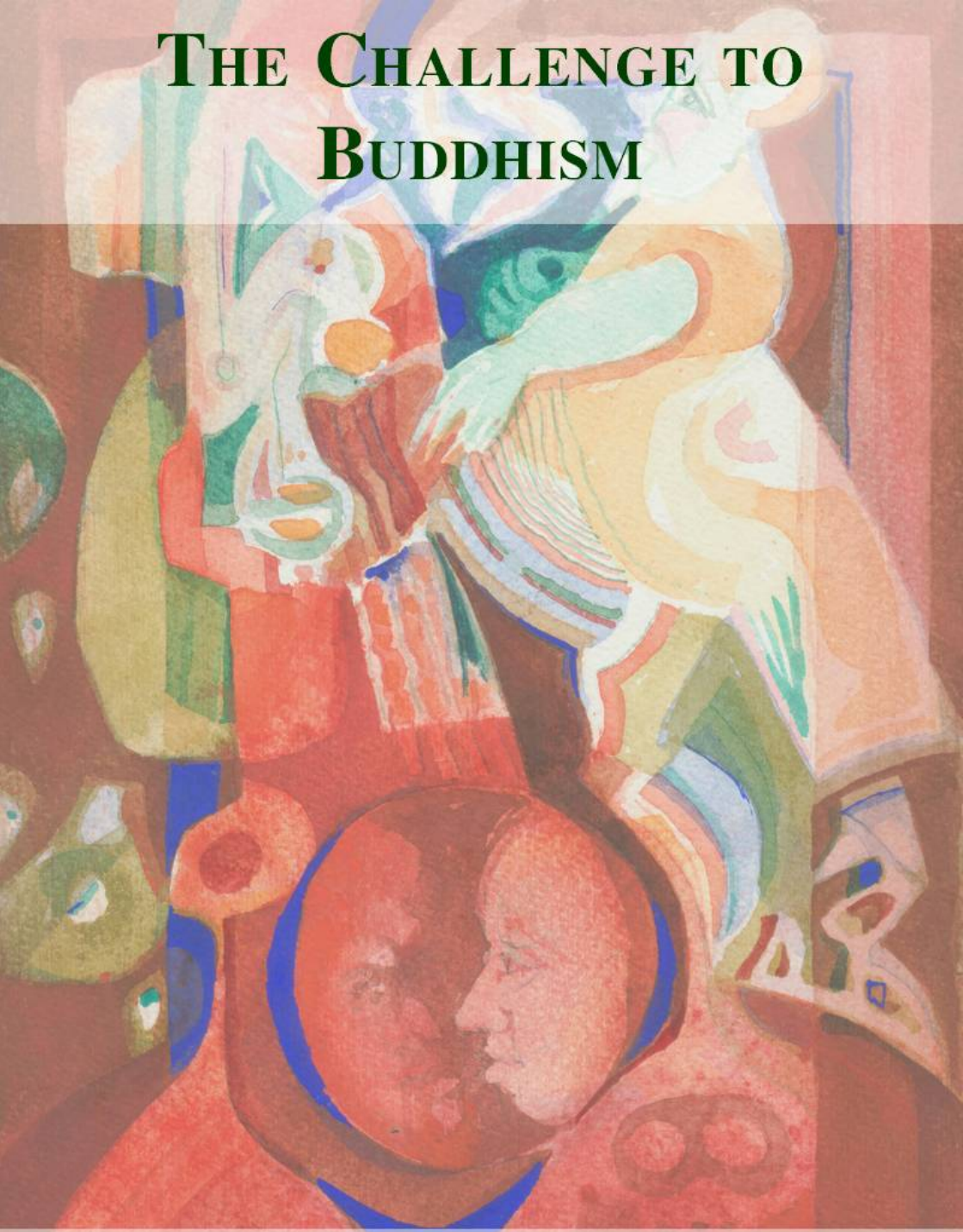
The Challenge to Buddhism



Henri van Zeyst

The Challenge to Buddhism

Henry van Zeyst

1970

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

Vijayalakshmi Pandit

Proem

A certain Western writer, Mrs. Gertrude Garatt, while speaking on Buddhism, once said: "It will not be possible ever to say in regard to Buddhism that it is worn out because it is rooted upon certain fixed principles that can never be altered".

But it is a pity that even today some Western writers on Buddhism and their eastern followers seem to consider Buddhism to be a cult suited for a dreamy people of a dark age. Either due to their ignorance or to their prejudice they do not see that the doctrines of Buddhism have anticipated in a remarkable way many of the conclusions of modern science.

Buddhism is entirely divorced from blind belief and superstition and its naturalism and humanism have a vital message for our times, an age of scepticism, of rapid revolutionary ideas.

It is true its philosophy seems too profound and difficult even for the intellectuals, yet its ethical principles are easy for any practical man or woman both to understand, follow and also apply to his or her every day life very successfully.

