



# **BUDDHISM**

**ANSWERS THE**

# **MARXIST**

# **CHALLENGE**

**Francis Story**

# BUDDHISM

## Answers the Marxist Challenge



An analytical comparison between the scientific doctrines of Buddhism and the tenets of Dialectical Materialism, in theory and practical application.

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# *Foreword*

**E**XTRACTS from this work, the fruit of extensive research embodying the author's independent and unbiased conclusions in the form of an analytical comparison between the doctrines of Theravada Buddhism and the philosophy of Marxist Materialism both in theory and practical application, were first published in a Burmese English-language newspaper in 1952. In a series of articles I endeavoured to show that Buddhism, while rejecting almost every dogmatic article of belief common to most religious systems—the belief in a personal Creator-god, in an individual soul-principle, in an eternal life of bliss or punishment hereafter—yet takes an essentially spiritual view of life and of the universe which is opposed to the materialistic ideas now gaining ground in East and West alike. I have felt it necessary that such a statement should be made, clearly and as far as possible in detail, for two reasons. Firstly, because we have reached a point in the development of human thought where it has become necessary to choose between the two opposing concepts of materialism, with its amoral implications, and the spiritual, and consequently ethical, view put forward by all religions which is the concept on which all civilisation is based and has developed throughout history. If I have felt it necessary to stress the point that the supernatural foundation of religion is no longer capable of supporting ethical systems in the modern world, and that Buddhism supplies the rationalistic element that the twentieth-century demands for any belief in spiritual values, it is because I myself felt this very strongly, and became a Buddhist for no other reason. In that I believe I speak for the whole of my generation of educated men who have not been blinded either by religious emotionalism on the one hand or materialist scepticism on the other. When I was still adolescent I felt an all-consuming curiosity about the meaning of life, its purpose and the laws that govern it. These,

I felt, could not be haphazard or arbitrary, yet I found that all the religious systems, while admirable in their moral teachings, were inadequate as explanations. One had to take too much for granted, and I was not prepared to take anything for granted, especially when it seemed clearly to be against all the laws of probability and human experience. It was in Buddhism that answers were found to satisfy me, both emotionally and intellectually.

The second reason I had for writing this book was the fact that of late, certain persons interested in promoting materialistic ideas in Burma and elsewhere have tried to prove that Buddhism and Marxist materialism have much in common. Particularly I had in mind an answer to a pamphlet published over two years previously, in Burmese, which put forward this viewpoint. The author, doubtless trading on the fact that most Buddhists do not know a great deal about Marxism and that the majority of people, in any case, are prone to accept whatever they are told without examining it too closely and deciding for themselves, wrote that "the emergence of Marxism is instrumental . . . for the effulgence of Buddha's accredited 'Anatta Sasana' and for a speedy attainment of Loka Nibbana, called the Sa-upadisesa Nibbana (Heaven on earth) and Lokuttara Nibbana' (Nibbana beyond the world)". This altogether misleading statement he based solely on the superficial correspondence between Buddhism and Marxism that they both deny the existence of a soul-principle. After referring to what he called "Buddhist materialism" and Marxist materialism, the writer went on to say that when he had read Karl Marx's "Dialectical Materialism and Historical Materialism" he found that Marx's "natural laws", "nature of impermanency" and "the nature of non-ego of matter" were well explained, and that he then acclaimed Karl Marx as a Bodhisatta or Embryo Buddha. Later in the same work he claimed that Marx was either a Sotapanna or Bodhisatta because he had acquired wisdom up to the stage of understanding the composition of Rupa or matter. Every Buddhist should know, however, that while Rupa is sometimes formally identified with matter it means more than just 'Matter' in the Western sense, and that in any case the understanding of Matter as a principle is not enough to make anyone a Sotapanna or a Bodhisatta. There is more in Buddhism than mere "Matter", call it Rupa or what you will. No

one can become a Sotapanna (the attainment of the first degree of purification) without accepting the Four Noble Truths, which means understanding the nature of Kamma and its connection with rebirth, and without acknowledging the truth of the Law of Causal Origination and the Noble Eightfold Path leading to Nibbana. Marxism knows nothing of these truths; in fact it utterly denies them.

Sassata-ditthi, or "eternity-belief" is the false view held by most religions. Uccheda-ditthi, or "annihilation-belief", its opposite, is the false view of Marxism. Uccheda-ditthi is the belief in the existence of an Ego-entity or "Self" which is co-existent and in some sense identical with the material body and the thought processes arising from that body, and which consequently is annihilated at death, leaving no results of good or bad actions. This is the teaching of Marxism, and it bears no resemblance to the doctrine of the Buddha. It was expressly condemned by Him as leading to hell and the other painful and inferior states of existence. It can certainly not make anyone a Sotapanna. The Teaching of the Buddha is totally different from either of these two extremes of Miccha-ditthi.

Dialectical Materialism is based on the theory that nothing exists in the universe except matter, and that everything, including the human mind and its processes, arises from material causes and material substances interacting upon one another. In Materialism the "Mind" is synonymous with "Brain" — that is to say, the conscious processes of a living being are entirely conditioned by a combination of external material phenomena and the physical cells of the brain, which is simply an organ of the body like the liver or stomach. According to this theory the mind has no independent activity; it is entirely dominated by the causal processes of matter. The way we think and act has nothing to do with our will but is the result of mechanical processes going on in the physical substance of the brain, and these processes in their turn are set in motion by events and circumstances in the physical world outside the body. The whole universe, therefore, is considered as a mechanism obeying strictly material causality, and the individual is nothing but a part of that mechanism, bound to follow a predestined course of action determined by prior conditions. This is why Marx sought for the meaning and pattern of historical progress in purely

material factors: in the individual his philosophy points to bodily factors determining characteristics and activities, while in the realm of sociology it indicates the pressure of economic factors as being the sole arbiter of mankind's destiny. In other words, man is what he is — good or bad, happy or miserable — because of his circumstances; he is moulded entirely by the situations and events of the external world and is their slave.

In its mechanical and rigid system of causality, from which there is no logical escape, Marxism most closely resembles the predestination of Calvinism, except for one important consideration which places it in opposition to all religious systems or philosophies based on ethical principles.

This is the fact that Dialectical Materialism does not recognise any principle of morality in the universe. It cannot do so, because morality depends upon the ability to exercise free-will in choosing between good and evil: if the mind is dominated by material factors it cannot have any freedom of choice. Furthermore, the theory of the pre-eminence of matter in itself precludes the existence of any moral principles. The idea of morality cannot be connected with material things; the human body is not either moral or immoral, any more than is a chair or a table. It is the actions of the body, prompted by the will, that constitute moral distinctions and set up ethical standards. All religions assert this clearly, and most emphatically so in the case of Buddhism. To try to associate morality with that which is merely physical or material is a manifest absurdity.

So we see that the Marxist universe is not governed by moral laws but by merely material cause and effect. Morality is replaced by the principle of expediency; that is to say, the most effective means of obtaining what is desired; and what is desired is only the enjoyment of material benefits. For the Marxist there is but one object in life — to obtain the maximum degree of pleasure here and now, and pleasure in its most limited materialist sense, since Marxism does not recognise any spiritual or "Lokut-tara" states. The logical development of this doctrine, therefore, is the "Class conflict" which urges a ceaseless struggle for the possession of this world's goods. It is, in a certain sense, the law of nature, which follows

the principle of the survival of the fittest; but the law of the jungle is not the law of civilised man, still less is it the law of religion. And this applies to every religion that exists or has ever existed. All religions point, however imperfectly, to a higher standard of behaviour aiming at a higher goal than that of material pleasure. Worldly enjoyment can only be gained at the cost of unending struggle of one individual against another, one nation against another, on the same principle that obtains among the wild animals of the jungle. The whole world is a battleground, from the life of the smallest insect to that of the most powerful mammal, simply because each is seeking to preserve its life against its more powerful enemies and at the same time enjoying sensual existence at the expense of creatures weaker than itself. Each creature lives on the creatures weaker to it in the scale of life. This is the principle that Marxism sets up against the moral principles that have been taught by all the great religions since man emerged from the primeval state, and Dialectical Materialism as a philosophy admits no higher motive in life than this natural law based upon craving for the gratification of the senses by material means.

Marxist Materialism is scientific in so far as it follows the principles of causality, but it does not admit any causal process beyond that of matter and material agencies. It condemns religion because religion teaches that there is a process of causality based on moral principles. Every religion maintains that there is another life beyond the present one, and that this future life is in some way governed by the moral effects of what has been done, said and thought in this present life. This claim is nowhere made so strongly or logically as in Buddhism, with its rational teaching of Kamma and rebirth, the two principles which are categorically denied by Marxism. According to Dialectical Materialism all idea of a future state, a continuation of life after death, is superstition. Hence the Communist dogma, "Religion is the opium of the people". Marx maintained that there is no moral resultant of thoughts or actions nor any past or future state of man as a thinking, self-determining entity; man comes into existence merely as the result of material causes, and passes away again into annihilation just like any other material object. Religion, he stated, was invented solely to reconcile the depressed classes to their fate by giving them the delusive hope of a

better life beyond the grave. A historical study of the development of religion in all its forms and phases from prehistoric times, however, shows the unscientific nature of this hypothesis; but the theory, as it is at present held by Communists, does not any longer deserve to be considered scientific; it has become a political dogma, precisely on a par with the Nazi pseudo-scientific theory of racial superiority.

Materialism, then, directs all its attention to the present sphere of existence; man's hope and all his being cannot extend any further than the brief spell of his physical existence on this planet. Any system of religion or philosophy therefore must be false that asserts the importance of moral values or gives promise of a spiritual evolution or a spiritual happiness for living beings. This creed of Nihilism, or 'Uccheda-vada' is one of the systems of false theorising (Miccha-ditthi) exposed and refuted by the Buddha in the Brahmajala Sutta, where the Teacher deals with the philosophies current in the India of His day. Essentially, Marxist Dialectical Materialism has nothing new to offer. It stands for a retrogression in human thought, and it is this fact that must be known and taken into account in choosing between the Buddhist way of life and that sponsored by Marx.

I have only one further point to add. During the publication of the series of articles a reader wrote accusing me of misrepresenting the Communist attitude towards religion. He wrote, in effect, that there is no bias against religion in the Soviet Union and that there is no anti-religious propaganda from official Communist sources. He further accused me of delving into ancient history when quoting Marx and Lenin on the subject. I wish to take this opportunity of replying to the criticism and answering all those who may share my correspondent's misapprehension.

It is a fact that "all things are subject to change", and no doubt Communist policy is no exception. But that it has not changed, and in this respect, at least, cannot change, is fully borne out by the following quotations. First, from "Science and Religion" a lecture delivered by D. I. Sidorf and published in the Soviet Youth organ "Komsomolskaya Pravda" of April 3rd 1952:

"One of the most harmful and persistent survivals is religion. It justifies the capitalist order of things, instils into the faithful the feeling of fatalism, passivity and submission to fate, and attempts to bolster up ignorant primitive superstition about the development of nature and society". After a lot more of the same kind of thing, the lecture continues: "Religious teachings about society are hostile to Communist ideas. The Christian religion calls princes, kings and czars 'God's anointed'. The *Buddhist religion divides people into castes of pariahs (the lowest) and Brahmins (the highest)*. The Jewish religion also lauds slavery and oppression."

The ignorant reference to Buddhism, which has no caste system and is absolutely opposed to it, disposes of the Communist propaganda for Asian consumption to the effect that Communism makes a distinction between Buddhism and other religions. Buddhist Asia must not be deceived by the carefully prepared mixture which is being served up to it, and which is so different from the propaganda given out for home consumption. Communism is as much against Buddhism as it is against every other creed.

"Religion", continues the official Communist spokesman, "has not ceased to be a harmful reactionary ideology since it attempts to inculcate contemptuous attitudes towards all that is earthly, and by that token distracts attention from the building of Communism . . . Hence the struggle against religious superstition is an integral part of our ideological war. Religious superstitions can be overcome only by a scientific struggle against them by the widest dissemination of the scientific-materialist outlook. *Such propaganda must be militant, combatant and directed towards religious prejudice and superstition.*"

From what has been quoted above it is clear that the Communists, who have not even troubled to study Buddhism to the point of being able to distinguish between it and Hinduism, ignorantly suppose the Doctrine of the Buddha to be superstition and are quite unaware that it is far more scientifically advanced than the out-dated materialism of Karl Marx.

Broadcasting from Moscow Radio on June 6th 1952, Professor Stepanyan said that religious ideas were being

countered by the "propagation" of materialistic conceptions" and that the carrying out of plans for the "transformation of nature" (whatever that may mean) was of tremendous importance in this respect.

Another talk, entitled "Our Goal is Communism" given in a Moscow Home Service broadcast on June 12th of the same year, said that the Party carried on a propaganda campaign against religion because religion was "opposed to scientific world-views" and religious beliefs and practices are incompatible with the title of Party Member.

In Prague, Czechoslovakia, the opening session of the Constituent Congress of the Society for the Dissemination of Political and Scientific Knowledge was held on June 21st and 22nd, when M. Kopecky, Czechoslovak Minister for Propaganda, explained the aim of the new society to be that of forming a powerful instrument of Communist indoctrination, and he stressed the anti-religious aspect of its work as being of the utmost importance.

These quotations, I hope, will be sufficient to prove that in this work I have not been guilty of misrepresenting the Communist attitude towards Buddhism. There lies great danger in naively accepting whatever propaganda is put out from time to time to suit places and circumstances. The best basis for forming a correct judgment is to let the Communists speak for themselves. To meet them on the ground they claim as being their own, the ground of science, and to meet the challenge of their indiscriminate attack against religious thought is the object with which this book has been written.

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FRANCIS STORY

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# Buddhism Answers The Marxist Challenge

**T**WO thousand five hundred years have elapsed since Guatama Buddha attained supreme Enlightenment and preached the sublime Dhamma for the welfare of gods and men. Ever since that time, the Buddha Sasna has been the greatest influence for peace and righteous living the world has known, and has been the means by which countless beings have achieved release from Samsara.

Wherever the Buddhist religion has spread it has brought happiness and prosperity to the people and has taught ideals of good government and good citizenship. While some other religions have been propagated by the sword and other methods of forceful compulsion, Buddhism has conquered without any of these abuses. The Dhamma has spread by the power of love and truth alone, and has shed in many lands the light of reason and universal benevolence.

European historians such as H. G. Wells have admitted that Buddhism has done more for the advance of world civilisation and true culture than any other influence in the chronicles of mankind, and that all that is best in other religions has been drawn from Buddhism, while none of them has matched it in purity of ideals and nobility of teaching.

Today, however, there are strong anti-religious ideas prevalent in the world which constitute a threat to the spiritual life taught by the Buddha. The world is in the grip of materialistic ideologies based upon the natural laws and principles revealed by science, and there is no religion scientific or rationalistic enough to combat these ideas, except Buddhism. It is vitally important that we should find out how Buddhism stands in relation to the scientific beliefs of the present day, because there is every indication that Western materialism is invading Asia, hitherto the stronghold of the spiritual life, and that it is doing so to the detriment of Buddhist civilisation and culture.

The strength of materialism, with its great appeal to

the modern rationalistic outlook formed by the technical and mechanical advances of civilisation, is a direct result of scientific progress. People all over the world have come to regard civilisation as ~~being~~ the same thing as *material progress*, and they measure the advance of civilisation by the amount of purely material benefit it can show. The present trend of world events reveals this view to be a fallacy, but there are few people far-sighted enough to acknowledge the fact, and because of the prevalence of this quite erroneous idea there is now a great conflict between the religious mode of thought represented by the great moral and spiritual creeds of former days, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism and Islam, and the modern sceptical disbelief in everything of a higher spiritual nature, which goes by the name of "materialism". That conflict is growing day by day, and it has come to have a political as well as an intellectual aspect, since materialism is most powerfully represented by the Communist political ideology, which sets up Marxist Dialectical Materialism as its "religion" and is striving to abolish all other forms of belief from the world.

It is impossible to deal with the problem of materialism without also dealing with its political form, Communism, because although there are many scientific thinkers who are materialists because they know of no religion which meets their intellectual needs, they are not necessarily Communists, but a Communist is, of necessity, a materialist, and one who is pledged to a fanatical warfare against all established religious systems.

The chief reason why materialism has grown to be so powerful an influence in the modern world is because, as we shall see, science has proved so many of the doctrines of the principal religions to be false, so that nowadays there are very few educated and intelligent people who can wholeheartedly subscribe to them. Those who do still hold to their faith have been forced by the advance of knowledge to alter and modify their ideas a great deal from the original doctrines taught by their religion. The Christian Church, to give the most striking example from the scientifically-progressive West, has had to admit that many of its earlier beliefs were wrong. It has had, within the last century or so, to retract from its position with respect to many of its principal dogmas. Yet some of these beliefs were at one time held to be so essential as articles of faith

that people were excommunicated for refusing to believe them. \* From the nature of some of these primitive beliefs of Christianity it is clear that the founders of the religion were not endowed with any deeper insight into the real laws of the universe than the most ignorant of their contemporaries, and that therefore their claim to be directly inspired by God is not supported by any evidence whatever. The whole concept of Divine Revelation has therefore been seriously undermined.

Apart from the theoretical aspect of the question there is also the all-important political side. Materialism, in its political form, Communism, is at war with religion partly because in the past certain forms of State religion have been used as instruments for terrorising the people with threats of eternal damnation in order to keep them in submission to authority. At the same time it has, under such regimes, been employed as a means of keeping the depressed and ignorant peasantry contented with their unfortunate position in this world by promising them happiness in heaven. But this has never been universally true by any means, for in many countries religion has gone side by side with social progress, even where it has been in conflict with science. Communism as an experiment started in Russia, where the Greek Orthodox Christian Church under Tsardom was admittedly an instrument of State, and was certainly used in this way to keep the Russian peasantry in subjection. It was because of this that the Communist revolutionaries rebelled against their State and against religion as a whole, and adopted Marxist materialism in its most violently anti-religious form as their political creed.

It was an English clergyman and author, Kingsley, who first said "Religion is the opium of the people"; but Karl Marx and Lenin adopted the slogan and the later Communists have slavishly followed it ever since. There is no evidence that either Karl Marx or Lenin knew anything about any religion other than the particular type of backward Christianity prevalent in Tsarist Russia. There is no reason to believe that either of them had studied

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\* It is only within the last few months that the Pope of Rome, reversing the entire Roman Catholic policy with regard to Darwinism, has decreed that a Roman Catholic may accept belief in Darwinian evolution if he wishes. Up to 1950 the Catholic Church declared Darwinism to be a heresy. It has had to recognise it because the scientific proof can no longer be set aside.

Buddhism or any other Oriental religion, or that they took any interest in Asiatic social problems. They were essentially European revolutionaries with a Western materialistic outlook, and with no interest in, or sympathy for, the needs of Asian peoples. Their successors, who have made their anti-religious slogan into a kind of religious dogma, now use it to attack all religions indiscriminately, including Buddhism.

Their anti-Buddhist propaganda, which has become more noticeable of late, shows that they have not even taken the trouble to study the Teachings of Lord Buddha or the historical development of Buddhism. Recently an official Soviet anti-religious propagandist broadcasting from Russia made an attack on Buddhism in which he stated that it sanctioned a rigid caste-system and encouraged a superstitious belief that the various castes were divinely ordained, the Brahmins and Khattiyas being born from the head of Brahma while the Vaisyas were born from his arms and the lowest caste from his feet. Other wild and ridiculous statements made in the same broadcast showed the speaker's complete ignorance of the subject, and revealed that in his desire to discredit Buddhism without regard to truth, he had indiscriminately confused it with the most primitive form of Hinduism. This is typical not only of the fanatical attitude of Communists towards religions of which they know nothing, but also of their complete intellectual dishonesty and lack of any balanced spirit of enquiry.

As I have pointed out, there are any number of scientific thinkers who are materialists, but not necessarily Marxist materialists. This point is an important one, and in the next section I shall endeavour to show the distinction between Materialism as a pure philosophy and Marxist Dialectical Materialism which has more the character of a political patent medicine. It is a part of Communist political teaching that Communism and religion are fundamentally antagonistic. In other words, it is not possible to be a Communist and at the same time a Buddhist, a Christian or a Hindu. In considering materialism as an ideology of tremendous power in the modern world, we must also consider it as a political creed, because it is in Communism that we find the materialist view elevated to the status of a State religion, and it is under Communism that it represents the greatest menace to true religious thought.

# Faith and the Sceptic

SIR Peter Chalmers Mitchell, CBE, FRS, DSc, in his Herbert Spencer lecture delivered at Oxford in 1930, stated the case for scientific materialism in the following words:—"A large part of the structure of the living world is the inevitable consequence of mechanical principles. It neither requires nor can bear the interpretation of being designed for a purpose, whether the design is to be attributed to a supernatural agency or to a vital principle striving for self-expression.

"We notice with wonder when the structure fulfils a purpose, and with a pessimistic acceptance when the purpose seems evil. But life abounds with examples of meaningless by-products . . . A continually increasing set of functions, formerly attributed to some mysterious vital force, are due to mechanism and are independent of consciousness . . . It is at least certain that the advances in biological knowledge which have increased human control and power of prediction have come about by the investigation of vital processes as if they were material, by material agencies. Materialism has proved itself the best working hypothesis of science."

