps open for man the road to liberation as stated in the Buddha-word quoted at the beginning of this article.

But the potential "openness" of a given situation has also its negative aspect of risk and danger: it might also open a downward path if there is a wrong response to the situation. It is man's response which removes the ambiguity of a given situation, for better or worse. This reveals the Kamma doctrine of the Buddha as a teaching of moral and spiritual responsibility for oneself and others. It is a truly "human teaching" because what makes a human is to have a larger range of choices than an animal. Though man's moral choice is severely limited by the varying load of greed, hatred and delusion and their results which he carries, yet at every moment when he stops to make a decision or a choice, he is potentially free to throw off that heavy load of his, at least temporarily. At this precarious and precious moment of choice man *can* (at least to a varying extent) rise above all those menacing complexities and pressures of his unfathomable kammic past. Indeed, one short

moment can thus transcend aeons of kammic bondage. It is through right mindfulness that man can firmly grasp that fleeting moment, and it is mindfulness again that enables him to use it for making wise choices.

II

At the very first, Kammic action affects the doer himself, that is his own mind. This holds good also for actions by body or speech which are directed towards others and are meant to affect others. But the response of others to these actions is not under our control; it may turn out to be quite different from what was expected or desired by the doer. A good deed of his might bring him ingratitude and a kind word may find a cold or even hostile reception. Though these good deeds and kind words will then be lost to the recipient to his own disadvantage, they, and the good thoughts that inspired them, will certainly not be a loss to the doer. They will ennoble his mind and even more so if his inner response to the negative reaction he received was not one of resentment and anger but one of forbearance.

Again, an act or word meant to harm or hurt another, may not cause a hostile reaction in him but only self-possessed calmness. Then this "unaccepted present will fall back to the giver," as the Buddha once told a Brahmin who had abused him. The bad deeds and words and the thoughts motivating them, though not having the desired impact on the other, will not fail to have a damaging effect on the character of the doer; and even more so if he reacts to the unexpected response by rage or a feeling of resentful frustration.

Hence it was said that beings are the responsible owners of their Kamma which is their inalienable

property. They are the only legitimate heirs of their actions, inheriting their legacy of good or bad reactions.

It will be a wholesome practice often to remind oneself of the fact that our deeds, words, and thoughts first of all act and react upon our own mind. Reflecting on this will give a strong impetus to true self-respect which is preserved by true self-protection against everything mean and evil. Reflecting and acting upon this aspect of Kamma will also open a new and practical understanding of a profound Buddha-word:

> "In this fathom-long body with its perceptions and thoughts there is the world comprised, the world's origin, the world's ending and the path to the world's ending."
>
> Anguttara Nikāya, Fours, No. 45*

III

The 'world' of which the Buddha speaks, is comprised in this body-and-mind aggregate because it cannot be experienced in any other way than by the activity of our physical and mental sense faculties. The sights, sounds, smells, tastes and body impressions which we perceive, and our mental functions of various kind, conscious or unconscious — this is the world in which we live.

And this world of ours has its origin in that very aggregate of physical and mental processes that produces the kammic act of craving for the six physical and mental sense objects.

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* See 'The Wheel' 155/158 (Anguttara-Nikāya Anthology, Part I), p. 84f.

> "If, Ananda, there were no Kamma ripening in the sphere of the senses, would there appear any sensual existence?" — "Surely not, O Lord."
>
> Anguttara Nikāya, Threes, No. 76

Hence Kamma is the true creator of the world, and this includes ourselves. Kamma is the womb from which we all have spring (kamma-yoni). And through our kammic actions in deeds, words and thoughts we are unceasingly engaged in building and re-building *this* world and worlds beyond. Even our good actions, as long as they are still under the influence of craving, conceit and ignorance (sāsava-kusala), contribute to the creation and preservation of this world of suffering. The Wheel of Life is like a treadmill set into perpetual motion by Kamma, and chiefly by the three unwholesome root-causes of it, greed, hatred and delusion. The 'end of the world' cannot be reached by walking in a tread-mill which creates only the illusion of progress. It is only by stopping that vain effort that the end of that toil can be attained.

It is "through the elimination of greed, hatred and delusion that the concatenation of Kamma comes to an end" (Anguttara, Tens, No. 174). And this again can happen nowhere else than in this matter-and-mind aggregate where suffering and its causes originate. It is the hopeful message of the Third Noble Truth that man *can* step out of that weary round of vain effort and misery.

Yet, our keeping life's treadmill in motion is a deep-rooted habit, an age-old addiction that is hard to break. But here again there is a hopeful message in the Fourth Truth with its eightfold therapy that can cure that addiction and can gradually lead to the final cessation of

suffering. And all what is required for the therapy is again found in a human's body-and-mind. The therapy proper which aims at the root of the illness, starts with rightly understanding the true nature of Kamma and, thereby, man's situation in his world. If there is at least a modicum of the understanding that even good Kamma cannot alone lead to liberation, and if such awareness is kept alive, then effort in all that is Good will not be in vain because it is no longer blind. Then, good Kamma thus performed will not so easily be weakened or wasted in the course of one's life or future lives. Therefore, he who wishes for the greatest benefit from his good actions and thoughts may always dedicate the fruits thereof to the final liberation from all kammic bondage, for oneself and all sentient beings.

For further reading

on KAMMA AND REBIRTH

Karma and Rebirth
Nyanatiloka Mahathera — The Wheel No. 9

Survival and Karma in Buddhist Perspective
Prof. K. N. Jayatilleke — Wh 141/143

The Case for Rebirth
Francis Story — Wh 12/13

Rebirth Explained
V. F. Gunaratna — Wh 167/169

The Wheel of Birth and Death
Bhikkhu Khantipālo — Wh 147/149

Broadcasts on Buddhism
Bhikkhu Dhammapala — Wh 132/134
(on Kamma, see p. 49ff)

The Law of Karma and Mindfulness
Karel Werner — Bodhi Leaves B. 61

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