Let us analyse this important statement in detail, for it cannot be ignored. Every religion, with the exception of Buddhism, declares that the universe was created by a God, and created for a special purpose or to what is commonly called a "divine plan". This type of theology maintains the omnipotence and creative urge of the deity and claims that the vital force of living beings is a supernatural gift of the divine power, and that the will of God is apparent in the natural laws that govern the universe, from the planets down to the smallest microscopic organism. Science, on the other hand, examining the nature of the world from a practical or materialistic point of view, finds no evidence whatever of a divine will or purpose. It demonstrates, so far as its technical resources permit (and it must be granted that these are now very extensive) that there is no need to assume anything more than a material law of cause and effect. The process of evolution,

for instance, whereby living organisms arose from a primal single-cell animal floating in water, and through countless millions of years became successively fish, reptiles, flying reptiles, birds and mammals, culminating in the human species, is, considered as a working-plan of creation an extremely clumsy, wasteful and cruel method. Clumsy and wasteful, because so many species have evolved, only to become extinct because they could not further adapt themselves to changing planetary conditions, as for example the mastodon and mammoth, the brontosaurus and other enormous reptiles whose reconstructed forms are familiar to us from the fossilised remains found in various places. These are the "meaningless by-products" referred to by Sir Peter Chalmers Mitchell. Cruel, because the entire plan involves the purposeless suffering of millions of generations of creatures, born for no other object than that of living upon one another, fighting one another, the weaker being mercilessly exterminated by the stronger, and all — small and large, weak and strong alike — subject to pain, disease and death. Surely, says the materialist, an all powerful and all-merciful God could have found a better way of constructing a universe of living beings, could have made their conditions of life less ignoble, and would not have made it an essential law that each should live by preying on others? And, in any case, if the God is of supreme wisdom and goodness, why could he not have revealed himself and his purpose in some absolutely undeniable fashion so that all men would submit to his laws, instead of, as now, each sect having its own idea of God and each being at enmity with the others? And again, why should God create a world at all? If God is perfect he could have no desires; from the fact that he created a world, it appears that he suffered from some unsatisfied desire which demanded the act of creation to appease it; therefore, he could not be perfect or self-sufficient.

The God of Christianity is a Semitic tribal god, depicted in the scriptures as possessing all the emotions and passions of a man, and a man of a not very spiritual type, since he is found experiencing jealousy, anger, hatred, and owing to a revengeful nature. In the doctrine taught by Jesus Christ this Hebraic God becomes more refined and merciful; he is presented as a "God of Love". But he was still conceived as an anthropomorphic being, a god in the form of a man, as the imaginative portraits of him in glass and

stone from the Middle Ages clearly show. He appears, for example, in the guise of an old man, with long white beard and flowing robes in the paintings by Michaelangelo in the Sistine Chapel in Rome, and similarly in the stained-glass windows depicting the Creation in the Cathedral of Chalons; and in ecclesiastical dress, with a bishop's mitre, in the church of La Chapell-sur-Crecy. Even now, orthodox Christian belief presents him in the same form, as a man, with body, parts and passions. He is stated to have created the world and everything contained in it, either in six days and nights of twenty-four hours, as originally taught, or in six periods of millions of years, as the modern adaptation interprets it. After this event the Devil appeared, an angel rebelling against the almighty God, and succeeded in introducing evil into the world. Mankind then fell to the temptations of the Devil, and could only be reconciled with God by the Deity sending his only son down to earth to be cruelly and brutally murdered. This, in a brief summary, is the gist of Christian religious teaching which scientific materialism considers nothing but a survival of primitive beliefs. \*

Now, says the rationalist, this God, being all-knowing, foresaw what would happen when he began his work of creation. Either it was, or it was not, part of his plan that the Devil should appear and cause the "fall" of man, and the subsequent curse upon all creation. If it was his plan that this should occur, why punish mankind? If, on the other hand, his plan was quite otherwise, he could not have been either all-knowing or all-powerful. But this is the religious explanation accepted throughout the Western hemisphere, of the existence of sin and sorrow, pain and death in the world. It is little wonder that a rational thinker of the present day cannot accept it.

If we look back into the past history of the world we find that it is one long record of savage struggle for existence among the "created" living beings from the single-cell amoeba to the saw-toothed saurian of the ocean; from

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\* Sir James Fraser's classic study in anthropology, myth and religious origins. "The Golden Bough" proves that most of the religious ideas of the present day, including that of the vicarious atonement, can be traced to extremely ancient fertility and other cults, and that similar themes run through various religions. The idea of the sacrificed God (or crucified Christ) can be traced to ancient Egyptian and Assyrian sources; it has its counterpart in Mithraism and in Scandinavian mythology.

the smallest insect to the rapacious tiger of the jungle. But this was going on long before man appeared on the scene and before any fatal disobedience of his to the mandates of his "creator". And we know that it has been the same since, from the time when the early cave-dweller beat out the brains of his neighbour with a stone axe, to the present day, when man's greed and stupidity threaten to end his hard-won civilisation by the power of his latest scientific devices, the atomic and hydrogen bombs. The law of the jungle prevailed before the sacrifice of 'God's Son' and it has gone on in the same way since, only in a more refined and "civilised" manner.

We are here confronted with the idea of "God" as the First Cause, and with the defects in his "creation". Not by any method of sophistry or logic-chopping can those who assign the first cause to this god absolve him from the whole responsibility, or any single part of it. Either he is not all-powerful and all-knowing, in which case the cause is not adequate; or he is not all-wise or all-good, in which case he is deficient in understanding and in moral qualities. In either case, he is not *infinite*. It is useless, says the rationalist, to blame man for being what he is, if a god created him, for he is as he was created, and cannot be otherwise by any effort of his own. From this point of view it is as unreasonable to blame a wicked man for his wickedness as it would be to blame a cobra for its venom.

We are told that man has "free will" given to him by his creator—and at the same time that this all-knowing creator has certain foreknowledge as to how he will use his "free will." We are told, also, that men are "saved from eternal damnation" by the gift of "divine grace", which is withheld from the vast majority, *i.e.* all those before and since the time of Jesus Christ who have never heard of him. A rationalist writer has observed: "This kind of thing may pass as truth with simple undeveloped minds but it will not do for those who test everything by the highest standards of reason. To present it for the serious consideration of a modern educated man is an affront to his intelligence."

This is what Sir Peter Chalmers Mitchell meant when he said that the universe of living beings "neither requires nor can bear the interpretation of being designed for a

purpose, whether the design is to be attributed to a supernatural agency (the anthropomorphic God of Christianity) or to a vital principal striving for self-expression" (the impersonal God of Vedantic Hinduism). He meant, in effect, that the laws which we find governing the universe are not moral laws, as religion teaches, but merely mechanical principles inherent in the nature and structure of material substance. Scientific materialism claims that we need look no further for the cause of the universe and life itself than these processes of matter, by which it undergoes chemical and nuclear transformations into different forms and performs various functions, both organic and inorganic.

Anthropology, which is the study of mankind as a whole, shows that, contrary to the conventional Western religious belief, human beings are not a special creation of God, but are related structurally, organically and in their neuropsychic system to other creatures; and moreover, that at some period millions of years ago they shared a common ancestry. Established religion has tried to take refuge in an absolute denial of the Darwinian theory of evolution, but this is not the way to help religion. The Darwinian theory is now more firmly established as a scientific fact than ever before. The mechanism of the actual process has been found to be different from that originally postulated by Darwin, and there is still considerable disagreement as to the actual means by which species differentiate one from another and take their own particular line of development, but the central fact, namely that man is a species of animal only differing from the others in the possession of a higher mentality and more complex nervous system, which he has acquired through the same biological evolutionary process, is now so firmly supported by all the scientific evidence that it is undeniable. Just as other forms of living beings have acquired special organs and a special technique for living in their particular environment, — the fish for living in water, the birds for flying in the air and other animals having specialised faculties, such as the bat with its radar apparatus which enables it to fly blind and catch its prey on the wing — so also man has developed over countless aeons the special self-protective intelligence which enabled him first to make primitive tools, clothing and houses, and later to reach the height of technical knowledge which is at once our blessing and our curse in the present century.

We now know beyond all possibility of doubt, that Darwin's theory that all living creatures are descended from a common form of life, and that human beings and the anthropoid apes are both offshoots from the same ancestral stock, is true, and that the Christian and Muslim story of the creation of man, and his first parents, Adam and Ève, in the Garden of Eden, is simply a fabulous legend in no way differing from the primitive creation stories current among the ancient Egyptians, Babylonians and Greeks. Biology, which is the study of the different methods by which distinct forms of living creatures are propagated, like the sciences of chemistry, physics and psychology, shows no indication whatever that there is such thing as a soul or spiritual entity, or that life is possible without the physical mechanism of the nervous system. It has been shown that the consciousness of a living being, whether it be a simple form of life or a highly specialised type such as a human being, depends upon the proper functioning of the complicated network of nerve channels that extend from the brain to every centre of the body. It is through these nerve conductors located all over the body, but particularly in the eye, ear, nose, tongue and body - surface, meeting in the appropriate sections of the grey matter of the brain, that we receive our sense-impressions of the world we live in. If that system through disease or accident, is impaired, our consciousness is likewise damaged, if the brain itself is affected, our whole outlook and what we call 'character' is changed. All this goes to prove that there is no "soul" or separate entity, independent of the physical body, which carries on its own life or has any form of consciousness in its own right. Therefore, says the materialist, it is absurd superstition to believe that anything can survive after the death and dissolution of the physical organism. The motor-reflexes by which the nervous system operates are a purely mechanical set of activities, both in animals and human beings; they depend upon physical substance — flesh, nerve-cells, connecting tissues of various kinds and ultimately on the cells of the brain, which are also composed of physical substance. The brain of a human being differs from that of the lower animals only in its more complex development and the greater number and intricacy of the convolutions in its surface. It is this which gives man his greater thinking power, not any immaterial "soul" or spirit.

# Science and Religion

**B**IOLOGY, therefore, shows that there is nothing apart from the body which can be called "soul" or "spirit", of those terms are taken to mean an enduring principle independent of and unaffected by material factors.

Science cannot say exactly in what way living matter is different from "dead" or inanimate matter that lacks sensation and consciousness, but it *has* managed to trace the way in which living cells combine together in the womb, the egg or the seed, and grow into living, conscious beings. The latest tentative theory is that these living cells are generators of some form of electrical energy, and that this, and nothing more, is the secret of their activity and growth.

In the sphere of psychology we have the statement of a leading specialist to the effect that, in examining the consciousness of living beings, human and animal, we come upon conditions and processes, a continual state of activity and transformation, based upon the changes taking place all the time in the material substance of the body, but that nowhere can there be found any entity or permanently enduring being or "soul" which is apart from and unconditioned by these physical bases. It will be seen that each of these branches of science tends to confirm and substantiate the materialistic theory, as against the conventional religious teachings. Let us now find out what physics has to say on the subject.

Physics is the study of the nature of the universe and the laws which govern it. It consequently links up with all the other sciences, particularly with mathematics and astronomy. The latter reveals that this earth on which we live in only one very minute speck of matter in a system too vast to be imaginable; it is not, as taught by Western religion, the central and most important point of the cosmos. The latter belief, once a necessity of theological cosmogony, has of course had to be discarded long since; yet it still remains implicit in the idea of a special creation, and particularly in relation to doctrines bearing on divine,

personal revelation and the act of sacrificial atonement, which obviously cannot be conceived as being carried out on an incalculable number of inhabited planets for the salvation of an infinite number of human races which it is theoretically possible, at least, may exist. The earth is only one, and by no means the largest, of several planets revolving round the sun. It is roughly a sphere, some 25,000 miles round and 8,000 in diameter. To us it seems a very solid, immovable thing, but actually it is spinning round, carrying its atmosphere and ourselves with it, at the rate of more than a thousand miles an hour. It is also travelling along its own orbit round the sun at the rate of 68,000 miles an hour, or roughly nineteen miles per second. Not only this, but the sun itself is also travelling, carrying within the field of its attraction the earth and the other planets, the whole revolving about some other relatively central point at a speed even more inconceivable. There is reason to believe that this "relatively central point" itself is also moving, and so on to infinity. The entire system is a process of incessant movement.

The sun is a mass of white-hot incandescent matter, distant about 93,000,000 miles from our earth. Its size, relative to our earth, is so enormous that, if the globe were to be plunged into it, it would scarcely cause a ripple on the surface of the molten mass. Yet this sun is only a small star in comparison with many others, and compared with what we know of the outer space, our sun and the whole system are insignificant. The fixed stars, millions of which are visible through the telescope are, most of them, suns. The nearest is "Alpha" in the constellation called the Centaur, and it is more than twenty million of millions of miles away. These distances in space are so vast that they have to be calculated in "light years", that is, the distance that light, travelling at 186,000 miles a second, would cover in one year of our earth time. The light from the nearest fixed star, Alpha in the constellation Centauri, takes over four years to reach the earth. Its light is two and a half times greater than that of our own sun. But Alpha Orionis, which is 150 light years distant, is 300 times larger than our sun.

Astronomers have calculated that there are at least one thousand millions of such "fixed" stars within the range of the largest telescopes and the distance of stars of the eighteenth magnitude is such that it takes their light

no less than two thousand years to reach the eye of the astronomers observing them. If we can imagine an intelligent being upon one of those 'stars of the eighteenth magnitude, possessed of an optical instrument enabling him to observe the surface of this earth closely enough, he would be seeing what happened here two thousands years ago. He would see the ancient Greeks and Romans and would observe Buddhism at the peak of its cultural influence in India. Of more recent events he would see nothing whatever.

Beyond these remote stars, if it were possible to travel there, would be found millions of stars further away, for what has been said refers only to our own galactic universe, which is but a speck in the tremendous cosmic system. The knowledge of this has brought about a complete change in outlook from the time when it was thought that our world was the whole of the universe, and man the most important being in existence. The system of theology which teaches that the earth was created some five thousand years ago by a God under whose special protection and care it has since remained, in the context of these tremendous facts shrinks into nothingness. It becomes utterly improbable. Something like this must have been foreseen by the priests who tried to suppress the discovery of Galileo when he first announced that the earth revolves round the sun, instead of the sun revolving round the earth as in the Ptolemaic system.

If we look in the other direction, we find an infinity of smallness. With the aid of the microscope we can observe objects of one hundredth part of an inch. We pass from the light year to a unit of a millionth of a millimetre, or one twenty-fifth thousand millionths of an inch. If we could magnify a drop of water to the size of the earth, we should find it composed of atoms which would appear between the sizes of a cricket ball and a football. These atoms are themselves composed of still smaller particles called electrons, an atom of hydrogen gas containing 700 and an atom of Radium 160,000 electrons. So we find that, even as there is infinite magnitude in the universe, so there is infinite minuteness, and that everything is relative.

From the most colossal sun to the component parts of an atom, everything, everywhere, is in constant rapid motion. The solidity of rock, or iron, is only apparent.

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Actually it is the scene of ceaseless, violent motion, of change and transition both in time and space. 'We ourselves, says the scientist, share the same characteristic, both as to our physical bodies and our mental activities. They too are composed of atomic units and energy; their vitality is the result of this atomic activity and nothing more.

When we come to examine our earth to determine the origin of life, we can discover no point of origin. Life is defined as matter in which the particles are in a continual state of flux. But everything is in this condition of flux and change. The expression "dead matter" is only a figure of speech, as indeed are all our definitions of the phenomenal world, the world of relative reality. But looking at the system in its entirety, knowing ourselves to be a part of it and that we function according to the same scientific laws as everything else in the universe, the scientist rejects any theory that assigns to man a distinct and unique place in it. Without belief in an immortal soul he finds no justification for assuming that there is a moral or spiritual principle at work.

Moral laws and all such concepts, he declares, sprang from the mind of man. They were not given by divine revelation and are not part of any divine plan, since it is apparent that the universe itself is not ruled by ethical principles but simply by mechanical laws whose functioning is gradually being understood through scientific research. Physics, this most important study of the material universe, has shown that the whole system is governed by cause and effect following a natural sequence, and that there is nothing whatever to indicate the activity of a supernatural agency such as God, or any outside cause. Science therefore tends to demonstrate that such supernatural assumptions are unnecessary and that the universe came into existence, not through the act of any creator-god, but according to natural laws inherent in matter itself, and that it is sustained and continued by the operation of those properties of material substance. It is no longer considered necessary to seek outside or beyond the universe for a First Cause; it came into being through material causes and it obeys material laws.

So far, we must admit that the first round in the fight between materialism and Western religious ideas goes to

materialism; all the evidence of a concrete scientific nature appears to be on the side of the materialist. Religion can call nothing to its aid but a body of traditional belief, of legends and primitive lore backed up by wild and conflicting doctrines taught by rival mystical systems each of which maintains that its own view is correct and all the others false. The modern educated man pays no attention to these claims; to him they are mere fairy tale relics of a past age belonging to the infancy of human thought. All the benefits that have come to humanity, he points out, have come from materialistic science, the work of human hands and brains, not the gifts of any god. It is man himself who has raised his status from savagery to civilisation; it is he who has harnessed the laws of nature for his benefit, and similarly it is he who has introduced the concepts of mercy, charity and justice into the world by a slow and painful process of development, not by any divine inspiration. It cannot be long before every obsolete religious idea is swept away before the advance of knowledge, and rationalism will come to take the place of blind faith.

This a viewpoint that simply cannot be ignored; it is too strong, too firmly grounded in factual knowledge and experience to be brushed aside. Unless religion can answer it, there is no hope for the survival of spiritual values. In the next section I shall try to show the answers that can be given from the Buddhist point of view, which are the only ones, in my opinion, that can meet the arguments of materialism effectively. I venture to believe that we shall then see a change in the situation, and that the final word does not, after all, rest with the materialist.

The Buddha did not give any specific teaching regarding the origin of the universe or of life. The question was said to be unanswerable from the level of ordinary mundane intelligence. In the *Visuddhi Magga* it states: "The origin of beings revolving in Samsara, being cloaked by Avijja (Ignorance) is undiscoverable". At the same time it is laid down, as a natural consequence of the law of Dependent Origination (*Paticca Samuppada*) that in the ceaseless cycle of cause and effect there cannot be any link in the sequence that could be designated a first cause. Each effect becomes in its turn a cause, and the beginning is nowhere apparent; it is a closed circle of related conditions, each factor being dependent on the preceding ones.

The early Buddhists, because of this silence on the part of the Buddha, and His unwillingness to attempt the hopeless task of explaining the inexplicable, took their ideas concerning the nature of the universe from the Brahmanical teachings already current in India. These, because of their remarkable correspondence to modern scientific concepts, are well worth examination at this stage.

In the first place, it must be realised that the ancient Vedic teachings, because of the lack of technical and scientific knowledge and of the necessary vocabulary in which to express such modes of thought, used allegory and symbolism, much of it being of a primitive and animistic kind. The early Buddhists found the concepts of Brahman and Atman unnecessary and, while adhering in outline to the Brahmanical idea of the universe, they departed from the orthodox tradition in considering it to be self-sustained by laws inherent in its own nature, the whole group of these laws being part of the universal law of Kamma, which may be considered as cause-effect or action and reaction.

The universe consists of an infinite number of Cakka-valas or World-systems. These come into being and pass away again in an endless series of cycles covering periods of millions of years, called Kappas and Yugas: The system of chronology is complicated and unthinkably immense, as is also the number of inhabited world-systems in this cosmic mechanism. It is not necessary to go into the divisions of time in detail, but a sufficient indication of their immense span can be gained from the fact that a Yuga is equivalent to several millennia, and that eight of such Yugas, representing a single cycle, makes one small or Antara Kappa. Twenty small Kappas constitute a middle or Asankhya Kappa, and a full cycle of these four middle Kappas is called a great or Maha Kappa, which is the largest unit of calculation. Each Great Kappa is the cyclic period of a world system, during which the entire process of coming into being, maturing, decay and destruction is brought into operation. After the destruction of a world-system another immense period of time elapses, at the end of which the process begins over again, the whole being repeated ceaselessly, without ultimate beginning or end.

In the Brahmanic theory we find this to be the general pattern of events. Vedanta teaches that the cycles of the universe are divided into the 'Days and Nights of Brahma'.

In the beginning of a cycle, the whole of the basic material substance of the universe is evenly distributed throughout space. This substance is called Prakriti (matter) and is to be considered as atomic particles in a state of almost complete balance. Gradually, over unimaginable aeons of time, a slight movement in this vast ocean of matter gathers impetus and by imperceptible degrees the mass pulsates into life. In Vedantic terminology it is said that Prakriti is being infused by Purusha or Spirit; the Brahman is animating and manifesting through the material substance. This substance becomes differentiated into worlds, and living beings appear. Cosmic evolution then comes into play and the universe runs its course, through development and degeneration to decay. After the full period of the cycle the universe disintegrates and returns to the same state of undifferentiated material elements as before. Again the process begins, and repeats itself to infinity.

The Buddhistic view is much the same, except that, as stated before, in place of the Brahman or any controlling deity Buddhism substitutes the impersonal law of cause and effect; one universe or world-system arises from the Karma, or causal genesis, of the one preceding it.

The Visuddhi Magga summarises the position thus:

“ Na h'ettha devo brahma va  
Samsarass' atthi karako,  
Suddhadhamma pavattanti  
Hetusambhara-paccayati ” ,

“There is no God or Brahma who is the creator of this world. Empty phenomena roll on, all subject to causality.”

In recent times the astronomers Jeans and Eddington are among those who have attempted some speculation regarding the origin of the universe. Eddington, calculating the recession of the spiral nebulae from the colour changes observable in the spectrum, has formed the theory that the entire universe is in process of expansion. The countless planets and solar systems comprising it are governed by the principle of cosmic attraction and repulsion which is a law inherent in the nature of matter. It is this law which holds together all the material substance of which the universe is composed, from the smallest atom to the largest planet. It is believed that in the course of expansion of the universe, one of two things will eventually happen; either it will reach its maximum point of expan-

sion and the law of cosmic repulsion will cause the atomic elements to scatter throughout space, or else the law of attraction will gain the upper hand and the process will be reversed causing the universe to shrink back upon itself. In either case, the ultimate result will probably be the same; that is, the atomic elements will become evenly distributed throughout space. Eddington has also hazarded the guess that this is the primal state from which the universe first took form; thus his imaginative picture of it before "creation" is very similar to that of the Vedantic and Buddhistic conception. We are to imagine the whole of space filled with units of electronic energy in an almost perfect state of balance and homogeneity. In this uniform undifferentiated mass there is only a slight movement or vibration, but over incalculable aeons the movement becomes more pronounced as the law of cosmic attraction and repulsion comes into play. Gradually the even distribution of substance forms clots, groups of the atomic particles being drawn together, so that in time whirling masses of gaseous matter are formed, and from these emerge what astronomers call the "island universes — that is, systems forming themselves round a central nucleus, like our own solar system. It is obvious that this process, as in the Buddhistic cosmology, can be repeated over and over again.

In this way science disposes of the need for a creator-god, but still it has not explained the origin of the movement in the conventionally inert matter which carries the process forward from one stage to another, and from one world cycle to another. Buddhism explains it as being Kamma, exemplified in the indestructibility of force or energy. The even distribution of matter is never perfectly still, never completely balanced, and its movement is the residuum of activity released from the previous universe, which does not cease even though that universe itself has disintegrated. When we come to examine the operation of Kamma in relation to the rebirth of living organisms it will become possible to relate it to the corresponding cosmic process, and trace the analogue between the Kamma of a sentient being and the Kamma of material phenomena.

# Evolution by Craving:

## THE BUDDHIST "GENESIS"

**D**URING the nineteenth century, when the Western World began to be dazzled by the accumulating achievements of science and the amazing vistas of progress that seemed to be opening up in every direction, a belief arose in the inevitability of human advancement through technical mastery of nature.

It was then thought that this progress was bound to lead to an age of perfection when mankind would be the heir to all knowledge and virtue. The belief was strengthened by the current theories of Darwinism, which seemed to teach that the evolutionary process made a steady and regular ascent from crude forms of life to higher and more refined types. A facile philosophy of optimism was born, which placed its faith in the parallel development of technical knowledge with moral and spiritual growth, and mankind was thought to be firmly established on the upward gradient which would ultimately lead to the dreamed-of age of absolute righteousness, wisdom and plenitude of power.

Since that period the world has been disillusioned. It has been found that progress in the material sense is not necessarily accompanied by growth of wisdom or deeper understanding of spiritual values. Mankind now has command of tremendous material forces, but does not know how to use this power for beneficial ends. Instead, the tendency of man is still to employ whatever knowledge he has gained in the oppression and destruction of his fellows. The madness of greed, for possessions and for power, points a finger not towards perfection but towards self-destruction, and the gifts of science are only being used to hasten humanity on the fatal road. As H. G. Wells, once a firm believer in evolution through knowledge, pointed out shortly before his death as a disillusioned man, the human being is like a clever monkey, possessing dangerous toys

which it does not know how to handle safely, or how to put to a good and constructive purpose. Man's spiritual growth has not kept pace with his increased command of technical knowledge and he is like a lunatic loose in a power-house.

A better understanding of the natural laws of evolution has also gone to show that the shallow optimism of the early followers of Darwin was based on a fallacy. Natural evolution in the biological sphere is not a steady upward progression as it was once thought to be. It is a hazardous series of experiments, some of them successes but the great majority failures. Numbers of different species have evolved in the course of this evolutionary process, only to become extinct on account of their inability to adapt themselves to changing conditions. Evolution is accompanied by retrogression; species become degenerate and go down in the scale, and there is no indication of any external guiding principle aiming at a definite goal. The entire process is seen to have been carried out on the principle of trial and error, a blind groping, and we can no longer have confidence that our own species has any assured future because of its long upward struggle. It too may degenerate — may, in fact, be the result of a degeneration that preceded the earliest traces of primitive man — or may eventually bring about its own extinction through defects inherent in its own nature which intellectual development alone has failed to overcome. The ascending line of intellectual progress may indeed be the descending curve on the side of spiritual development and hence our entire concept of evolution may be false.

Buddhism teaches that the basis of all life, the main-spring, as it were, of the vital principle of living beings is craving. The facts of biological evolution most strikingly confirm this. We are brought face to face with the hidden machinery of evolution only when we acknowledge the power of craving as a dynamic force which is capable of making matter obey its mandate. Just as a man, working on the basis of his own imperfect judgement, commits errors in striving for the attainment of his object, so the process of evolution also is seen to have been a myopic, undirected force feeling its way towards a goal not fully comprehended. As we understand it now, the history of evolution presents a different pattern from that which was first suspected, and

we are able to point to craving as its motivating factor. The various species of living beings which have all evolved from a very simple prototype, the single-cell amoeba, show how, over countless millions of years, more and more complicated organisms have come into existence, each developing by branching off from an earlier type, and each in turn reaching a higher degree of sensory perception than those preceding it. Behind all this complicated process we find the sole driving and directing force to be the craving for increased and more accurate sensory experience, which can only be obtained through improved faculties of mind and body. In the lower animals the organism is simple and relatively insensitive; its sphere of sensory experience is restricted and its perceptions dim. In the course of evolution it acquires a more complex set of sense organs, each one ministering to a particular need, not all of which are utilitarian. This acquisition of a more sensitive aesthesodic organism cannot in each case be attributed, as was once believed, to the needs of survival. In some instances, far from helping the species to survive, the development of a more delicately adjusted physical mechanism has made it more vulnerable. If the scheme of evolution were solely directed towards survival the single-cell, self-propagating prototypes would have fully answered the purpose and evolutionary progression would not have needed to pass on to any higher stage. It is permissible to assume, therefore that some at least of the characteristic physical changes brought about by mutations within the species were not evolved only to perform a utilitarian function, but also to meet a need that may fairly be called hedonic. What becomes apparent is a blind force whose sole objective is an ever-increasing field of sensory experience. Its motive is the equivalent of what in psychology is called the "pleasure principle".

It is thus possible to trace two principles at work, one aiming at preservation and the other no less clearly directed towards the extension of hedonic experience; but it must be understood that preservation of the species is only an incidental to the need for attaining the more important goal of hedonic fulfilment. We have already seen that the evolution of species does not take a uniform upward trend, but that it branches off into blind alleys and forms subsidiary waves that rise and fall independently of the general trend

of the current. It shows long periods of seeming lack of progress during which no fresh mutations occur, or in which species that have already over-specialised in fitting themselves to their environment succumb to changing climatic or other conditions. There is, for example, the case of the giant lizards, glorified in folk-lore and tradition as dragons, which became too vast and cumbersome to support their great bulk on a gradually thinning vegetation during the successive ice-ages that crept over the earth's surface when the terrestrial sphere, perhaps influenced by the proximity of another planet, swung on its axis, and what had hitherto been the tropics became polar regions. The same fate was shared by the mastodons and mammoths, whose gigantic remains are still found in the wastes of Siberia and the Arctic Circle, frozen for millions of years in glaciers that were once tropical swamps.

These enormous animals perished and became extinct because they had specialised in size and physical strength. Under the changing conditions these assets were no help to them; they were, indeed, a handicap, because of the great quantity of food required to sustain them. The animals that did survive were the creatures of smaller size and more active brain, particularly those that had developed prehensile toes for climbing, and could reach vegetation beyond the reach of the largest mastodon. These smaller animals had other advantages; they could creep into crevices for shelter, and even extemporise rough covering for themselves by using their supple toes to manipulate twigs and dead leaves as a gorilla even now makes its nest from whatever material it can find. These animals had yet another instinct which helped them in their extremity; they were gregarious, moving about in groups for mutual protection and in this way they were able to migrate *en masse* to warmer regions, while the mammoth and the mastodon perished alone in the frigid wastes that had formerly been their grazing grounds.

But most important of all was the fact that some of these small animals, a type of anthropoid ape, under the compelling force of urgent necessity had developed a rudimentary power of reasoning. Instead of mechanically repeating the same habitual actions prompted by some racial memory stamped upon their brain formation, as did the others, they specialised in a quite new function — that

of independent thinking. Obeying the behest of the shadowy consciousness that was awakening within them, further physical changes took place; their toes grew longer and more flexible, becoming in time efficient instruments for carrying out the directions of the brain. From using these toes to pluck fruit and dig up roots they came to employing them for covering themselves with leaves against the cold, and thence to manufacturing rough weapons and tools from bones and flints. In this way the first manlike animals appeared upon the earth. Their bodily structure and capabilities were clearly the outcome of mental predispositions brought into being by the exercise of this new faculty of independent thinking.

Here it becomes necessary to take a brief glance at the story of evolution as presented in the Buddhist Canonical Books. Excluding commentary and tradition, the most complete account is given in the Aggannya Suttanta of the Digha Nikaya. Explaining the process to Vasettha (a Brahmin, be it noted), the Buddha tells how at some time, after the lapse of an incalculable period, the universe passes away. When this happens, the beings are mostly reborn in the World of Radiance, an aetheric state where they dwell formed of mind, sustained by rapture, self-luminous, space-borne and remaining in a state of immaterial splendour for many ages. Sooner or later the universe begins to re-evolve, and the mind-formed beings, deceasing from the World of Radiance, usually take rebirth on earth. The Sutta, it should be noted, does not specifically state what form they take, and certainly does not call them humans (*Manussa*); the phrase used is, literally, that they "come to hereness", and Buddhaghosa says that they are born by spontaneous generation (*Opapatika*), a very significant phrase when we consider the scientific theory of the first generation of life from chemical combinations and solar radiations, possibly cosmic rays, on this planet. The description of the earth that follows indicates a state that closely corresponds to the period known to geologists, when, after the formation of the Fundamental Gneiss, an age ensued during which the steam in the atmosphere began to condense and fall down to earth pouring over the primordial rocks and gathering into depressions as lakes and oceans. This must have been a period of thick clouds and darkness; in the actual words of the Sutta, "one world of water, dark, and of darkness

that maketh blind''. A more accurate description could not have been given by an eye-witness. Next follows a description of how the beings, sexless, lived on the scum spread out on the surface of the waters; a perfect account of the existence of the primordial protoplasm from which all life began. The remainder of the Sutta is a detailed, though necessarily somewhat allegorical, account of how craving arose in the beings. They took to feeding on different substances, losing their ability to live on the mud and scum that had formerly nourished them, and gradually, over long ages, themselves became differentiated species taking various forms, some ugly, others beautiful.

Is it indeed too much to see in this an indication of how certain branches of these beings, as they developed more specialised organisms along the lines science tends to show, became apes and other mammalia, while others developed into human beings? I have spoken of allegory, but in fact, there is very little allegorical element in the description given by the Buddha — only the very minimum needed to make His Teaching clear to the Brahmin Vasettha. It is practically a literal account of the process. Those who still doubt whether biological evolution is consistent with Buddhism should study the Aggannaya Sutta with understanding and in the light of modern knowledge, and then compare both with the magical accounts of creation given in other scriptures. The more the understanding of the student of Buddhism deepens and widens, the more he becomes amazed and impressed by the further proofs of the Omniscience of the Exalted Buddha that become revealed to him.

# Knowledge and Concepts

“**I**GNORANCE is the foulest stain of all”, declared the Exalted Buddha, and by Ignorance, He meant the belief in Self and all the wrong thinking, wrong actions and wrong speech that arise from it. Ignorance is the primal condition behind all manifestations of life; it is the creator of space and time and consciousness and all the phenomena that have their existence in the space-time complex throughout all the realms of becoming.

It is given as the first link in the chain of Dependent Origination, but this does not mean first in temporal sequence; it is not to be confused with the idea of a First Cause, since Dependent Origination has no temporal beginning. To understand this it is necessary to consider the nature of time itself. Time — that is to say, our knowledge of it, for it has no existence outside the sphere of phenomenal relativity — is governed by the movements of bodies in relation to other bodies, the rotation of the earth and its revolution around the sun, together with the movements of other suns and planets that compose the universe and the nearer and more familiar movements of objects in our immediate vicinity. Because movement (Time) implies change of position (Space), the two concepts of space and time must be identical: they cannot be considered separately. From this we get the space-time complex of Einstein, an interrelated and interdependent combination of ideas that forms a single concept in mathematics. Without material bodies and physical space—that is, the dimension they occupy — there could be no time. Without time nothing could come into existence, and without the existence of phenomena there could be no time. Hence it is meaningless to talk of the beginning of “creation”, or of a First Cause. Creation out of nothing can only mean the creation of time, since time cannot exist in nothingness, and to create something that

did not exist previously itself implies the prior existence of time, because there must be the threefold condition of time already in existence to make such an event possible. There must be "past", the time when the object did not exist; "present", the time of its creation, and "future", the time of its continuance. So we are driven to the conclusion that, as Buddhism insists, there could never have been a time when Samsara and a physical universe in some form or another did not exist.

Again we must refer to the statement in the Visuddhi Magga: "Beginningless is the process of Samsara; the origin of beings revolving in Samsara, being cloaked by Avijja (Ignorance) cannot be discovered." The universe of space and time, the creation of Avijja, is a closed circle of conceptuality in which there is no first cause. It therefore cannot be understood or penetrated by any intellectual means for the mind itself operates within its complex mechanism and is bounded on every side by its related conditions. Ignorance may be called the essential infirmity or limitation of the intellect. It is bound to the processes of cause and effect, *yet at the same time itself creates from moment to moment the process and the conditions.* The mind moves like a prisoner confined within its own constructions; it cannot get outside the orbit of its own limitations and so cannot see the process in its entirety or understand its own nature.

All relative concepts are unreal *because they are relative.* They cannot have any existence in an absolute sense. As Bergson pointed out, no object in the whole universe can be isolated from other objects and known as a "thing in itself". If we try to describe its shape, calling it square or round, we are merely making a comparison between its shape and the shape of other objects that are not square or round. The same thing happens when we think of its texture, colour, weight, smell or any of the other data concerning it that come to us through our senses. All our knowledge is comparative only; our minds are not equipped to deal with concepts outside the realm of comparisons and relative values. Therefore, the thing we know has no real existence; if it had real existence we should be able to cognise it in isolation, without reference to anything else. This is the meaning of the Buddhistic "Sabbe dhamma (or sankhara) anatta" — all phenomenal (compounded) things are void of reality or self-existence. The

material, composite world is nothing but an appearance, based on the illusory activity of the mind.

How, then, is the mind to attain liberation from a condition which is intrinsic to its own nature? That is the problem which it took the Buddha six years of arduous striving to solve. The answer is, to destroy all concepts, beginning with the fundamental delusion of the personal Self on which all the others are based. This is to be achieved by realising, through insight, the impermanent, painful and unreal nature of all phenomena; the Anicca, Dukkha and Anatta of everything, including the constituents of personality. These three concepts, the most important feature of the entire system of Buddhist thought, are in reality only three different aspects of the same truth. That which is Anicca, impermanent, must necessarily be subject to suffering. Its suffering consists in the state of restlessness, unbalance and continual agitation of its component elements; the incessant arising, decay and passing away of the units of atomic and electronic energy that compose its physical substance. In the Buddhist sense, Dukkha means not only suffering associated with consciousness but also the state of disturbance and unbalance in all phenomenal things. It is to be thought of as a cosmic principle, ubiquitous and all-permeating, existing in the nuclear structure of the atom as well as in the growth, decay and death of the physical body and the arising and passing away of the successive moments of consciousness. Wherever there is movement, the state of flux, there is Dukkha — and this means everywhere; it is present in both sentient and insentient matter. Abhidhamma teaches that Dukkha is present in all of the Thirty-One Abodes of Samsara, including the realm of the Asanna-satta. These beings possess only one of the Five Constituents of being, Rupakhandā. They have material form only, without consciousness, for the duration of their existence in the Asannasatta Brahma-loka. This demonstrates that, philosophically speaking, suffering exists even in insentient substance.

Where the two first conditions, impermanence and suffering, exist, there cannot be any real selfhood, since all is momentarily undergoing transformation. It is a state of becoming, not of being; it is always a transitional stage from one state to another. Therefore it must be Anatta; there is no permanent self or soul of a being, or

even identity of an object from one moment to another. All that can be found is a causal process, a current of causal dependence. Science tells us that there is no actual identity between an atom at one moment and what we choose to call the same atom at another moment; its existence is merely a linked chain of causal relationships, a current of activity or energy. In the same way, there is no real identity between the infant, the child, the youth, the man and the old man, though for conventional purposes we have to consider them the same person and call them by the same name throughout the different stages of life. All the physical cells of the body die and are replaced many times during the course of one lifetime, and the body itself changes in appearance through the gradual accumulation of these minute changes. Similarly the consciousness, the contents of the mind, its reactions and so on — all are different at different stages, while the fluid current of consciousness, like a river, flows past, bearing only an illusory identity from one moment to another, as a river is seen as a river only by the general contour of its banks. Heraclitus, who declared that it is not possible to step into the same river twice, was thinking Buddhistically. There is no permanent factor — no *Atta* or essence of selfhood — to be found anywhere in the components of personality, either physical or mental.

Many Western philosophers have arrived at the same conclusion as the Buddhist with regard to this universal condition of flux and unreality, but to realise it intellectually is not enough to liberate the mind from its conventions. The mind can only know this fact in its negative aspect; it cannot, as we have seen, be expected to penetrate beyond the phenomenal and have direct knowledge of the noumenal. In order to do this the mind must conquer itself; it must be subdued and transcended, and it is only possible to achieve this result by meditation.

Meditation begins with concentration; it requires first of all that the activity of the mind should be controlled and fixed in complete stillness, its restless motion brought to a focus of one pointedness (*Ēkagata*). When this is achieved, the whole force of its concentrated energy must be brought to bear and fixed on an object of meditation. In Buddhism there are forty of these *Kammathana*, each one being suitable for a particular type of mind. When

the meditation is successful it brings about a state of realization that is beyond anything accessible to the normal consciousness, carrying knowledge right outside the illusory barrier of phenomenal appearances into the "unconditioned reality", sometimes defined as the Asankhata Dhamma. With this state comes the cessation of all the impurities of consciousness, the end of craving for existence or for material things, for sense enjoyments and all other attachments that imprison sentient beings in the process of Samsara. Hence it is called "Nibbana" — the extinction of the fires of lust, hatred and delusion. Not the extinction of Self, because Self never existed, but the end of the *illusion* of selfhood. When the reality is known and experienced, unreality has no longer any meaning or attraction. When freedom from the thralldom of the six senses and from attachment to material existence is attained there can no longer be any craving for individual rebirth, with the result that rebirth ceases, and with the end of rebirth comes the end of Anicca, Dukkha and Anatta.

The Buddha did not try to describe Nibbana. That which does not come into any of the categories of ordinary experience cannot be described. There is no vocabulary for it because there is no ground of common experience on which the meaning of words used to convey it could be understood. Language can be used only concerning relative things; there is no language or mode of speech for that which is unrelated to anything else. Had the Buddha tried to describe Nibbana He would have falsified it by using the terms of phenomenal experience, which are not applicable. That is why He refused to answer questions about Nibbana, even though many people thought, because of His silence, either that Nibbana is annihilation or that the Buddha Himself had not experienced it. Both views are wrong, Nibbana is not annihilation, for there is nothing of a self to annihilate; it is annihilation only in the sense of the extinction of the fires of craving, hatred and delusion. Nibbana may be called Reality, so far as that word is not misunderstood to mean God, Spirit or any other anthropomorphic concept: it is the sole reality as distinct from the changing forms of the transitory world. There is a great danger in using any word to serve for "Nibbana" except Nibbana itself, because everyone tends to put his own interpretation on a particular word, according to his own associated ideas;

and as we have seen, such ideas, since they are formed by and bound up in relative distinctions, sometimes highly individual and personalised, are certain to be misleading. It is a further proof, if any were needed, of the genuineness of the Buddha's Enlightenment that rather than give a wrong impression of what He had realised in order to convince and satisfy fools, He preferred that they should leave His presence doubting His Buddhahood.

When asked about the existence or non-existence of a Buddha after Parinibbana, the Exalted One replied: "After Parinibbana the Tathagata cannot be said to exist; neither does He not exist. Nor does He both exist and not exist nor does He neither exist nor not exist." This means that both existence and non-existence, and all entanglements of these associated ideas, are phenomenal, and therefore unreal, concepts. The point of the Buddha's Teaching is to do away with all such concepts: they are called "Ditti" — "Views" — and as such have nothing to do with reality. The Buddha said, "I have no theories. I have reached the Further Shore".

# The Rationale of Conduct

FROM this necessarily belief comparison of modern scientific ideas and the teachings of over two thousand years ago it will be seen how strikingly they dovetail and supplement one another.

The question then arises; how was it possible for the sages of that remote period to penetrate the illusion of material substance and find that it was composed of electronic forces, and to form so accurate an idea of the nature of the universe and its processes? The answer can only lie in accepting the belief that they were able to raise their consciousness beyond the sphere of the mundane, so that they were able to view phenomena from an entirely different angle of perception, through the practice of Jhana or meditation. They had no laboratory equipment, no microscopes or telescopes and no mathematical formulae to guide them; and when they had made their discovery they had no technical language by means of which to impart their findings to others. It would indeed have been hopeless for the Buddha to attempt a description of the nature of the universe as He had realised it, on these lines; no one of His time would have been capable of understanding Him. That is why He refused to answer questions concerning the origin of the world, or whether it is eternal or not eternal. Had He given an affirmative reply or a negative one to either question it would have been in a sense untrue. All such queries, being based on a false conception of existence, are wrongly framed, and are not capable of being answered by "yes" or "no". The Buddha's reply, in effect, was that questions of that kind are not conducive to release from rebirth, but the implication always remained that the true answer could be gained by the seeker, through insight, although it could not be imparted to others. The Iddhi, or so-called "supernatural" powers gained by the Arahats were simply the knowledge of the hidden laws of the universe and how to make use of them, but by the Buddha they were regarded as but another and greater obstacle to the quenching of desire and the attainment of liberation.

The law of causality is like an iceberg; only one-eighth of it or less is visible, the rest lies below the surface. We observe the effects while remaining ignorant of the causes.

When we switch on the electric current the light appears; we know how to harness electric power, and we know that it exists because of its manifestation as light, but of its real nature we know nothing.

The scientist Max Planck, wrote; "What sense, then, it may be asked, in talking of definite causal relations in regard to cases where nobody in the world is capable of tracing their function? The answer to that question is simple. As has been said again and again the concept of causality is something transcendental — quite independent of the nature of the researches and it would be valid if there were no perceiving subject at all . . . We must distinguish between the validity of the causal principle and the practicability of its application". Even the scientist, therefore, has to admit causes beyond his comprehension, such causes existing in a realm that is distinct from the subjective realm of the investigator. Concerning this the Buddha declared: "Whether Buddhas arise or do not arise (to perceive and reveal the Truth) the law of causality, the principle of the dependence of this factor upon that, the casual sequence of events, remains a fixed and unalterable law".

"The concept of causality is something transcendental". This is a significant phrase indeed, coming from a scientist. It is precisely in this transcendental concept of the causal law that Buddhism establishes the moral principle of Kamma. The materialist rejects the idea of God and Soul, and because he finds no evidence of a moral or other purpose in life, he repudiates all belief in the moral order of the universe as well. Buddhism also is independent of a theistic creator and of a soul or ego-principle, but Buddhism maintains the validity of the moral law. Likewise Buddhism admits the infinite multiplicity of worlds and the apparent insignificance of man — yet man is the most significant of all beings, according to Buddhism; man is of more significance than the gods. Why is this? it is because the gods are merely enjoying temporarily the results of good actions performed in the past, but man contains within himself additional potentialities. He is the master of his own destiny; on the battlefield of his own mind he can conquer the ten thousand world-systems and put an end to Samsara, just as did the Buddha. But in order to do this he must understand the nature of Kamma, the principle that governs his internal and external world.

“Yam kincayam purisapuggalo patisanvedeti sukham va dukkham va adukkamasukham va sabbam tam pubbekatahetu issaraninmanahetu ahotu appaccayati”. (Anguttaranikaya, Tika Nipata) — “To believe that the cause of happiness or misery is God, Chance or Fate, leads to a state of inaction”. Our spiritual evolution depends upon ourselves and ourselves alone. If there is any meaning behind the ethical laws, any exercise of freewill in the choice between good and evil, right and wrong, it stands to reason that there must be the possibility of developing or degenerating, of evolution or involution. If progress were a mechanical process with its outcome a foregone conclusion, there would be no point in any freedom of choice in a world of opposites. The law of Kamma, or causal resultants, must work both ways, like a law of mathematics, otherwise it cannot be a universal law. We cannot, as some believe, have a law that works only one way and gives us the best results even though we choose the worst causes. Freedom of selection between right and wrong, between ignorance and knowledge, implies the highest degree of personal responsibility. Under the influence of materialism humanity is rapidly losing sight of spiritual values and is choosing the path of darkness and ignorance. What is needed today is a return to the wisdom of the past, which is also the highest wisdom of the future---the wisdom that belongs to all ages and all the races of mankind. Without that there can be no lasting peace or certainty of progress for individuals or nations.

Buddhism teaches three essentials; to abandon all evil, to fulfil all good and to purify the mind. Its teaching is a doctrine of scientific principles based upon analysis, discrimination and reasoned investigation. Yet “Good and evil” and “right and wrong” are terms that do not rightly belong to Buddhism; we have the choice of Kusala kamma (skilful action) and Akusala Kamma (unskilful action), the first denoting those actions which are pure and lead to good results, the second meaning actions performed under the influence of delusion and tainted with greed, hatred and ignorance, which lead to retrogression. When the materialist states that he finds no reason to believe that life is governed by any moral principle or that it has any ultimate purpose, but every reason for supposing that right and wrong, good and evil, are merely inventions of the human mind, the Buddhist reply is that so far as purpose is

concerned he is right. The process of Samsara has no purpose; it is "empty phenomena" without any ultimate meaning. But all the same it is controlled by the causal law, and that law is, *transcendentally*, an ethical law. The purpose of life is whatever we make it for ourselves, and its goal such as we define for ourselves, but all the time we are subject to moral law in every volitional action, mental or physical. The deep conviction which all men, even the least civilised, possess, that there is a universal distinction between what is called right and wrong, persists in the face of all apparent evidence to the contrary. Where does it come from? Can it be justified?

If it cannot be supported by reason, then life becomes nothing but "a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying - nothing". Against that conclusion all our instincts revolt. If reason cannot come to their aid the instincts dispense with reason, for the psychological fact is that we would far sooner abandon reason than lose our faith in absolute justice. And our instincts in that respect are right, though our reasoning be faulty. Drawn unwillingly into an argument on freewill versus predestination, Dr. Samuel Johnson roared, "We know we have freewill, and there's an end on it!" Most people feel the same way about moral values.

That, actually, is our starting-point, but it cannot be proffered as anything more than collateral proof. Since people are subject to delusion in so many other matters the argument cannot stand on its own, but it is very strongly reinforced by (a) its universal existence among all types of men, in all stages of civilisation and historical epochs and (b) the fact that although the finer points of moral conduct may differ widely in different parts of the world and at different periods, the basic principles of morality are recognised everywhere and receive universal assent.

By "basic principles" we are to understand, not the local and temporary standards that prevail from time to time, and which give place to others as modes of thought change, but certain fundamental rules that are found to be identical all over the world, and which provide the foundations on which society rests, by enabling people to live together in communities to their mutual advantage. Morality is not, for instance, a matter of clothing. The dress that is suitable for one climate, period or civilisation may be considered indecent in another; it is entirely a

question of custom, not in any way involving moral considerations, yet the artificialities of convention are continually being confused with principles that are valid and unchanging. It is strange that so much importance is attached to them when history shows that it is possible for a complete revolution in ideas to take place within so brief a period as one generation. Michael Angelo depicted many of the characters, both angelic and human, in his Sistine Chapel frescoes completely nude. A subsequent Pope, outraged by their appearance, desecrated the artist's work by commissioning an inferior painter to add loin cloths to the male figures. Marriage customs equally have little bearing on essential morality. In a polygamous society, to have only one wife might quite reasonably be thought an outrage against the customs of one's fellows, and therefore "immoral". In Tibet, a girl who has had a child before marriage, instead of being disgraced and humiliated and properly ashamed of herself, as she is expected to be in Western society, is highly honoured and sought after in marriage because she has proved herself fertile. In many parts of feudal Europe it was at one time the custom for a newly-wed girl to spend the first night with the lord of the manor. Such customs are now considered barbarous, but at one time they represented the norm. Marriage between brother and sister was the rule for the Pharaohs, and the records of antiquity provide other instances of incestuous relationships that carried with them no particular moral condemnation. Among the warriors of Sparta and the ancient Samurai caste of Japan, sexual relationships which in Europe are severely punished by law, were not only permitted but actually encouraged, the reason being that heterosexual relationships were thought to have the effect of softening and effeminising the martial nature. It is abundantly clear, therefore, that all such local and temporary fashions in behaviour are governed by expediency and current beliefs; they represent the standard of conduct which is thought best for the welfare of a particular community at a particular time. Depending on circumstances and conditions, they are liable to change as these undergo alteration. Communities which are mainly pastoral and agricultural, or nomadic as in the case of the desert tribes of Arabia, tend to be polygamous, and any change in their customs is usually traceable to a change in their economic conditions or mode of livelihood. In the same way the

sexual customs of the Spartans, quite apart from religious prejudices, are naturally frowned upon in a society that wishes, as most national groups at present do, to increase its population.

It has been the mistake of most systems of morality based upon religion to place too much emphasis on the non-essentials, with the result that, in the frequent phases of reaction against an artificial morality, such as the present generation's revolt against sexual restrictions, the really important rules are thrown aside likewise. Under Christianity, for instance, the very word "morality" has come to mean almost exclusively *sexual* morality, so that it may be said of a man who is a confirmed thief, liar and swindler that, despite his failings he is a very moral man — meaning that he is faithful to the one wife the law allows him! The danger here lies in the fact that thoughtful people who are intelligent enough to realise that these rules are artificial and not based on any transcendental, universally-valid principles, are liable to fall into the error of thinking the same about all the other ethical laws. This is not to say that sexual rules of conduct have no importance; they have, but not in the sense that it is necessarily wrong to have more than one wife. It may be legally wrong in one country at one time, but it is not therefore wrong from the moral point of view, since a plurality of wives and concubines is sanctioned by highly moral people in other parts of the world. Mohammedanism permits a man four wives and the sexual enjoyment of those "his right hand possesses", i.e. his female slaves. It does not, however, permit him to commit adultery with the wife of another. Similarly, a prince in the time of the Buddha was given a retinue of concubines and dancing girls. Man is by nature a polygamous animal, and systems that permit a plurality of wives can with greater justice and realism punish severely any man who commits adultery with the wife of another, since he can have no possible excuse for his offence. Actually, adultery is rare among the polygamous sects for this very reason, whereas in the West it is all too common, and so has to be dealt with leniently.

We have already noted that the universe itself is amoral; it does not show any indication of being planned on what we should recognise as ethical principles. It knows nothing, apparently, of justice or mercy; still less is it

concerned with sexual rules, except where these are connected with the preservation of species and their propagation, that is, their biological compatibility. A dog in its wild state will not try to mate with a cat because there is no biological affinity between their species, though I am informed on credible authority that under the artificial conditions produced by association with humans this is occasionally (but very rarely) attempted. But in quite normal circumstances a dog will certainly attempt sexual connection with another dog. The working of instinct in such a case is clear. Nature knows no such thing as "unnatural vice", it is only virtue that is "unnatural".

Buddhism does not claim that to live virtuously, in any sense, is to live in harmony or accordance with the laws of the universe. Quite the contrary. Nature is governed by the law of craving and self-gratification. The practice of Sila (morality) is counter to the laws of nature; it aims to nullify and destroy the conditions of Samsara which are inherently bad, and to open a way out of these conditions. It is the animal, ruled solely by the promptings of instinct and self-preservation, that lives according to the laws of nature. Seeing that the universe is not the work of a beneficent Creator the Buddhist is not surprised or dismayed by the discovery that it shows no signs of a moral law or purpose. Samsara is the outcome of Ignorance; why should it manifest any ethical principle? The materialist, in claiming that moral laws are merely man-made, without any sanction either from nature or from supernatural sources, is right to a certain extent, but only Buddhism is able to show how this can be true, yet at the same time maintain the validity of the moral laws. The fact is that there is one kind of law for the world — the natural law which is completely amoral — but another law for getting outside the world and its conditions. This is the Dhamma Sanantana, the "Ancient Law" that the Buddha referred to when He said, "Not by hating does hatred cease; by love alone hatred ceases. This is the Ancient Law." Not the law of nature, but the Law discovered by those who made their escape from the evil conditions of nature, the Buddhas, Pacceka Buddhas and Arahats of the past. Buddhist morality is therefore on a stronger and more rational basis than any system of religious ethics which attempts to impose morality on man by pretending that moral laws are the laws of a Creator whose

own work, the world, itself shows no evidence of morality. This point is vitally important, since it indicates at once the superior realism of Buddhist thought over the philosophy of the theistic systems, which are bound to ignore the contradictions of their doctrines that are to be found everywhere in nature. It establishes morality on an altogether higher and more invulnerable plane. The so-called "problem of evil", the great stumbling-block of Christian theologians, does not exist in Buddhism; it was not necessary to invent a Garden of Eden and a mythical apple to account for the existence of "original sin". The man who kills, steals, fornicates, lies and stupifies himself with drink is not going contrary to the "laws of God" or of nature. He is following the laws of the world—that is, the essential conditions of Samsara, dominated and brought into being by Craving — and he will continue to revolve in the miserable spheres of existence until his ignorance is dispelled and he realises that his egoistical sensory indulgences carry with them a tremendous burden of suffering.

This suffering is not the penalty of transgressing any law, but the natural consequence of following the law of ignorance instead of the higher law of wisdom. The law of nature is the law of ignorance; its bidding is: "Do whatever your lust and hatred prompts you to do, *for this is your nature*, as it is the nature of the beasts. Look around you and you will find the whole world following this, the law of nature and of life. This is the way to remain in the Kama-loka, the realms of passion and sensual pleasure!" But the voice of higher wisdom tells us: "The law of the world is an evil law. Giving transitory and illusory pleasure through the indulgence of the senses, it claims payment in suffering. Look around you and you will see all sentient beings paying this price in pain and despair. They revolve ceaselessly in the miserable toils of Samsara, self-bound and self-condemned. The law of Samsara is their own law, because they in their ignorance have created Samsara and the conditions of Samsara are the conditions of their own nature. Cease to follow the base of law of the world, the law of lust, hatred and delusion; destroy its power. Follow instead the law that gives release from birth and death and brings all beings to Nibbana, the Eternal and Unchanging, the Everlasting Bliss!"

# Rational. Morality

**W**HAT, then, can we regard as the basic, or universal and timeless principles of morality? They could not be better summed up than in the Five Precepts given by the Buddha for the guidance of laymen. It should be noted that these are precepts offered for guidance; they are not commandments.

Anyone is free to break them if he wishes or cannot help doing so, but the Buddhist understands that, in accordance with the law of Kamma he breaks them at his own risk, and must inevitably pay the penalty for his indulgence.

The first Precept is not to take the life of any sentient being. It bears a much wider meaning than the "Thou shalt not kill" of Christianity. The latter applies only to human beings; but Buddhism, more scientifically, places all life in the same category, and the Buddhist is expected to extend his compassion to every living being without distinction or reservation. All are enmeshed in Samsara and all are struggling upwards, evolving towards something higher. At the same time, all are suffering, and no one should willingly increase the sum of pain and distress in the world, or try to interrupt the working out of the Kamma of another. Parallel with this runs the law which ordains that he who kills must himself be killed, having created that condition by the volitional impulse of his own thought and deed. "He who lives by the sword shall die by the sword" is a truism, but the Dhamma reinforces its authority by revealing the causal principle, mental in origin, which underlies it. This is the basis of Buddhist "harmlessness", the foundation of Metta and Karuna. If only this one rule were observed throughout the world, wars, murders and violence would come to an end and the security of all peoples would be assured.

The second rule is not to take that which is not one's own by right. It is the equivalent of the Christian "Thou shalt not steal". Here again we have a basic principle, in the sense that it is one without which no form of society could cohere. So far as the writer is aware, the Spartan community of ancient Greece was the only nation in history that did not condemn theft, but it was the law of Athens that finally prevailed. Theft is the result of greed, and is more harmful to the offender than to the victim.

The third is the Precept not to indulge in excessive sexuality. It is sometimes translated as meaning not to indulge in *unlawful* sexuality, but the Pali word Kama means only sensual lust. It says nothing about "lawful" or "unlawful". As we have seen, fashions change as to what is lawful and what is not, and the Buddha was not concerned with passing modes of thought or local customs. In the India of 2,500 years ago a rich man could have many women without being thought immoral or being guilty of any unlawful act. The Precept is, actually, directed against excessive indulgence in any kind of sensual pleasure but particularly unrestrained eroticism. Sexual craving is the greatest of the Kilesas or impurities since it is that which binds most strongly to the wheel of rebirth in the Kama-loka. Buddhism agrees with Freud in viewing sex as the mainspring of most human and animal activities and the most powerful force for maintaining attachment to life. The Buddhist layman is encouraged to develop his self control by periods of continence, a practice which is beneficial both to mind and body, since it purifies the mind, strengthens the will and conserves vital physical energy. The Monk, on the other hand, must observe complete celibacy, the rule of Brahmachariya.

In this connection an interesting fact is well worth noting, since it has a definite bearing on one of the most pressing problems of present-day economics. It is well known to all students of economics that the general standard of living, of health and well-being, is always highest in those countries which are under-populated. It is in the over-populated countries such as India and China that the depressed millions suffer continually from malnutrition and consequent disease. In those countries, human life is cheap; untold millions die yearly from starvation, while the land is scourged by famines, sickness and riots, simply because there is not sufficient

food to support the enormous and ever-growing population. Where the birth-rate is high and ignorance of dietetics and hygiene is rife, disease becomes the normal condition of the majority of the people, and even a high death-rate cannot counteract the evil. It is only necessary to compare the physique of the Average Indian of the poorer classes with, say, that of the Burmese on a similar level, to note at once the tremendous difference made by the higher standard of living enjoyed by the latter. Burma, like the other Theravada Buddhist countries, is comparatively under-populated; for generations past perhaps the most thinly-populated land in the whole vastness of Asia. Its people, therefore, even the poorest, are healthy, sturdy and vigorous, except where abnormal conditions, the result of recent invasion and insurrections, have brought about an exception to the general rule. Burma and Siam, both fertile and productive countries, are sparsely populated although their people are by nature as prolific as others, and the cause is not far to seek. For centuries past a greater proportion of the men of these countries have led celibate lives as Monks, and the laymen have practised sexual continence to a far greater extent than elsewhere, as the direct result of Buddhist teaching.

This is the best, most certain and most beneficial form of birth-control. It has given the Theravada countries a standard of prosperity unequalled throughout the whole of Asia and only matched by that of a few nations in Europe, where its sole counterpart may be found in the under-populated Scandinavian countries. While other nations have been forced to wage war on their neighbours to support their ever-expanding population, Buddhist Burma has in the past been able to live at peace, enjoying the fruits of the fertile land without class-antagonism any of the many evils that arise from the struggle for existence among starving millions. Such wars as have been known in the history of Burma have been caused neither by economics nor religion. To keep the population figures low is the only sure recipe for the perfect Equalitarian State, so far as this can be achieved. Buddhist Burma achieved it quite unconsciously, long before the invention of artificial Western ideologies based on class-warfare, imperialistic expansion or the repression of personal liberty.

Here is a point for students of economics to ponder over if they wish to gain a realistic insight into the true causes of poverty and economic injustice. They will be obliged to admit that this advantage enjoyed by the Theravada countries of Asia is a direct result of the existence of the Buddhist Sangha and the salutary teaching of Buddhism with regard to sexual restraint. This is one of the blessings conferred by the Sangha which are not mentioned in the Buddhist Scriptures, but the passage of time and historical developments have made it manifest. It can be examined and demonstrated in the light of the Buddhist law of cause and effect. For those who demand some concrete proof of the benefits conferred by Buddhism in a practical sense, here is one that even the most confirmed sceptic cannot deny -- the proof that supporting a Sangha of celibate Monks, far from being a drag on the economic resources of a country as Marxism claims it to be, rewards that country with the blessing of prosperity. If the Buddhist Sangha were to become a universal institution most of the major causes of the world's misery — wars, famines, exploitation and necessity for economic expansion — would automatically disappear within a few decades. It is not an impractical ideal, but one based on commonsense and sound economic principles, to which every intelligent man must give assent. Marxism, in its characteristically unrealistic way, ignores the fact that, so long as the world is over populated there can never be equal distribution of its resources, or enough to support the surplus population on a reasonably decent level of subsistence. Buddhism alone can solve this urgent problem and solve it ethically, without recourse to artificial and psychologically harmful methods of birth-control. Malthus (1766-1834) in his classic "Essay on the Principle of Population as it affects the Future Improvement of Society" mentions "*moral restraint*" as one of the chief factors that can help to avert the dangers of over-population. On statistical grounds he proved that if the world population continued to increase, a time would come when the earth would no longer be able to feed the whole of mankind. Since his period science, by combating disease and increasing the average expectation of life by a number of years, has increased this danger of over-population, while at the same time many countries, impelled by nationalistic expansionist doctrines, are engaged in a mad

race to increase their population still further. In this, Soviet Russia is helped by the official abolition of religious moral codes relating to marriage and procreation. \*

Man is the only animal that does not have periods of natural sexual inactivity during which the body can recover its vitality, and unfortunately our present civilisation from the West has laid so much emphasis on the erotic side of life by commercialising it, that the modern man is exposed to a ceaseless barrage of sexual stimulation from every side. Much of the neurosis of present-day life is traceable to this unbalanced state of affairs, wherein men are expected to be monogamous yet women are encouraged in every way to "glamourise" themselves — not as the Oriental woman, for her husband alone, but to excite in every man passions that society forbids him to indulge. Sex should be given its due place in the normal man's and woman's life; it should be neither unhealthily repressed nor morbidly exaggerated. And it should always be under the full control of the will, as it can be if it is regarded sanely and placed in its proper perspective.

The fourth Precept, "Musavada veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami", means not only to abstain from lying, but also from all forms of evil speech — abuse, slander, harsh and biased criticism and anything that can cause injury or distress to another. Here again, compassion and benevolence are the keynotes to understanding the Buddhist rule. To abstain from Musavada is to refrain from saying to or about anyone that which we should not wish said to or of ourselves. It means scrupulous honesty and adherence to truth, and something more — tolerance and kindness.

Fifthly, the Buddha enjoined His followers to abstain from drugs and intoxicants. Christianity has no such precept, but Buddhism requires full command of the mental faculties, an unclouded and penetrating intellect to pierce through the illusion of Samsara and find reality. The man whose mind is well-balanced and purified by understanding does not need to take refuge in liquor to dull a mental pain. Drunkenness is the outcome of a sense of frustration and futility. It takes hold of people who subconsciously realise themselves to be failures, even though they may be successful in a worldly sense. It is a refuge from Dukkha, but

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\* This subject is more fully dealt with in the writer's pamphlet "The Glory of Burma", published in Burmese by the Burma Buddhist World-Mission.

only a temporary and false refuge, heaping illusion on illusion, a fictitious gaiety erected on the bottomless abyss of despair. Its final result can never be anything but utter physical and moral disintegration.

If we examine these five simple principles of conduct objectively we find that they are sufficient in themselves to guide and regulate the daily life of man, in every age and every land. They have nothing to do with fashions of period or place or with arbitrary prohibitions. They can therefore claim to be basic and fundamental, in the only real sense. They are moreover, sane and balanced in outlook and intention. They are not built on dogmas such as "Thou shalt have none other God but me . . . for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God", but on clear and explicit reason.

Behind each of the Precepts there lies the unspoken but evident intention to overcome the craving engendered by egotism, which is the only real evil. In Buddhism, the meaning of good and evil takes a different form from that found in any other system of thought. Evil is simply anything which binds us to the delusion of self and keeps us revolving in the cycle of rebirth. It is self-delusion, craving, lust, hatred, avarice — all the Asavas, or impurities of the mind. Nothing else. The actions that arise from it are only the outward and visible manifestations of the real evil, which is a subjective quality existing as an essential characteristic of phenomenal individuality. It arises in the mind as the percusor of all such actions and their resultants: "Mano pubbagama dhamma; manosettha, manomaya" — "Mind precedes all phenomena, mind is the chief, they are all mind-made."

# Mind and Matter

**T**HIS brings us face to face with the most perplexing problem of science and philosophy—the relationship of Mind (or what in Buddhism is more aptly termed “psychic factors”) and material substance. If we accept the theory of organic structures that mutate and develop over the generations, we must next ask ourselves whether there is any essential difference between organic matter, or matter which forms a part of a living organism, and so-called “dead” matter. The latter concept, however, is already somewhat out-dated, since physics no longer takes a static view of the material universe.

Science makes no distinction today between organic and inorganic matter, and this view, correct as it undoubtedly is, has been interpreted in terms of materialism. That this interpretation cannot be supported is proved by certain experiments, one of which is fairly well known. It is that of placing a subject under deep hypnosis and telling him that he is about to be branded with a hot iron. A pencil or some similar object is then placed on his skin, and a blister appears, together with all the accompanying symptoms of a severe burn. What happens in such a case is that the patient’s mind is entirely under the dominance of suggestion and when it is fully convinced that a burn is about to be inflicted, by some process as yet unknown the message travels to the part of the body that is touched, and the flesh reacts exactly as though it had been in contact with a branding iron. In other words, the material substance reacts to the suggestion of the mind; it is completely dominated by the preceding mental state. “Mano pubbangama dhamma” —“Mind precedes all phenomena”.

Again, an identical psycho-physical relationship is seen in the case of Christian mystics who exhibit the phenomena known as the “Stigmata”, which are popularly

ascribed to a miracle. The Stigmata are actual wounds in the hands and feet, which sometimes appear on the bodies of Christian religious and ecstasies, reproducing the wounds inflicted on Jesus at the Crucifixion. Invariably they are found in deeply religious people who have experienced states of ecstasy or trance. These states are analogous to the hypnotic conditions but are self-induced. The mystic meditates on the Crucifixion of Jesus and identifies himself or herself (the subjects are frequently women) with the suffering victim until the experience becomes an actuality in the mind. Here intense faith and concentration take the place of hypnotic suggestion from outside, but the result is the same. The physical body obeys the conviction of the mind just as in the case of the subject who is persuaded that he is being branded with a hot iron, and the wounds duly appear. The devout believer hails a miracle, the materialistic sceptic scoffs at what he believes to be a fraud. Both are wrong, though the believer is nearer the truth than the sceptic. The secret of the phenomenon lies in the pre-eminence of the mind, the determining factor in all physical processes.

Science is now beginning to explore the unknown territory of the mind and serious attempts are being made to define the frontiers between mind and matter. Without guide or compass it is fatally easy to take a wrong path and arrive at hopelessly false conclusions in a science which is yet in its infancy. Enough has been established, however, to indicate that mind is not a product of inert matter or in the last analysis dominated by materialistic principles. The precise nature of the relationship between the two may never be known, but from all we are able to observe it seems clear that matter is governed by laws that exist on an immaterial or psychic level. Our tendency to confuse the effect with the cause arises from the fact that the effect, which is material, is more apparent to our senses than is the non-material cause. It may well be that the Western scientist and philosopher encounters difficulties because he is looking for a frontier that is not there, or because he is looking for a relationship of opposite principles when he should be exploring a complex of interdependent factors.

Let us try to elucidate this from the Buddhist standpoint. In Buddhist philosophy a living being, of whatever order, is considered under two main heads, "Nama" and

“Rupa”. Nama signifies mental factors, Rupa stands for the physical form, or, in an extended sense, any physical or material phenomena, or any event that occupies space, since every object, considered dynamically, consists of a series of events. This division, however, is the crude division pertaining to relative truth only. Actually the whole organism is only an aggregate of four primary attributes: Apo, Vayo, Tejo and Pathavi, or Cohesion Extension, Kinetic Energy (Temperature) and Solidity, and these attributes or qualities are shared in varying combinations by all material substances both organic and inorganic. The psychic division consists of Vedana (Sensation), Sanna (Perception), Sankhara (predispositions or conformations conditioned by past volitional activity — a word impossible to render adequately in English) and Vinnana, (Consciousness). These groups (Khandhas) are governed by the immaterial law of cause and effect which takes its pattern from the impulse of volitional action or Kamma, which is actuated by craving. Sankhara is perhaps the most difficult factor to define of the four mental Khandhas, but it is precisely in this concept of Sankhara that the clue to the inter-relationship of mind and matter is to be found, for Sankhara stands for the whole aggregate of mental immaterial conformations, arising from past habits of thought and action that brings into momentary existence, and gives direction to, the phenomenal being or personality, including the physical form.

The Four Mahabhutas, Apo, Tejo, Vayo and Pathavi, are not material elements in the crude European Mediaeval sense; they are rather immaterial qualities which manifest to the sense as material substance. Hence it is said that to form a single material atom all four of the Mahabhutas must be present; not one of them can exist independently of the others. The atom of physics is a unit of electronic energy, but in combination with other atoms it assumes the material form characterised by the four qualities, and it is as such that it becomes preceptible to the senses.

Scientific knowledge has led us out of the realm of what is called “naive realism” — that is, the acceptance of the reality of material phenomena at their face value — into an insubstantial world that bears little resemblance to the external universe with which our senses make us familiar. In this abstract world

of the physicist, matter becomes electronic energy in a continual state of flux, and what is to all appearances solid substance resolves itself into a complex of immaterial forces. This has caused scientific thinkers to question the validity of all knowledge which comes to us through the channels of our senses, because the knowledge of physics itself depends on empirical observation. To take a simple illustration; when we perceive colour and give it a name such as "red" or "green", we are not perceiving anything that has real existence as "red" or "green", we are merely giving a name to the sensation that arises in our consciousness when certain light waves impinge on the retina of the eye. These rays are not a property of the substance which we then describe as being "red" or "green"; they are in fact only the rays which are not absorbed by that substance but are reflected back from its surface. In other words, there is no essential quality of "redness" or "greenness", but only a subjective sensation caused by neural and cerebral activity set in motion by the light waves entering the eye. This process of cognition through the Cakkudvara (Eye-door) is similar to that experienced through each of the other sense-channels, a process which is fully analysed in Abhidhamma philosophy: it leads inevitably to the conclusion that the world of our sense perceptions is a subjective world fabricated from a merely relative reality and that the dynamic world of physics bears hardly any relationship to that which we cognise by means of sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch. The mind (Mano), which Buddhism classifies as a sixth sense, correlates the data obtained through the senses and is thus caught up in its own illusory constructions, but these constructions manifesting as material objects and events in time and space, are determined by the preceding mental dispositions, or Sankhara. To understand Sankhara as a factor of personality it is necessary to go more fully into the doctrine of Kamma, but before doing so it may be mentioned that the identification of Sankhara and Kamma is so close that Kamma frequently appears as a synonym for Sankhara in the Buddhist chain of Dependent Origination (Paticca-samuppada). The Buddhistic unification of mind-body (as opposed to the Western concept of mind and body as discrete factors) which this implies, will be dealt with more fully later.

# The Causal Origination of Mind-Body

**P**ATTICA Samuppada, the chain or cycle of causality, consists of twelve Nidanas (links), and in Buddhist philosophy it embraces the whole process of the arising of a sentient being, from life to life and from moment to moment of consciousness, in the following formula:

From AVIJJA (Ignorance) arises Sankhara.

From SANKHARA (Predispositions determined by past volitional actions, or Kamma) arises Vinnana

From VINNANA (Consciousness) arises Nama-Rupa

From NAMA-RUPA (Psychic Aggregates and Physical Aggregate, or roughly Mind and Form) arises Salayatana

From SALAYATANA (the Field of Sense Perception) arises Phasso

From PHASSO (Contact between the organ of sense and the sense-object) arises Vedana

From VEDANA (Sensation) arises Tanha

From TANHA (Craving) arises Upadana

From UPADANA (Grasping attachment) arises Bhava

From BHAVA (The Process of Becoming, or Life-continuum) arises Jati

From JATI (Birth — or, in another sense, momentary coming into existence) Jara-marana, soka, parideva, dukkha, domanass' upayasa — Old age and death, grief sorrow, lamentation and despair arise.

For the proper understanding of this causal nexus it must be viewed in different ways according to the particular aspect to be considered; sometimes as a whole, and sometimes split up into its component parts. For our present purpose a triune division is necessary, the first two links to be taken as representing the agglomerate of past phases of experience from previous births; the following eight

(from Vinnana to Bhava) covering the contemporary existence, and the final two, Jati and Jara-marana with its resultants, as presenting a comprehensive survey of the conditions to be expected in the future. At the same time it must be remembered that the entire process is taking place momentarily and continuously, and that each of the Nidanas, to whatever section we have arbitrarily assigned it for our immediate purpose, may be considered equally present in each of the others. Thus Jati and Jara-marana, present in the continuous process of arising and decay in the future, were also present in the past and are active in the contemporary middle section. The same is true of Avijja and Sankhara. In one sense, Paticca Samuppada represents cause and effect operating in three connected life-sequences, while in another it stands for the same causal process which is going on from moment to moment throughout a single life-span. A stricter analysis of the meaning of the technical Pali terms is necessary in order to appreciate this. Buddhism views the process of arising and passing away as one continuous stream, in which birth and death follow upon one another with the arising and passing away of each momentary unit of consciousness.

For our present purpose we have to take the triune division as our basis for understanding the law of Kamma; that is to say, the grouping into past, present and future existences. Here we find the first two Nidanas bracketed under what is called "Atita Kamma Bhava", or Past Causal Continuum. This represents the aggregate of activities performed under the influence of ignorance in the past, which must bear resultants in the same life, the present or the future lives. These resultants when they fructify are known as "Paccupana Vipaka Bhava" or Present Resultant Continuum, and they condition the Nidanas of the middle section from Vinnana to Vedana (five links). In effect this means that Consciousness, Mind-Body, Sense-organs, Contact and Sensation in the present take their arising and their particular form from the willed causal actions of the past. If these were good, the Nidanas springing from them must be good; if the actions were bad, the resultants must be of an inferior kind. Hence the inherent differences, physical and mental, between different beings, and

the varying conditions of sickness or health, riches or poverty, in which they find themselves. This is governed by a law which is as impersonal and mechanical as the laws of physics. But although present conditions are thus pre-determined by past actions, the Buddhist view is not fatalistic. While the circumstances confronting us in the present were predetermined by ourselves, our *reaction* to them is not predetermined. The remaining Nidanas of the middle section, from Tanha to Bhava, are under the control of our will; hence they are grouped under the heading of "Paccupana Kamma Bhava", which means Present Causal Continuum and is the counterpart of the "Atita Kamma Bhava" of the first section. It is as free volitional action (Kamma) that the casual process can be given a new direction. It can even be brought to an end. This section, it will be observed, begins with Tanha (Craving), as the first section begins with Avijja (Ignorance). Because these two, which are in a sense complementary, both stand at the forefront of their respective sections, and both sections represent the sphere of willed action, it is possible to extirpate them, and in extirpating Craving, Ignorance is also overcome. This is the purpose and object of the Noble Eightfold Path, with its final goal, Nibbana.

The incompatibility between a mechanistically-determined universe and one in which free will is possible is resolved in Buddhism in much the same way that it has been dealt with by science. So far as we have been able to see hitherto the causal law has been absolute, and all enquiry outside the realm of conditionality must still be referred to a different dimension of experience. But the rigid determinism of science has given way under the impact of quantum physics, and we now know that the causal law which operates predictably for large quantities does not necessarily govern the activities of any specified unit. No law has been so far discovered that is equally valid statistically and individually. That this leaves an opening for the admission of free will has been hotly contested by some scientific philosophers who prefer to cling to the concept of a rigidly mechanistic universe, but that concept no longer holds its former authoritative position. In the sphere of

human action we must acknowledge that choice is severely circumscribed — by conditions, situations, environment, heredity, individual psychology and other factors — yet despite this, man shows a quality that differs very greatly from the conditioned reflexes of Pavlov's dogs. He is not solely a piece of mechanism, reacting uniformly and predictably to the nerve-stimuli set up by sense-contacts and associations. A man, confronted by the choice between a good action and a bad one, may have a very strong predisposition in favour of the bad action, due to habit-formation Kamma, but he can overcome it. He can mitigate his Tanha and Avijja, taming them to actions that are profitable and useful to society; or, as we have seen, he can if he will, put an end to them altogether and attain the extinction of suffering.

For purposes of exposition, however, we shall assume that the process of Bhava continues, and that the present life we have been considering is followed by a rebirth. There is no "Soul" that passes on, linking one life to another, it is not even Vinnana, as is sometimes erroneously supposed. Vinnana arises and passes away momentarily and must not, as the Buddha expressly demonstrated to His disciple Sati, be confused with "Soul". What passes on is merely the causal continuity of actions and results, so that the final group of Nidanas, Jati and Jara-marana etc., fall into the category of "Anagata Vipaka Bhava"; that is to say, Future Resultant Continuum, or the consequences of the Paccupana Kamma Bhava of the present life section. This Anagata Vipaka, again, corresponds to the "Paccupana Vipaka Bhava" of the middle section, so that in the complete Paticca Samuppada we have two sets of Kamma Bhava, past and present, and two of Vipaka Bhava, present and future. In other words, two sets of potential causes and two sets of resultants, balancing one another. And these two continue to operate reciprocally and in sequence until such time as the volitional action takes a new line and is directed towards extinguishing Tanha and eliminating Aivijja.

"Anagata Vipaka Bhava" signifies destination — the future state to which the present actions tend. This can be any one of the thirty-one Abodes. As there is no "Soul"

there is no question of a man's spirit or personality trans-migrating into the body of an animal. The phenomenal personality is merely the manifestation of Kamma, nothing more, so that an animal may be reborn as the result of a man's deeds performed under the influence of greed, hatred and delusion; which is a totally different concept from that of transmigration. It may be said that a man has been reborn as an animal or as a Deva, but this is only using the word in a conventional sense; a fresh Nama-Rupa has come into being, bearing a causal relationship to the former being in exactly the same way that an old man bears a causal relationship to the child from which he developed. Conventionally, the old man bears the same name as the child, but his Nama-Rupa, that ever rolling river of Heraclitus, is not the same in any single respect.

It has already been stressed that Buddhism makes no false and unscientific distinction between the various forms of life; they are all embodiments of Kamma, the Nama and Rupa alike being the direct result of the previous volitional actions. In the case of the lower forms of life, where there is no moral consciousness and hence no possibility of the exercise of free will in choice between right and wrong action, all actions are more or less strictly conditioned by prior determinants. They are of the nature of the "conditioned reflexes" investigated by Pavlov. This means that in such states it is only possible to work out the results of past Kamma, which is bound to be predominantly of a bad type: when this is exhausted, rebirth in another sphere of existence, higher or lower, takes place as the result of some residual good Kamma left in abeyance from the time when volitional actions were being performed (Katatta-Kamma). It must be understood that all human beings, under the influence of ignorance, craving and delusion, are continually alternating between right and wrong action, each of which must have its result, so that a man who has performed many outstandingly good deeds, although as the result of some particularly bad action he may be reborn for a time in an inferior state, must eventually reap the good results of his meritorious actions, when he again has an opportunity of exercising his human right of free-will. To be reborn as a human being after having sunk

to a lower level is extremely difficult because of the lack of opportunity and ability to perform the necessary good actions, and it may take aeons to accomplish, but the time-scale dealt with by Buddhism is that of infinity, and nothing is final until release is gained. \*

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\* For readers who wish to know more in detail about the various types of Kamma and how they function an excellent resumé of the subject will be found in the "Buddhist Dictionary" of Nyanatiloka Thera.

# Kamma: the Universal Principle

**T**HE universe is a complicated yet entirely consistent whole, and we ourselves are a part of its mechanism. We cannot dissociate ourselves from the natural process which brings into being and destroys the physical objects around us. They all follow a pattern of cause and effect, a pattern which is universal and all-pervasive.

It is the same law which has determined the structure of the atom, and the structure of the atom in its turn has determined the character of material forms from the smallest grain of dust to the colossal planetary systems scattered throughout space. Yet an intimate knowledge of atomic structures has not enabled science to fathom the precise nature of matter or break down the secret of cellular growth or any other characteristic of vital organisms.

According to old systems of belief, man is a being distinct and separate from the rest of nature; distinguished both in origin and in destiny from all other forms of existence, organic and inorganic. He was thought to be unlike the mineral substances, unlike plant life, unlike the insects and unlike animals, because he possessed an immortal soul or some similar imperishable essence, not clearly defined, which other creatures lacked. Modern thought, as we have seen, finds no support for such a belief in science or biology. Human beings come into existence because of the same fundamental laws that give rise to other things in the universe, both animate and inanimate. Any distinction that we make between man and the other species on this planet must be purely a distinction based on differences in qualities, not in essential nature or substance.

What then is the law that underlies the arising of all phenomena? Science encourages the belief that its nature may be known to us through the process of cause and effect; that action and reaction are equal and opposite is a scientific axiom. In Buddhism, Kamma means action, something performed, and in the moral sense it also implies reaction

(Vipaka), because every cause must produce a result, unless it is inhibited by some other factor of the same type but opposite tendency. That result must be of a like nature to the action that preceded it. If we could trace back the line of causation to the very beginning of this present universe we could not arrive at any first cause. We should discover, on the contrary, that the first atomic particles from which the universe took shape were merely the remains of a previous system that resembled the present one, and so back into unimaginable recessions of time and forward into infinite futurity. "Beginningless is this process of Samsara; the origin of beings revolving in Samsara, being cloaked by Avijja, is not discoverable". This indicates a state of things which we can only imagine by resorting to analogy; it is altogether beyond the compass of the intellect. But so also are some of the concepts of science. Our minds are bounded by forms and relationships, the qualitative content of the space-time dimension, but this does not mean that other dimensions do not exist. When Einstein carried mathematical speculation into the nature of physics further than it had ever been carried before, he came upon certain laws that proved the existence of another dimension beyond the three dimensions of Euclidean geometry. It is referred to as the fourth dimension, but there is no mind that can formulate any mental picture of it. Whereas we have the evidence of our senses and experience to give us knowledge of length, breadth and depth, for this other dimension we have no data whatever to build upon. It is a thing that exists simply as an abstract concept and can be expressed only as a mathematical formula.

Philosophically, it leads us to a paradox, for we have to work on the assumption that space is curved, and that the entire space-time complex is a closed circle in every direction. To the ordinary mind this means nothing, for to understand the nature of the space-time complex we should have to know what lies beyond it; we should have to get outside it in order to look at it in relation to something else. As it is, our minds operate within the structure and are bounded by it — hence our mathematics, like our systems of philosophy and metaphysics, can never lead us to any first cause or final destination. Our ideas, if we project them far enough and pursue them logically enough, inevitably bring us back to the point from which we

started. We travel round the circumference of the circle or round the sphere in every direction, like a ship circumnavigating the globe, and all we discover at the end is a paradox, a seeming contradiction in terms of the "Fourth Dimension" of Einstein and the Nibbana of Buddhism, both alike incomprehensible to the normal consciousness. But the fourth dimension, although it is something that exists only as figures on paper so far as we are concerned, is essential to modern physics; calculations in the higher sphere of mathematics cannot proceed without it. The fourth dimension is something which, while incomprehensible itself, yet makes the rest of mathematics understandable and gives reason and cohesion to the laws that govern the other three dimensions known to us.

So it is with Nibbana. To understand Nibbana we have to break through the closed circle of concepts and associations. These phenomena are all characterised by Anicca, Dukkha and Anatta; they have a causal genesis, a beginning and an end, without possessing intrinsically any of the characteristics with which our sense-perceptions invest them. Nibbana, on the other hand, is the ultimate "dimension" that lies beyond thought and altogether beyond worldly or even cosmic experience. Like the fourth dimension of Einstein, its reality has to be accepted, for the very reason that it alone gives meaning to all the rest. What science tells us of the fourth dimension was said by the Buddha about Nibbana. "If there was not this unconditioned, beginningless, endless, unchanging state there could be no way out from the states that are conditioned, subject to beginning and cessation and involved in ceaseless change". But while the fourth dimension can never be brought into the perspective of ordinary experience, but must forever remain a mathematical enigma, Nibbana can become a living reality because it can be experienced here and now, in this present world, in this earthly existence. There is a way out of the closed circle or sphere, and the Buddha has shown the way. If we visualise the sphere as being bounded by the Kilesas or Asavas — the impurities that arise in the mind through attachment to sense-objects — it becomes clear that to escape from it we must first destroy these Kilesas. In the centre of the sphere, right at its heart, lies the fundamental delusion, Sakkaya ditthi — the belief in Self or Atta. Everything else revolves around that central point; so long

as we are attached to the basic immemorial error of self-delusion, there can be no breaking through to the unconditioned pure state beyond the sphere of Samsara.

Everyone has seen a goat tethered to a stake in the ground. The goat moves round and round the stake eating the grass in a circle that extends as far as its rope will allow. The mind is exactly like that. It feeds in the pasturage (gocara) of the senses, and all the time its range is limited to the circle, while the stake to which it is fastened represents the idea of Selfhood, which keeps it from freedom. If we are to break away from the circle of conceptual thinking we must first of all recognise that the Self around which it all centres is a delusion; once this truth is fully realised the realm of sense-objects and enjoyments can no longer imprison us. In terms of the Cycle of Dependent Origination, if Ignorance is abolished, Volitional Action and all the subsequent links, down to Rebirth and Death with their attendant miseries, come to an end. Thus it is not that there is any wall around us separating us from the reality; we are bound from within, and it is to the realm of consciousness within ourselves that we must turn in order to uproot the stake that binds us.

But it is with the principle of Kamma that we are concerned at present, because while we are still within this wheel of Samsara we are subject to its law. It is necessary that we should understand that law so that we may use the knowledge to our benefit instead of being its blind, ignorant slaves. The working of Kamma and Vipaka is impartial, it does not favour one above another, but when we realise it as being the one law that governs all our existence we realise also that through it we are the masters of our own destiny. The action we perform so unthinkingly today is a part of what we shall be in the future, for our aggregates of Nama and Rupa, our mental and physical characteristics, — which, being in a perpetual state of flux are only tendencies, — were formed in the past, while from moment to moment our present activities of mind, speech and bodily action are determining our future.

Western critics of Buddhism sometimes raise objections to the principle of Kamma on the lines of the following quotation, which is taken from an article by a European who studied Buddhism but failed completely to grasp the important point which has been emphasised at the beginning of this work. He writes: "The justice of the

law of Karma is acceptable only if we take a superficial and theoretical view of life, but not when we examine more carefully the actual web and woof of human lives . . . . Let us take the case of a cripple child born to parents in abject poverty. He does not remember his past life so he cannot be expected to appreciate that he is merely paying the penalty for former misdeeds. He will not in any way benefit from such a crude form of punishment but, on the contrary, will probably grow up with criminal tendencies and a grudge against society. Karma cannot save him”.

Such objections are the result of a view that is animistic and artificial, a view that is essentially emotional rather than scientific. It is an attempt to find human motives and a human purposiveness in what has been shown to be an impersonal, amoral mechanism. It is not the function of the law of Karma to “save” or to “punish” anyone; its function is to maintain the process of Samsara, just as the function of the law of gravity is to make life on earth possible. Its results are only “good” or “bad” as we interpret them from our human standpoint. The law of gravity is not concerned because a man falls from a high building and breaks his neck. The law of cause and effect is not operated by any external agency with the object of “teaching” human beings. Man has to find his release, by struggling against it. The theistic idea, together with man’s projection of his own personality and values into a scheme which has no place for them, is the root cause of all such confused theorising. Emotional thinking destroys objectivity: it is bound to be personalised and to evaluate everything according to personal standards of what is good for “me” or bad for “me”. Buddhism requires a scientific objectivity of outlook, a faculty for seeing things as they are without emotional reactions or any tendency to indulge in emotional interpretations. It is not possible to understand Buddhism while retaining the outlook on life of a sentimental spinster.

It cannot be too often repeated that there is no *being*, no continuous entity linking together our moments of conscious life, but there is a continuum of cause and effect, or the current of our *becoming* which is like a river, never the same from one moment to another yet all the time following a pattern that gives it visible form and makes it appear to be a continuous entity. Buddhism teaches a dynamic concept of consciousness, and hence of personality,

which is a phenomenon momentarily arising and passing away. There is nothing in it that can survive the fleeting moment, nothing that can endure; its nature is Anicca, impermanence, and Anatta, the absence of any real core of personal self.

A living being, made up of Five Upadana-Khandhas, is therefore simply the manifestation of Kamma and Vipaka; he or it is the living embodiment of past actions. The Five Khandhas are Rupa-khandha, Vedana khandha, Sanna - Khandha, Sankhara - khandha, and Vinnana khandha, some of which have already been dealt with loosely under Paticca-samuppada. They mean respectively physical substance and attributes, sensations, perception, the mental tendencies or predispositions caused by past Kamma (fifty in number), and consciousness. Of these, the one that forms the subject of our immediate attention is Sankhara-khandha, the fifty mental tendencies, for this is the result of the predominant or most frequently-recurring Kamma of the past.

When a certain action is performed, a tendency is set up to repeat that action; when it is repeated over a number of times the tendency grows stronger. This is what is called habit-formation and is found to some degree even in inanimate objects, the most familiar example being a piece of paper that has been rolled. When it is unrolled and released again it rolls up once more, although there is no force causing it to re-roll except the fact that it had been rolled previously and certain minute alterations in its structure had taken place accordingly. Thus it can be seen that habit-formation has its counterpart in a physical or "natural" law, and operates even where volition is absent or is represented by a volitional action from outside. In the lower forms of life, where volition, or will power, is only very slightly manifested, its working is even more clearly seen than in human beings. A fly settles on a particular spot on your arm. You brush it away and it makes one or two circles in the air, then comes to rest once more on precisely the same spot as before. This experiment may be made several times in succession with the same result. Every time the fly will descend on the same place on your arm, even though there is nothing special there to attract it, until something happens to break the chain of habit-formation which its first act set in motion.

Much the same mechanical pattern of behaviourism can be observed in the habits of fowls. If the hen roost in which they are accustomed to sleep is removed to a different place, at roosting time the fowls will go to the same spot where the hen-roost formerly stood, and for several nights they have to be guided into the shelter in its new location, until a fresh habit-pattern is established.

Such is the tremendous force of a habit which has become confirmed by the repetition of a particular action. The only thing that can break it is a strong act of will, or the arising of a different set of circumstances which make it impossible to continue on the same lines.

Every action that we perform, therefore, is potentially the father of a long line of actions of a similar kind. When the planets emerged from the fiery nebulae they continued revolving in space, not because there is any mechanism to keep them going, but simply because there is nothing to stop them. The initial impulse carries on requiring nothing more to maintain it, and it will continue until it is exhausted. Motion, and the thing moving, are merely a series of events in time and space, and this is the law governing the psychic tendencies — the principle of an action or an event producing a like action or event, the second producing a third and so on in unbroken sequence.

The Buddhist philosophy of Dependent Origination must now be considered as a whole, rather than interpreted according to the sequence of its parts. It begins, as we have already seen, with Ignorance (or Nescience — “not-knowing”), which is a condition of the mind. Because of Ignorance the mind functions imperfectly, accepting phenomenal appearances for reality, unaware of their true nature which is Impermanence, Disease and Dissatisfaction and Lack of Essential Reality. This condition is dispelled by realising the Three Characteristics of the phenomenal world and gaining knowledge of the Four Noble Truths, *i.e.* the fact of suffering, its cause, its cessation and the way to its cessation. Until that point of insight is reached, Ignorance is present at every stage of existence; it is like an invisible cage which keeps the mind trapped in its own illusory constructions. Another name for this condition is Vipallasa, meaning hallucination. It is of three kinds: Sanna-Vipallasa (hallucination of perception), Citta-Vipallasa (hallucination of mind or thought) and Ditthi-Vipallasa (hallucination of views). Each of the three kinds of

Vipallasa has four modes; that is to say, perceiving, thinking or believing that which is Anicca to be permanent, that which is Dukkha to be happiness, that which is Anatta as having selfhood and reality, and that which is Asubha (unpleasant) as being pleasant. The delusion of a permanent Self and of the reality of material things leads to attachment to an external world that has no noumenal reality, and under the influence of this craving the impurities of consciousness (Asavas) come into being; that is, Kama Asava, sensual craving, Bhava Asava, lust of life, Ditthi Asava, speculative opinion and Avijja Asava, the impurity of ignorance. The word 'Asava' literally means an influx of tainted concepts. The mind being self-tainted from these various sources is governed by Lobha, Dosa and Moha, the unholy trinity of Greed, Hatred and Stupidity, and these characteristics give rise to evil actions producing bad Vipaka (resultants) through repeated births. The central fact of Buddhist teaching as it concerns this present world is the actuality of rebirth and the operation of a moral law which conditions and dominates material phenomena.

From this it may be seen that Buddhism disposes of the materialistic fallacy, not by denying the data of experience, but by going beyond it. The material universe is not a delusion, neither is it a fixed and self-existing reality. It is to be viewed as it truly is — an aggregate of composite factors existing in relation to a certain imperfect sphere of consciousness; in short, a "relative reality" or conventional truth, which is called in Buddhism Sammuti Sacca. For example, any material object may be regarded from different levels, and known or experienced according to those levels. First we have the level of ordinary cognition, which the materialist takes for the reality. On this plane the object is a solid body occupying three-dimensional space. We are aware of its existence through the channels of our senses and to them it appears to be endowed with shape, solidity, colour and other qualities. On the next higher level to this, the "solid object" is seen as a collocation of apparently material atoms, a miniature planetary system but consisting mostly of space. Viewing it thus, we are still not out of the material sphere; the atoms are the seemingly solid particles, like billiard balls, of Dalton's physics. Above this level it is seen to take the form of immaterial forces, and the electronic

energy which is the basis of its atomic structure becomes apparent. The infinitesimal billiard balls disappear, resolved into the energy which is the sole reality of present day physics. The next higher viewpoint, that which is accessible to the contemplative Seer who has gained insight into the truth of Anicca, Dukkha and Anatta, discloses the "Dhammata" or underlying law of the whole process, wherein its true nature is revealed and it is known to be constantly subject to change, perpetually in a state of unbalance and restlessness, and absolutely unsubstantial. The "Dhammata" is the law of being which, while itself invisible makes all its results visible. The ultimate stage of insight is above this; it reaches the void wherein even the Dhammata of the object ceases to exist and all relativities are wiped out. To exist means to function; in any dynamic concept such as that held by Buddhism and science the two terms are interchangeable.

Properly understood, Buddhism provides the one acceptable explanation of the arising of material phenomena from a mental base, and how it comes about that the mind can control, shape and evolve material forms to suit its needs. It also explains how it comes about that the effect of a strong mental supposition can, under favourable circumstances, produce an immediate reaction in the physical body. Everywhere the dominance of the mind (which most scientists are now agreed is not to be solely identified with the physical brain) over material substance reveals this most important side of their inter-relationship. The Hindu Sadhu in a state of religious ecstasy can walk on burning coal without injury, because intense faith has convinced his mind that he will not be burned, whereas the hypnotised subject of our earlier experiment is burned by the harmless touch of a pencil. The fact that this law works both ways, and that the physical can also influence the mental, as in the case of disease or injury impairing the psychic faculties, shows, not that mind arises from matter, as materialism would have it, but simply that there is no "Soul" or self-entity independent of the Five Khandha process, which is a closely correlated, dynamic psycho-physical structure. One of the earliest sermons of Buddha, the "Anatta-lakkhana Sutta", deals with this point exhaustively. The "being", complete with form, identity and personality, is a purely momentary resultant of past causes and the potential of future ones. He may be called the material manifestation

of Kamma, but Kamma itself represents a law which is above the material. It corresponds to the "Dhammata" or immaterial law that underlies all material phenomena.

Despite the widespread belief voiced by the writer quoted previously, it is a fact that many people, at least in early childhood, do remember their former lives, sometimes in great detail, and cases have been known where the evidence has been confirmed beyond all question of doubt. The point then arises as to how, since at death the old Khandhas disappear and fresh ones come into existence with rebirth, is it possible for anyone to remember anything relating to the previous Khandhas? Memory is a function of the brain cells, and at rebirth the physical brain, which is part of the Rupa-Khandha, is a new organ. Does this not mean that there must be some kind of a "Soul" that transmigrates and takes up its abode in the new body, carrying its memories with it?

There is no such "Soul". What happens in these cases is that the memory is carried forward by the causal impulse stamping the new brain structure with a pattern similar in some respects to that of the old. In Paticca-samuppada the life-continuum is represented by Bhava; it is this which conveys the previous impressions in conjunction with the Sankhara group. It will be remembered that Avijja, Sankhara and Vinnana constitute the first group of links, with Vinnana in its function of Patissandhi (connecting) Consciousness bridging over to Nama-Rupa, at which point the new body and mind appears and the next birth-group of links begins. Similarly, at the end of the middle birth-group comes Bhava, the life-continuum, bridging over to Jati which stands for the future birth. Here the relationship in place between Bhava and the two links Sankhara and Vinnana shows how these three function in concord to project certain characteristics from one life to another. In actual practice, what happens is this: Pre-natal memory is almost always that of the life immediately preceding; it is usually the result of a very strong impression coming close to end of the life, or even dominating the final moment of consciousness, the death-proximate Kamma which has the greatest influence in determining the next existence, and it is often of an intensely emotional nature — the kind of impression that is most powerful in affecting thought-patterns at any stage of life. At the rebirth, this powerful impression stamps its

pattern on the cell structure of the new brain, and so the fresh Nama-Rupa inherits, together with accumulated tendencies of the Sankhara-Khandha, certain memories belonging to the old. It is an operation analogous to the process whereby a mental conviction that the body is going to be branded produces a burn on the flesh, without any heat having touched it. The mental activity comes before the physical organ and determines its conformations. In Buddhist Abhidhamma Bhavangasota corresponds to the unconscious-mind current or "Subconscious mind" of modern psychology.

In this way Buddhism avoids the two extremes of idealism and materialism. While it teaches that as a man thinks, so he becomes, it does not attempt to dismiss the material world as a dream and a mirage. The multiple material universe exists, but only on the mental plane of Avijja. Its space-time dimensions and sequences are homogeneous within the framework of their own logic, but that logic itself can only be understood by reference to a higher principle that is not in any sense supernatural or contrary to mundane knowledge and purposes, but which on a spiritual level reconciles the data of sensory experience with the intuitively-perceived moral law. With this knowledge it becomes possible to trace the harmonious pattern of cause and effect through all phases of sentient and insentient existence.

Sakkaya-ditthi, the belief that the Self alone is real, and that it is unaffected by circumstances or actions, is a delusion of idealism that leads inevitably to the rejection of moral values. Materialism on the other hand, leads to the same result by denying the existence of immaterial ethical categories; for this reason it was denounced by Buddha. The mind that is enmeshed in materialistic delusions can never relinquish craving. It takes the impermanent to be lasting, and tries to find happiness in things that are perishable. At the same time it gives birth to impure states of consciousness, unaware that these and the evil actions resulting from them produce misery without end. This, indeed, is the grossest form of ignorance, for even without any knowledge of the law of Kamma it is plain for all to see that true and enduring happiness can never come from the pursuit and grasping of material pleasures. Emancipated from Ignorance the mind views all things and sensations impartially, without clinging to any — this alone

is the true secret of mental equilibrium and the stability that constitutes the greatest happiness in this world or any other plane of existence.

For many centuries these truths have been uttered, so that they have come to sound commonplace. They are the clichés of philosophy. But it is only Buddhism which is capable of bringing them into line with the facts of everyday experience and the discoveries of science, and thus infusing into them new life and meaning. The Teaching of the Buddha does not deny any scientific fact, or even such evidence as that to which the materialist points as being contrary to religious belief. These materialistic facts are true — but they are not all the truth. Buddhism comprehends them and passes beyond them.

“There is no Creator and no immortal Soul,” declares the Materialist. “Therefore there is no moral law, no after life, no reward or punishment, and no distinction between right and wrong.”

“Your facts are partly correct”, replies the voice of the Buddha across the gulf of the centuries. “But your conclusions are altogether false. *Because* there is no Creator and no immortal Soul there *is* a moral law. And because there is a moral law that metes out evil for evil and good for good, there is also a means of escape from the miseries of personal existence. It is not in the nature of material things to endure, but that which is not material, the un-compounded element, has no arising and no passing away. Nibbana is Peace. Therefore My exhortation stands — Sabbe sankhara anicca. Appamadena sampadetha”. “All compounded things (phenomena) are impermanent. Strive (for realisation) with diligence!”

# Materialism as a Political Doctrine

THE first demand of Communism is that those who profess it should adopt *in toto* the principles of Dialectical Materialism "Dialectic" is a term signifying no more than a particular form of intellectual analysis. Karl Marx, its originator, was a philosopher, but not an original one. His materialistic concepts were known in the time of the Buddha; they were shared, wholly or in part, by the Ucccheda-vadins who held that existence ends with death; the Nastikas, who denied all moral and spiritual principles and the Lokayatikas who were the equivalent of our modern materialists.

It was natural, therefore, that when Marx attempted to apply his theories to an analysis of the process of historical changes and put forward in explanation the doctrine of historical materialism he used the stock terms of philosophy: thesis, anti-thesis and synthesis.

The substance of his theory is that codes of laws, systems of education, the standards of ethics and principles of art are integral parts of a social whole which is human society. The essential purpose of society is the supplying of man's needs, and to satisfy these needs production is all-important, and hence, when new methods of production are introduced the relations of classes and of individuals are altered, with a consequent alteration in laws, education, art, morality and everything else. Nothing else, according to this theory, plays any part in the history of human development or the transition from one stage or level of culture to another. Religion, which is usually accorded a guiding status, is ignored as being only another by-product of economic necessity. In Marxist theory, religion cannot be separated from the class structure of society, and since the "liberation of humanity" from this structure is the ultimate aim of Communism, religion must

be destroyed. In Lenin's interpretation, "All contemporary religions and churches, all and every kind of religious organisation, Marxism has always viewed as instruments of bourgeois reaction, serving as a defence of exploitation and the doping of the working class . . . The struggle against religion cannot be limited to abstract preachery . . . this struggle should be brought into connection with the concrete practice of the class movement directed towards the elimination of the social roots of religion . . . The party of the proletariat must be the intellectual leader in the struggle against all kinds of medievalism, including religion". The quotation is from Lenin's papers on religion, collected into a pamphlet and translated into English under the title *Lenin on Religion* and published in 1935. Any later modification of this viewpoint by official Communism must be regarded as a departure from orthodox Marxism; in other words an opportunist policy directed solely by the needs of the moment.

The materialist philosophy Marx, as we have already seen in the sections on scientific materialism, excludes much that is relevant to a complete understanding of the hidden motives and currents of human psychology. It follows naturally, therefore, that its interpretation of history becomes an over-simplification when viewed in the broader context of mankind's intellectual and spiritual aspirations. The theory of economic determinism has its place in the pattern of history, no doubt; it would be foolish to deny this. But that pattern is made up of many intersecting factors of cause and effect, of which economics is only one strand in a complex whole. To focus attention on one aspect of the pattern and ignore the rest is bound to result in a distortion, and it is precisely this distortion on which Marx has built his politico-philosophic structure.

In the Manifesto of the Communist Party published in 1847, which was the combined work of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, we find outlined the economic interpretation of history and the "theory of surplus value", both of which were elaborated in Marx's "Das Kapital", together with the Marxist view of the "class-struggle" which he claimed to be the dominant motif in history. From the beginning, he asserted, man's history has been a story of class warfare, the exploiters pitted against the exploited. All wealth has been created by labour but the

labourer has never been allowed to enjoy his full share of the wealth he has helped to create because the bourgeois capitalist grants him a wage only sufficient for subsistence, while the balance (the "surplus value") is appropriated by the capitalists. The workers, therefore, with only their labour to sell, must organise; but to meet the threat of that organisation the capitalist classes increase their economic power by concentrating it into larger and fewer units and by employing more and more machinery. Hence he concludes that the only final solution is the overthrow, by force, of the possessors by the labouring classes, followed by dictatorship of the proletariat — a transitional stage during which the workers will expropriate some and liquidate others of the counter-revolutionary forces attempting a return to the *status quo* — the result to be at last the establishment of the socialist commonwealth, a classless society in which private ownership of the means of production will have been abolished and the old conflict of the "haves" and "have-nots" thus be ended.

This programme, superficially impressive at first sight, succeeded in capturing the imagination of a great number of people. But like all revolutionary formulae, it starts from the assumption that there are two classes of people, mutually antagonistic, who retain their essential characteristics despite change of circumstances. This, however, is obviously a fallacy, and is disproved by the dialectic of Marxism itself. The proletariat who become rulers are no longer the proletariat. They in turn become the bourgeois, and proceed to act in accordance with their new character. A revolution which succeeds is no longer a revolution; it becomes an established Government, itself a target for other revolutionaries. The principle of continual change cannot be arrested at whatever stage suits us; it goes on, producing new adaptations and modifications. Marxism, admitting the principle of change and of modification to altered circumstances, is basically unscientific in putting forward the possibility of a static society at one particular point of development which happens to represent its own ideal.

Conquest by force never settles any problems. The Buddha, Whose insight into the nature of Samsara was more profound than that of Marx or Engels, saw this clearly, and proclaimed it as scientific and ethical truth. The curious thing is that Marx, who after all has some

claim to be called a philosopher, failed to see that his "class-struggle", inasmuch as it constitutes the central pivot of his philosophical thought, must be considered as one aspect of the universal struggle that prevails throughout life. He failed entirely to relate it, as a philosopher should, to the larger issues of survival in the evolutionary process, or to see that it is an integral part of a much greater principle which dominates the whole of life. If the "class-struggle" has any reality at all, or if, as Marx thought, it could be traced as a feature of mankind's history from the earliest times, he should have carried the philosophical inference further and seen it as a reflection of that biological law which decrees that the stronger animal shall live at the expense of the weaker, and which holds all worldly structures together by virtue of the harmony produced by internal stress of disharmonious components. Had he done so, he would have reached a better understanding of the cosmic process which is called in Buddhism "Samsara". From this he might have realised, as did the Buddha, that the law of the world is one thing, but the higher law by which an individual puts an end to the world's Dukkha is quite another. If conflict is the law of the world, on which progress and retrogression both depend, it is vain to believe that the victory of one class or one particular species can put a final end to conflict. It merely reverses the roles of the protagonists; the essential conflict, so long as it is not resolved on a higher plane must of necessity continue. Forms change but principles are constant.

In order to survive, man had to fight incessantly --- against nature, against the animals and against the bacteria of disease. Now it is a fact that, if the bacteria producing some specific disease were to be entirely eliminated from the world, the whole balance of nature would be upset; the particular type of germs against which the vanished bacteria had militated would become unduly prolific and the disease which they themselves produced would correspondingly increase.

The human body is kept in a state of health by the balance of power preserved amongst themselves by various conflicting organisms inhabiting it. In the same way, the structure of human society relies for its existence on internal stresses which, taken as a whole, preserve it in a state of balance and normalcy. This principle is a reflection of the cosmic law of attraction and

repulsion which holds the physical universe together.

Where human society is concerned, wars and revolutions are the diseases which from time to time attack the organism; they occur when one of the influences working within it becomes too strong and the balance of power is upset. Hence they are morbid symptoms and no war or revolution can ever provide a final cure for the morbid condition which it represents. After every war or revolution there must be a movement tending towards a return to something corresponding to the *status quo*. The rebel leaders themselves become the victims of the powerful forces they have helped to set in motion. Some of the instigators of the proletarian French Revolution went to the guillotine even before the revolution was fully accomplished. Those who survived became rulers and in doing so inevitably lost their revolutionary status. The same thing happened in Soviet Russia. The ideology of Stalin is not the ideology of Marx or even Lenin. It cannot be, because the conditions in which Stalin functions are radically different from those that produced Marx and Lenin, as these again differed from each other. The Marxist doctrine that circumstances, primarily economic, govern the thoughts and actions of men, itself points to a flaw which the practical application of Marxist principles in government has exposed strikingly. Russia is not a classless State except in theory.

The idea of equal distribution of the world's resources—that is to say, the produce of the workers—is an ideal that can only be approximately reached, and Communism has not proved itself the best means for arriving even at a desirable approximation. It has failed because proletarian dictatorship in practice resembles every other form of dictatorship, since the proletarian who becomes a ruler is no longer a proletarian. Buddhism shows that there are three predominant factors in worldly mentality; Lobha (Greed), Dosa (Hatred) and Moha (Delusion). Any form of Government that gives absolute power to one section of the community or one political party tends to increase these three factors in the dominant few. "All power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely". The Russian Communist experiment was made possible by the absolute corruption of the Tsarist regime; its success has consisted in replacing one form of dictatorship by another.

and all the evidence goes to show that the curtailment of personal liberty under the new dispensation is greater than under the old. Extensive improvements in Russian society have been made, but they have been made at a tremendous cost. The suppression of religious thought has been made a cardinal point in the Communist theory of education and by this all other features of intellectual and cultural life have been adversely affected. Art, literature, even science itself, the most objective and impartial activity of man, have had to conform to the minutiae of Communist ideology, with the result that any original thinker or creative artist works under the doctrinate supervision of the State and subject to the constant threat of an accusation of "bourgeois deviationism" if the ideas or moods he expresses are not strictly in accord with whatever happens to be Communist policy at the moment. Shostakovitch, the foremost living Russian composer, was accused of writing "Bourgeois" or decadent music and was compelled to alter the nature of his work at the dictatorship of the party. The same thing has happened in the case of painters, sculptors, dramatists and poets. It is an ironical reflection that those very intellectuals who are most emphatic in their support of Communism would be the first to suffer under its rigid control, and that the whole of Russian culture derives from just those personalities that Communist uniformity would reject and persecute. Under applied Marxism, Tchaikovsky, instead of writing exquisite but regrettably "bourgeois" symphonies and ballet music, would have been forced to compose "class-conscious" music, whatever that may be. Pushkin would have received instructions to re-write his poetry, and Gogol, Tchekov, Tourgeniev, Dostoievsky and Tolstoy would have been given peremptory orders to turn their pens to themes more in keeping with the "realities of class warfare."

All these great writers, musicians and artists served, not a political creed, but the need to express the highest truth they knew, and this is the only impulse that produces great and enduring works of art for the world. Tolstoy in particular, with his strong religious feeling, would have fared badly under Communism; he was a misfit under the Tsarist regime, but at least he was permitted to live and to propagate his ideas unmolested.

Leaving aside the Marxist teaching regarding religion, what is the present Communist attitude? It is given in the Communist publication "Nauka I Zhizn" ("Science and Life"), which, under the heading "Scientific-Atheistic Propaganda" states, "in its very essence, every religion is a conservative, reactionary, anti-scientific force which has always resisted the birth of new ideas, has always fought and is always fighting against new, progressive and revolutionary ideas . . . Lenin wrote that the bourgeoisie, in order to ensure its domination, needs two functions; the function of the executioner and the priest. The executioner suppresses the indignation of the oppressed masses by physical means, while the priest does the same by deception and persuasion . . . What is the attitude of Marxism-Leninism to religion? What is the relation of the Party of the working class to this anti-scientific, reactionary ideology? The relations between the Communist Party and religion are exhaustively defined in the works of Lenin and Stalin, in the decrees of congresses, and in the Party programme . . . Lenin insisted that the Communist Party must carry on active propaganda aimed at exposing anti-scientific religious ideology". This is from the official mouthpiece of Communist anti-religious propaganda, F. N. Oleshchuk.

These are some of the unavoidable consequences of having to uphold a dogmatic politico-philosophic doctrine at all costs, and even the scientist is not exempt from ideological control. Because Marxism claims to be itself a scientific philosophy, Soviet scientists have not been permitted to put forward the results of their researches when these were seen to contradict its theories. The philosophical premises of Marxist Dialectical Materialism are as unsound as the theological cosmogony of the Christian Church in the time of Galileo, and therefore have to be bolstered up by the same means. Should we be surprised to find that "progress" so often turns out to be retrogression? Cause and effect regulate the pendulum of time and the swing from one extreme to its opposite. The expression of individual ideals and concepts of life must be subordinated to the prevailing dogma wherever such dogma is made the central pillar of a system of rulership, whether it be the Christian theology of the Middle Ages or the materialist philosophy of Marx. Had Marxism

never been subjected to the test of practical application it might have served as the basis of a possible view of history or even as a general pattern for future progress, but the best way to destroy any theory is to act upon it. Having been raised to the status of a State Religion Marxism could not be allowed to stand arraigned at the bar of reason since everything depended upon its unqualified acceptance as a dogma complete and absolute. \*

\* The official action taken by the Party against Soshtakovitch and other leading Soviet composers in 1948 is fully described in "Musical Uproar in Moscow", by Alexander Werth, published in the following year.

Communist attempts to suppress science itself when its latest discoveries do not fit in with Marxist theories came to a head and were exposed in the great Lysenko controversy on genetics ("Russia Puts the Clock Back", by John Langdon Davies). In mediaeval Europe the Church exercised its authority against the pioneer scientists and freethinkers, but it is unique in history for a ruling group which claims to draw its own authority from a scientific philosophy and view of life, to exhibit fear of scientific developments to the extent of taking official action against its foremost scientists.

# Marxism Versus Human Values

**T**O recapitulate: the dogma of Marxism is that man as a social being (and Marxism refuses to consider him in any other character) is conditioned entirely by economic factors. He is a product of his environment, and thinks, wills and acts in response to the external stimuli of his sociological background. Even heredity, according to this theory, plays but a minor part in the influences that mould him compared with the economic motif, which is dominant throughout.

The formula may be summed up by saying that economic conditions make men and men make history, but in the making of history they are only the instruments of a logical summation predetermined by current economic necessities.

The defect is not so much in the falseness of this view as in its insufficiency. Economic trends cannot be isolated as a first cause in the sequence of historical events. They must be themselves considered as effects if we are to carry the analysis to a conclusion and discover the basic cause of human inequalities. The obvious fact that these inequalities have always existed, and in such widely-differing social structures as those of China, ancient Egypt and the civilisations of Greece and Rome, points to their being the outcome of something more fundamental to human nature than economic circumstances, and that these latter themselves must be merely a product of that something, which alone can be called basic and universal. It must therefore, as a principle, be sought in the nature of human beings, in the interior realm of human nature, not in externals. Buddhism, like science, regards man as an integral part of the whole of nature, not an isolated phenomenon in the cosmos. The laws that regulate the universe find perhaps their highest and most perfect expression in the synthesis of the human mind and body; it is a pattern of

the cosmos as a whole, just as the nuclear structure of the atom is a type of the solar systems of space. This is the meaning of the profound words of the Buddha: "Within this fathom-long body, equipped with mind and volition, O Bhikkhus, I declare to you is the world, the origin of the world and the cessation thereof!" All circumstances are created by man out of his own nature. If his nature is in turn modified by these creations, as it undoubtedly is, that fact does not alter the preceding fact: it only brings another current of influence into the pattern, and that current in turn can be traced to its source within the matrix of human personality. All that influences the individual has its origin ultimately in the potentialities of his own nature.

Are those potentialities the same in all men? In the final sense that all possess the requisite factors for perfection and liberation, they are; but these factors lie dormant under the escrescences of the ego. The specific manifestations of individual ego are the very means by which man tries to impress his will upon the structure of his environment; without becoming a self-conscious being in such a way as to be able to act upon the material of his destiny he cannot realise what he has the capability to become. He must figure at once as conqueror and conquered, as exploiter and exploited, as both the author and actor in his own express comedy or tragedy. His growth in self-awareness is the direct outcome of the struggle against, not his environment, but the conflicting personalities engendered by the diversity of choices open to him as the result of that environment. He must find his own individual kind of perfection by traversing every level of experience possible to his nature.

The idea of a classless society imposes an artificial limitation on the living and developing organism which is in opposition to its function as an instrument of evolution. But it is not in the nature of things that such a restriction could be imposed for long, if at all. The laws of Samsara are more enduring than the experiments of theorists. The universal characteristics of Lobha, Dosa and Moha which give reality and form to economic trends may be forced temporarily into taking a fresh direction, but they cannot be eliminated except by individuals working for their own emancipation within the framework of an accommodating sphere of relationships. Perfection is

attained only through volitional activity, and both the goal and the means are personal, not collective, concepts.

In America prohibition was a failure because it did not remove the desire to drink from the people. It only deprived them of the opportunity. Similarly, the abolition of classes, if it is not an impractical dream, must eventually prove a failure because it does not remove greed or ambition but only thwarts and turns them into underground channels. It has been argued that the Buddhist Sangha is a communist type of organisation because in the Order everything is shared in common and properly speaking there is no such thing as private ownership. From this a parallel between Buddhism and Communism has been attempted on the ground that both are aimed at the extinction of craving.

This argument, however, does not bear examination. The life of communal ownership is adopted by the monk voluntarily; it is not imposed on him by the State or any external power. The Monk relinquishes worldly possessions of his own free will, and Buddhism does not anywhere recommend communal ownership among laymen. Since the doctrine of Kamma teaches that worldly riches are the result of practising charity in past lives, and poverty the consequence of past selfishness and avarice, Buddhism must regard any such attempt to enforce communal ownership as impractical from the start. Still less does Buddhism favour the forcing of any particular mode of life on the community as a whole. There is no virtue in renouncing personal possessions under compulsion. A man who loses his sight through circumstances beyond his control cannot be said to have overcome the craving that arises from Chakkhu-vinnana (Eye consciousness). He is not even on the right path towards overcoming it if he intentionally blinds himself. The same may be said of the American citizen under prohibition, with regard to drink, and the Communist citizen who is forced to relinquish his personal rights and possessions. Each turns to illicit means of gratifying his craving. Any legislation which goes against the fundamental principles of human nature is bound to end in failure.

In Buddhism there can be no question of force being used to justify any particular ends, however desirable these may be in themselves. To impose a monastic regimen on the whole world would be to defeat the purpose of the Sangha in its opposition to worldly conditions.

From the beginning, moreover, the Monk has always been free to leave the Sangha and return to lay life. It is recognised that it is better for him to do so, if he feels himself unsuited to the Order, than that he should continue to wear the Yellow Robe of Renunciation while not living in accordance with the principles for which it stands. It is on record that a certain Bhikkhu in the time of the Buddha left the Sangha and returned to it seven times, yet he ultimately became an Arahant. It is more than doubtful whether he would have been successful in his striving for emancipation had he been compelled to remain in the Order against his will. It is similarly doubtful whether a man's greed for possessions or for power is checked by being forced to give them up; the act must be voluntary if it is to have any psychological significance or good results.

# The Basis of Personality

**W**E come now to the question of the individual in relation to the community and this involves a consideration of individuality as a thing itself. What precisely do we mean by individuality? It is that which distinguishes each man from his fellows. Externally such individuality could mean physical distinctions, and taken in that sense everything phenomenal and material from a cloud to a pebble, is possessed of individuality. But as physical distinction in man is the least of his differentiating characteristics we must mean by individuality something different from this.

Actually, by individuality we mean something which has reference to our internal being. It is in the subjective self that we must seek it, and there it appears as a consciousness of difference from others and also a more or less successful attempt to maintain that difference. The stronger the sense of individuality, the more resistance there is to regimentation; human individuality develops itself in the realisation of a sphere of mental activities consisting of personal tastes, repugnances, volitions and objectives to which it attaches the name of "self", "I" "the ego". Further, the realisation of this self is in its integration, the various propensities and impulses being its component parts, making conscious "self" and individuality phenomenologically identical. One who has not been able to compose and harmonise these impulses and properties is to be considered devoid of individuality; since he is not an integrated self — that is, a unity moving towards one self-appointed objective — he is merely one impulse or isolated tendency at a time. As a personality he is not an ordered State but an anarchy. Individuality exists only where there is self-control, and this is perhaps the only universally-valid criterion of what

constitutes civilisation. Civilisation does not mean material progress, knowledge, religion or culture; it can exist where all the values attached to those factors are different. It means, in the last analysis, the attainment of a group-consciousness which has recognised the need for self-discipline and does not have to rely on that discipline being enforced from without — or relies on it to the minimum extent and only for the control of its more backward elements. This is the meaning of civilisation in the democratic sense as opposed to totalitarian concepts of civilisation. A developing civilisation moves towards self-determination while recognising at the same time that the logical goal of anarchy cannot ever be realised, on account of the intrinsic and fundamental differences in character and mentality between individual human beings.

For a real understanding of individuality and its causes the theory of Marxist economic determinism does not help us much. Members of the same family, born and bred under the same social and economic conditions, may vary tremendously as personalities; human nature defies all attempts to reduce it to a uniform pattern. It is for this very reason that the "Utilitarianism" of Bentham — the attempt to achieve the greatest happiness for the greatest number — could only be successful for the majority at the expense of others who are just as much entitled to their concept of happiness as are the majority whose idea of happiness is different. In fact, it would be an impossible task to define what constitutes the greatest happiness even for the majority of people, as this varies from time to time in the individual. The main thesis of Bentham — that it should be the duty of the State to further the happiness of the people as its ultimate aim — is sound, but the Confucian ideal of as little interference as possible in the lives of the people is the most practical approach to that end. As it is not possible to legislate for all, the least legislation (and hence the least possible bureaucracy) should be aimed at. The purpose of civilisation should be to produce a condition under which the individual is free to pursue his own kind of happiness restrained only by his own self-discipline rooted in an innate respect for the happiness and well-being of his fellows. Buddhism augments the force of this self-discipline by making it clear that his

own personal welfare in the future is also bound up with his conduct respecting his fellows. In a perfect state of civilisation, governments and legal codes would be unnecessary; as Communism and other totalitarian systems tend to increase Governmental control and multiply legal codes, they represent, not an advance in civilisation but a retrogression.

Having failed to find in the materialistic theory the cause of individual differences between human beings, let us return to Buddhism, and to a further examination of the doctrine of Dependent Origination. There we are given a chart of the "arising by way of cause" of all beings. It explains not only how individual personalities with their distinguishing characteristics come into existence, but also the causal origin of non-human species. We have already seen that this doctrine of Paticca Samuppada shows spiritual evolution and biological evolution to be governed by the same pattern of causal development and decline. Buddhism regards man as a free autonomous agent, subject only to the Samsaric principle of Avijja, or Primal Nescience, which he is at liberty to destroy in himself if he chooses to do so. Under the influence of Avijja, which broadly speaking means the universal tendency to take the unreal for reality and to be attached to transitory phenomena of an illusory nature, he performs actions which are from the moral point of view good or bad, and the sum total of the resultants of these actions at any given moment represents his Sankhara, or tendencies and predispositions. These two factors, Avijja and Sankhara, the first two in the chain of Dependent Origination, form a summary of the antecedent causes produced in previous births and they are linked together under the heading of "Atita Kamma Bhava", which means past potential Kamma-activities. From the Sankhara is produced Vinnana, which signifies consciousness; that is, the awareness of "selfhood". This, by the operation of physic impulses on matter, leads to the formation of Nama-Rupa, the mind-body complex which is composed of five grasping-factors (Panca upadana Khandha), *i.e.*, Rupa (physical constituents), Sanna (perception), Vedana (sensation), Sankhara (Kamma-formations and tendencies) and Vinnana (consciousness). The arising of Vinnana out of Sankhara marks the beginning of a fresh cycle of existence, the formation of a new

embryo and its emergence from the womb. This new mind-body complex is equipped with six senses giving it fields of sense-awareness (Sal-ayatana). With these it makes contact (Phasso) with its surroundings, and this contact gives rise to Vedana (sensation).

The factors from Vinnana to Vedana form the group which is known as "Pacuppana vipaka bhava", which means the phenomena of being (or, more accurately, becoming) resulting from the previous (Atita) kamma, and these are the elements of the new existence conditioned by the preceding good or bad actions. In other words, physical form and "character" are predetermined by past willed action, but what they will become in the future lies in the actions of the present. From Sensation comes Craving (Tanha) for the objects of sight, hearing smell, taste, touch and mental cognition, and this gives rise to Upadana, the grasping-tendency, which produces attachment to life and sensory experiences. The result of Upadana is Bhava, which stands for the unconscious current of arising and passing away (the process of "becoming") of the elements which is a causal life-continuum going on all the time. These three factors, Tanha, Upadana and Bhava, are grouped under "Pachuppana kamma bhava"; that is, the volitional activities taking place during the current life, which corresponds to the "Atita kamma bhava" of the past.

Thus, the current life — that is, the group of factors from Vinnana to Bhava — is divided between phenomena that are the result of previous kamma and the new set of activities being set in motion under the stimulus of those phenomena. This means in effect that the given circumstances in which any sentient being finds himself are the result of his previous actions, and as such are no longer under his control. They are causally determined. But his response to them — that is, the particular way he acts, whether he succumbs to Ignorance and commits evil or resists it and performs good actions — is entirely subject to the free exercise of his will and it is in this way that he moulds his own future weal or woe. The conditions of the new birth, such as poverty or wealth, health or sickness, intelligence or dullness, are predetermined by the volitional actions of the past life, but the

response to them is not. Therefore poverty can be changed to riches in the next life (and often in the present life itself, by well-directed effort allowing some previous good kamma to come to fruition); sickness can be changed to health by devoting oneself to the welfare of others while diligent effort will make the man who is dull-witted in this life intelligent in some subsequent one. In this way the doctrine of Kamma, while adhering scientifically to the principle of causal determination, avoids the error of predestination with its inevitable fatalism.

The last two factors of the twelve-fold chain of causation are Jati (Birth) and Jara-marana (old-age Death); they summarise the future existence just as the first two summarised the previous one. Jati and Jara-marana, the future characteristics — expressed in this way to be applicable to all possible forms of rebirth, since all must have beginning and end—are the resultants of the previous volitional activity and as such are termed “Anagata vipaka bhava” — the future mode of Becoming, resulting (vipaka) from the present kamma.

Thus the causal chain embraces consecutive phases of existence, past, present and future; it is divided into four modes of Bhava, or Becoming, two of these being causal modes (kamma) and two resultant (vipaka). The past (Avijja and Sankhara) and future (Jati and Jara-marana) links are, it must be remembered, only summaries; they contain within themselves the other factors which are given in detail in the section dealing with the current existence, from Vinnana to Bhava, and the entire process must be conceived as a circular one, in which all of the factors may be, and others must be, present co-incidentally. Thus, Avijja (Ignorance) is present throughout the cyclic process, as also is Sankhara: Jati and Jara-marana are also present in all stages because in the causal continuum which we regard as existence the process of arising (Jati), decay and passing away (Jara-Marana) are going on unceasingly. All conscious and unconscious existence, from the dynamic viewpoint of Buddhist philosophy, is simply a flux of inconceivably rapid arising, decay and passing away of the mental and physical elements. It is like the illusion of the cinematograph in which a stream of momentary pictures

projected onto the screen gives a visual impression of a single moving picture with a continuous self-identity.

Human personality, then, is not a product of material causes nor is it governed by external circumstances; it is the manifestation of Sankhara — the predispositions created by one's own past activities, and these activities have their origin in the previous mental conditions. This at once explains the extraordinary diversity and range of human types. It explains the fact that a genius can be born of mediocre parents, an honest and industrious person appear in a family of shiftless or even criminal tendencies, or that a certain man may be able to make a material success of his life from the most unpromising beginnings while another, with all outward circumstances in his favour, may end up as a failure.

Buddhism does not ignore the factor of heredity. There is actual evidence among people who have remembered their previous lives (a quite common occurrence in the East, and not only in Buddhist countries) to show that, where certain tendencies have become very strong, rebirth takes place in a family whose characteristics, biological or psychological, are such as to favour the further development of those tendencies. Thus, one who has devoted his life to the study of any of the arts or sciences until that pursuit has become an all-devouring passion, will tend to be reborn in a family of similar bent. Mozart, the infant prodigy of music, who to all appearances came into the world fully equipped with musical knowledge, was born in a family of definite, albeit mediocre, musical attainments. Many such instances could be quoted, particularly in the sphere of music, in which an all-consuming passion, directed to one particular end, is perhaps more strongly marked than in any other art, thereby setting up a habit-formation, or Sankhara, that persists vigorously from one life to another. The infant prodigy does not learn; he remembers. Here again, the force of the predisposing mental factor in shaping material substance is to be noted; the child comes into the world with the characteristic pattern of convolutions already stamped on the brain-substance which enables the current of activity to persist in the new life.

It also happens that one person is reborn in the same family many times, by reason of the attachment-factor, thereby accounting for the reappearance of similar types

over a span of several generations in the same heredity-group. Investigations are now being carried out which will, it is anticipated, throw further light on the inter-relationship of mind and body as well as on the connection between heredity and the causal process of rebirth. \*

Reverting to the status of the individual in the community, from the Buddhistic teaching regarding human personality, its background and potentialities, it is clear that Buddhism cannot favour any wholesale surrender to the interests of the State of the individual's right to follow his own "dhammata" or inner law. The Buddha Himself was urged not to renounce the world, because He was a Kshattriya Prince, and as such, according to Hindu caste law, He was supposed to follow the manner of life laid down for His class. But the Buddha defied this law and asserted the individual's right to pursue his own ideal in his own way. The Brahmanical caste system was an ancient attempt to standardise human beings according to function. Its failure, and the inability to clear away the debris of its collapse, has been the chief obstacle in the way of Indian progress since Buddhism disappeared from that country. By reason of their inner nature, their past tendencies and predispositions, individuals are individuals, and they resist all attempts to make them conform to a stereotyped pattern. It is right that they should do so, as it is right that they should not allow their own spiritual welfare to be made subservient to political theories or any other form of regimentation.

We have already seen that individuality, as such, exists where there is self-discipline. Some form of self-control is a necessary condition of individuality, but may not be identical with it. Self-determination is not altogether

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\* Research is being conducted on this important subject in Burma by the author. A great mass of evidence from various sources is being gathered, to be scientifically examined and correlated, and it is hoped shortly to present the result to the world in the form of individual case histories of subjects who remember their previous lives, recorded systematically with all the relevant facts duly attested by responsible witnesses. This is the first attempt that has so far been made to investigate this subject on scientific lines, and it is not too much to predict that when the findings are published they will revolutionise most of the existing concepts.

inconsistent with the dependence of the self upon others. In a family group the different members may live in a condition of inter-dependence, yet they may each possess individuality. Their collective life of inter-dependence rests upon their self-control — that is, the extent to which each one subordinates his inclinations to the needs of the group. From this it might be supposed that their individuality is non-existent, because they are to so great an extent determined by one another. But actually they can claim individuality, inasmuch as their being determined by one another is a voluntary affair without any sense of mutual imposition and is therefore not antagonistic to their individuality. It must, however, be remembered that all individuality is destroyed in an atmosphere of imposition. When we voluntarily allow ourselves to be determined in a certain way, there is no imposition for the choice is our own and we can have it in any way we wish.

True individuality implies liberty, but liberty is not licence. There is the mentality of the brute who cares for nothing and for no one, unless he is compelled to — but the brute mentality knows nothing about individuality. Genuine individuality connotes a sense of responsibility, for it is an integrated “self” which may destroy itself by offending others within the orbit of its relationships.

It respects, but does not submit. It asserts itself in all its activities without being destructive. It does not seek to destroy, nor does it allow itself to be destroyed.

This is the individualism of liberty that Marxism, by its subjugation of the individual to the needs of the State, would seek to suppress. Buddhism claims freedom of thought for the individual, Marxism denies it. Buddhism accepts the reality of individual distinctions and inequalities and shows how these come about; Marxism tries to ignore them and treat all mankind as belonging to a common level. Buddhism offers a way to the highest spiritual attainment which is accessible to all: Marxism denies the spirit and offers nothing higher than material satisfaction — and even this promise it cannot fulfil, for reasons that we have already seen. Its materialist Utopia is built on unreal and unsubstantial foundations, by a process of selective theorising that ignores the most significant facts of human nature and life.

¶ Marxism, it must be borne in mind, is much more than a mere political theory or a social aim: it claims to be a comprehensive philosophy of life which includes an epistemology, a metaphysics, a philosophy of history and sociology, an applied theory of revolution and a social plan. Its metaphysical foundation is unalterably Materialism; matter and its motion is all that actually exists, and consciousness is determined by material existence and is its product or modification. Marx and his disciples had evolved these propositions by intuition, mainly by a dialectic in the style of Hegel, who was in vogue when they were young. After that, masses of facts were accumulated and explained in the light of Marxist theory; whether *all* known facts could be thus explained was not taken into consideration. As we have seen, they cannot be so explained, since the theory of the primal existence of matter rests in the final analysis on a dogma just as much as does the primal existence of God, and there is no evidence whatsoever in the light of modern science that thought and mental activity are the product of material changes. All the latest evidence points the other way. Today attempts are made to give Marxism an idealistic interpretation, for crude materialism of the kind in vogue at the time of Marx is no longer fashionable. Such attempts at compromise are wholly irrelevant to the main thesis on which Communism is based; the Russian Marxists adopted orthodox materialism, propagated it as an anti-religious influence and strengthened it by eliminating everything that ran counter to it. In their interpretation of history the material character of all that exists is exploited as the basis for an economic interpretation of social processes. Economic conditions and relations are established and altered without reference to human will. Such conditions and their alterations constitute the basic foundations of every society and are reflected in human minds by images and institutions. They become systems of morality, religion, metaphysics and other kinds of ideologies which form the apex of the social structure. They have no real independence, being but reflections; nor have they any actual history or development. As the economic conditions change, so, according to Marxism, change also the products of human thought including religion, as Engels sought to prove in his "Anti-Duehring". In this way the subordinate role of religion in the social-historical process is said to be demonstrated. From this it was but a step

for the Communists to proceed further and try to prove the harmful role of religion in society. Again, Engels in "Anti-Duehring":—

"All religions are nothing else than the fantastic reflection in the minds of men, of those external forces which dominate their everyday existence, a reflection in which the earthly forces assume the form of spiritual forces." While in "Das Kapital" Marx declared religion to be nothing but "the fantastic reflection of the impotence of the people before nature and the economic relations created by themselves". This was later supplemented by Lenin when he said "Being born from dull suppression . . . religion teaches those who toil in poverty to be resigned and patient in this world, and consoles them with the hope of reward in heaven. As for those who live upon the labour of others, religion teaches them to be charitable, thus providing a justification for the exploiters to sympathize with religion . . . The oppression of humanity by religion is but the product and reflex of economic oppression within society."

Communism therefore is fundamentally opposed to all forms of religion — that is to say, to any system of thought which does not accept the over-all dominance of matter and material conditions. It is from the start committed to total war against the spiritual side of human nature, whatsoever form of expression this may take. Its central philosophy is based on the exploitation of man's craving for material things, instead of on his higher urge to free himself from it. The Marxist works on the naive assumption that if a man is given everything he craves for he will be happy. But Buddhism and modern psychology are in agreement that it is not possible to give any man everything he craves for; the moment one craving is satisfied, another rears itself up. Craving is endless; it is the mainspring of all life, and only when craving comes to an end can the cycle of life draw to its close. Like a fire, craving burns more brightly the more fuel is thrown to it. There is an old fairy tale known to an older generation of Russians which contains in homely form the answer to the Utopian theories of Communism. It is of an old fisherman who caught a magic fish. The fish pleaded for its life, telling the fisherman that it was a fairy fish and would grant him anything he desired if he would let it return to the stream.

The fisherman, not wholly believing, but ready to gamble, set the fish free, and asked it to give him a fine house in place of the tumble-down cottage he lived in with his wife. On returning home, sure enough, he found a magnificent villa standing on his poor plot of ground, with a smiling and amazed wife standing at the door to greet him. For some time they lived happily in the enjoyment of their new possession, believing that they had attained the goal of their earthly desires. Presently however, it became apparent to the wife that a fine house was no use with only a few broken sticks of furniture inside it, so she asked her husband to demand new furniture from the fish, of a kind to match the grandeur of the house. The old man accordingly went down to the shore, called the fish and made his demand. The fish consented and when he reached home he found his wife happily scurrying from one room to another, admiring the magnificent new furniture that had suddenly filled the villa. Again they were completely happy, but not for long. The fine furniture naturally made a lot of extra work, and to keep it in good condition a staff of servants was obviously needed. Once more the fisherman applied to the fish, and obtained his desire. Soon afterwards it became clear that a fine house should have a respectable garden. They asked for and obtained it. Then they found they needed a gardener . . . a coach . . . a bigger house . . . more money. They received all these gifts, but somehow, things did not go right. Their fresh joy wore off and they began to take every new gift as a matter of course. It was too easy — they found themselves with nothing left to strive or plan for, and gradually discontent crept into their lives. With time on their hands they began criticising one another and quarrelling, and no matter what they asked for and received they felt a vague dissatisfaction, some need that they could not define. And finally they came to look upon their possessions as a burden and to think of their old life with longing. When they realised that with all their material possessions they had not found happiness there came a day when the old fisherman went down to the water's edge again and called the fish. Rather wearily, the fish responded. "What do you want this time?" it asked. "One last wish," the fisherman replied. "Take everything back. I know now that there is no end to desire, and I see that happiness cannot be gained by having all one's desires fulfilled. Take it all back

and let us be as we were." So he returned home and there, sure enough, he found the old tumble-down cottage standing on his poor plot of ground, with a smiling and amazed wife standing at the door to greet him. And for some time they lived happily . . .

Communism is not a Magic Fish. It cannot give man every material gain he longs for, even by exacting the terrible price it demands — the surrender of his personal liberty, his status as a free agent to choose his own manner of life. Even if it could do so it would still fail, because man's craving exceeds all possibility of satisfaction. To attempt to equalise men the State has to be given supreme power over their lives, and at the end of the experiment all that remains is the supreme power of the State, without the promised equality. That is the present state of Communism wherever it is found in practice. And for this goal the Marxist would stamp out every manifestation of mankind's spiritual striving expressed in religion.

The Buddhist way of life is diametrically opposed to this worship of material things and worldly objectives. It is based upon the Four noble Truths, including the Noble Eightfold Path, taught by the All-Enlightened One. This means the realisation of the nature of Samsara, coupled with full knowledge of oneself. When we recognise that all phenomenal things are transitory, subject to suffering and void of any essential reality we are brought to the conviction that true and enduring happiness must be sought elsewhere than in material possessions and achievements. The four Noble Truths begin with the postulate that all existence is in reality, *Dukkha* — they go on to show the cause of *Dukkha*, which is Craving; they then show the point at which it ceases, and finally the Way to reach that cessation of suffering caused by craving, which is the only real happiness, the *summum bonum* — Nibbana.

That Way is the Noble Eightfold Path. It was given by the Exalted Buddha primarily as a path to the destruction of suffering, but because Buddhism is a logical and consistent science embracing every aspect of life, it also serves as the finest possible code for living happily in the world, with benefit to oneself and to others.

Right Views, Right Aspiration, Right Speech, Right Conduct, Right Livelihood — to mention only the section concerned with active life—what nobler course could be laid down to guide man in his dealings with his fellows? It is

a design for civilisation and world culture which has never been matched in the entire history of mankind, for it is founded, not on conquest by violence or a doctrine of ruthless struggle for economic supremacy, but on the sublime ideals of Metta and Karuna — universal benevolence and sympathy. Here is no urge towards international strife or class warfare: in its scale of values human beings are measured by their intrinsic worth of character, not by the artificial standards of race, class or possessions. It stands for a true democracy of the spirit — modern, dynamic and compelling. A Government inspired by such ideals would give birth to a true and enduring system of social justice; it would bring into reality mankind's dream of a peaceful, secure and prosperous life, rich in spiritual values while at the same time utilising material benefits for the advantage of all, through knowledge of their place in the scheme of life and the best way to make use of them. Material things may be a blessing or a curse; they become a danger if they are allowed to rule, by being exalted above the things of the spirit. But used as servants, with a true sense of their merely relative value to man as an individual, they become blessings. The gifts of science are quite neutral; what they become depends on the way they are used. Ultimately it is the mind which makes heaven or hell out of the material world, as it does in the world of the spirit. Matter can create nothing, it is a passive tool of the mind, a vehicle of expression, a means to an end — nothing more.

“Not by birth is one a Brahmin, but by purity of thought, word and deed one is a Brahmin”. That was the Buddha's challenge to the artificial social theories of His time, and it rings out as clearly today as it did over two thousand years ago. “Not by hating does hatred cease; hatred ceases by love alone. This is the ancient Law.” Such was the Buddha's rebuke to those who preach doctrines of antagonism and ill-will, setting men to war and rebellion against one another as do the apostles of the Marxist “class-struggle.” And finally: “Let us live happily, then, free from hatred among those who hate. Let us live happily, free from craving among those who crave”. In short, let us make our own heaven, the heaven within, by living harmlessly and at peace with all beings. That is the message of Buddhism for the strife-maddened world of today. The evil things that we must resist, if we

are to preserve the light of truth in a world fast darkening in the ignorance of materialistic delusion, let us resist with the weapons of purity and wisdom, dispelling the shadows of hate and fear with the torch of reason and love. Mankind must not be led astray by false promises and delusive ideologies, under whatsoever guise they may be presented. These things are invented and exploited by unscrupulous men for their own advantage; they are dressed up in fine words and glamorous rationalisations, but behind them all lurk the same immemorially old ogres of Lobha, Dosa and Moha. They are the trappings of Greed, Hatred and Stupidity, strengthened by the cunning of envy. The Exalted Buddha was not a politician — He had renounced the imperialism of His throne and race, and had no selfish motive to serve in His Teaching. He made the gift of the Dhamma, the noblest gift of all, to high and low, rich and poor; to kings, soldiers, merchants, millionaires, beggars, courtesans and priests. Without attacking or criticising, He taught each and every one. Where people were at enmity, He made peace between them, where they were deluded He Enlightened them; where they were inflamed by rage and lust He gave them the cooling water of Truth; where they were forsaken and wretched He extended to them the infinite love of His compassionate heart. He did not set out to remould the world. He was "Lokavidu" — "He who knows the world" — and He knew it too well to have any illusions about its nature, or to believe that its laws could be completely re-fashioned to suit the desires of men. He did not encourage wishful-thinking in terms of worldly Utopias. Instead, He told each one the way in which he could alter *his own world* — the inner, subjective world that is everyone's private domain. "To put an end to evil; to fulfil all good; to purify the mind — this is the Teaching of all the Buddhas". And in putting to right the inner world, how can we fail to improve the world about us? The one reflects the other with mathematical exactness. But it is only over this inner realm that we have full and perfect control, each for himself a King.

Buddhism is love guided by reason, and reason inspired by love. It teaches men to be without prejudice and without fanaticism. It inspires them to be just, honourable and merciful, to be untiring in working for their own welfare and the welfare of others. Teaching the non-existence of self, it does away with selfishness. Good men make

good social systems, but no social system on its own has ever made a good man. Such an evolved being is a product of the spirit — that is to say, of his own incessant striving for wisdom and refinement of character. Religion is the expression of that striving; man cannot do without it. It has been truly said that "it is better to have an inferior religion than no religion at all", since every religion represents, however imperfectly, a reaching upwards to a higher level of being. From the earliest times religion has been the source of man's artistic and cultural inspiration, and although many forms of religion have come into being in the course of history, only to pass away and be forgotten, each one in its time has contributed something towards the sum of human progress. Christianity civilised the West, and the weakening of its influence has marked a downward trend of the Occidental spirit, manifested by the appearance of Hitlerism, Communism and other diseased symptoms. Buddhism, which civilised the greater part of the East long before, is still a vital force, and in this age of scientific knowledge is likely to extend and strengthen its influence. It does not at any point come into conflict with modern knowledge but embraces and transcends all of it in a way that no other system of thought has ever done or is ever likely to do. Buddhism is more than religion — it is Truth. Because of this, everything that is "true and of good report" finds a place within its all-comprehensive doctrine. Only the spurious and unwholesome is cast out. "Believe nothing, O Bhikkhus", said the Exalted One, "merely because you have been told it, or it is commonly believed, or because it is traditional, or because you yourselves have imagined it. Do not believe what your Teacher tells you merely out of respect for the Teacher. But whatsoever, after due examination and analysis, you find to be conducive to the good, the benefit, the welfare of all beings — *that doctrine believe, and cling to, and take as your guide.*" These are the most courageous words ever spoken by a religious teacher. Only one who was completely assured of his own insight and the truth of his teaching would have dared to utter them. They ring down the ages, a resounding and deathless assertion of man's right to liberty of thought and self-determination. And such is the spirit of man, the indomitable seeker after truth, that everywhere and in every age they find a response in human hearts. They are at once an invitation to liberty and a challenge

to be worthy of it. We ourselves must decide what is good: must distinguish between the real and the unreal. The Buddha has lit the beacon light to guide our steps, and that light shines brightly and steadily through the storm of this world. The Path is there — we have but to tread it with open eyes, trusting in no man-made laws or deceptive promises, but with mind steadily fixed upon the goal, the one sure and lasting deliverance, Nibbana.

“Be unto yourselves a lamp and a refuge; seek no external refuge. All compounded things are impermanent. Appamadena sampadetha!” — “Strive with diligence”. The Buddha bids us strive in the light of knowledge which is also love. His Dhamma urges mankind to extinguish the fires of Lust, Hatred and Delusion, that the lamp of truth may shine brighter in the world. Where all else falls, the Dhamma does not fail. It alone can bring the blessing of eternal peace and security to all beings.

Yanidha bhutani samagatani  
Bhумmaniva yaniva antalikkhe  
Tathagatam deva-manussa-pujitam  
Buddham namassama suvatthi hotu.

Yanidha bhutani samagatani  
Bhумmaniva yaniva antalikkhe  
Tathagatam deva-manussa-pujitam  
Dhammam namassama suvatthi hotu.

Yanidha bhutani samagatani  
Bhумmaniva yaniva antalikkhe  
Tathagatam deva-manussa-pujitam  
Sangham namassama suvatthi hotu.

“Hail! from all who are on earth or in the heavens  
To Him, the Enlightened One  
Adored by gods and men!  
By this adoration may all beings be happy.

“Hail! from all who are on earth or in the heavens  
To His Dhamma, the Doctrine  
Adored by gods and men!  
By this adoration may all beings be happy.

“Hail! from all who are on earth or in the heavens  
To the Sangha, His Holy Order  
Adored by gods and men!  
By this adoration may all beings be happy.”

(From the *Katana Sutta*)  
Propagation of the Dhamma  
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