Here we are very glad to see Mr. H. G. A. van Zeyst coming forward to solve some problems in connection with Buddhism and remove some misunderstandings about it. The author sets forth in form of a booklet some of his Radio lectures, in which his skill places him above most of present day exponents of Buddhism. Those who could not listen to his Radio lectures will be very happy to have an opportunity to get them in a book form so

that they could read and re-read and make them food for their thoughts.

B. Ānandamaitreya,
Mahanayaka Thera.

Author's Preface

All over the world, this twentieth century has seen already—perhaps more than any other earlier century—such a considerable amount of rethinking in the different spheres of politics, religion and philosophy, that many people have stopped thinking altogether, as they are not able to keep pace with the rate of changing values, which has usually resulted in a religious devaluation.

A demoralising attitude is frequently experienced as the effect of some uncontrollable catastrophe, when people either expect the end of the world to be near, or fatalistically surrender themselves to the total collapse of economic and other values.

Has Buddhism—the basic Buddhism of the four Noble Truths with its chief three characteristics, its doctrine of karma and rebirth, of dependent origination and cessation—has Buddhism still value in this present world, where even so-called truth is sold at competitive rates, and religion is being peddled from door to door as if it were toothpaste?

The fact that some people entertain this kind of doubt is a healthy sign, for it proves that they are still alive and prepared to kick, if it is worth while. But the challenges are so many, that one is almost sure to lose the battle on some front or other.

That was the challenge presented to me by a friend of mine of many years, speaking on behalf of several fellow travellers. The challenges of modern society, of local and international politics, of economic values, of advancing science, of ethical behaviour, of modern philosophy, of psychological attitudes, are indeed

formidable challenges to outdated forms of religion. Do we need the introduction of pop music in church service? Do we need to make religion attractive to our youth who are just bored? Should we make religion appealing enough for those who want excitement? Do we want a reformed Buddhism?

I have taken up the challenge on behalf of Buddhism in a series of eight radio talks, delivered over the National Service of the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation in January-February 1970. The Director General of Broadcasting realised the importance of continuity in such a series; and so it happened that the series became a weekly event. From April 1970 on, these talks were published fortnightly in the Radio Times with a circulation of 32,000 copies. And still letters kept pouring in for greater publicity.

Here is the answer, which was made possible by donations towards the printing costs, but mainly by the personal interest and effort of my friend Tissa W. de S. Amarasekera, who was also my first challenger in this connection. Those who appreciate these talks should be grateful to him and to all who contributed to the success of this publication.

The cover design depicts how:

> Through the spaceless wastes of time
> and the barren evolutions of life
> the truth moves on,
> whether challenged from above or from below.

H.G.A. Van Zeyst
Heeloya,
Bandarawela,
December, 1970

The Challenge to Buddhism and its Stand in Modern Society

Shortly after the second world war, the British Broadcasting Corporation arranged for a series of broadcast talks which involved discussions which were not occupying the minds of people still filled with urgent problems as a settling down after demobilisation, fitting into new jobs, creating jobs for youngsters who had never done a stroke of work apart from being drilled to kill, making families and making houses for them, then finding schools for their children; and jobs after schooling, after schooling them for a job, etc.

The object was to make people think again in terms other than expedience, to analyse their problems, to help them find a way, a means to reach the end, to reorganise values, to provide a re-orientation, in simple words, to make a fresh start.

Well, twenty-five years have passed and a fresh start was made, a new generation was called into existence and this brave new world has now grown up sufficiently to make its voice heard, and to compel others to listen to it. That is the challenge of our time, a challenge which is felt in every sphere, the social, the political, the economic, the scientific, the cultural, the moral, the

educational, the religious, the psychological, the philosophical, even the sphere of planning for the future.

It is a challenge which I am going to take up on behalf of Buddhism during my next few talks, spread out over a couple of weeks.

Can Buddhism Meet the Challenge of our Time?

Buddhism after all is more than 25 centuries old and things in the world have changed! Couldn't we do, with a more up-to-date outlook on life? For to-day let us discuss the challenge to Buddhism in the social sphere.

The social sphere is concerned with the mutual relations of men or classes of men. In this sphere there are social problems, social evils, social duties and rights, there are our social superiors and inferiors, we have acquired social tastes within or without social gatherings. All of these together have resulted in an organised society of which we form part, sometimes willingly, but more often (speaking for the younger ones) as rebels.

Before going into some details of the advantages and drawbacks of society as we find it now in this second half of the 20th century, we should do well to find out the basic idea of society, its development and need. When I refer to society, I do not in particular refer to the so-called upper classes of a community whose movements, entertainments and other doings are more or less conspicuous by their excesses, fashions, exclusions and general lack of intellectual interest. Here I understand by society the organised mode of living in a civilised country. A nation may be called civilised, if it has reached a fairly advanced stage of development (not to be confused with culture), away from savage cruelty and rudeness, advanced in a technical skill (which

may be mechanical art or handicraft) to express its feelings and serve its needs. Such a civilised community or nation will find it advantageous to exchange ideas and information, to learn and to teach, to expand and to consolidate its skills for the benefit of its individuals and of the community as a whole. And thus comes into being a mode of life, which is based on mutually agreed foundations, an organisation which is thought to be of benefit to each and all.

There may be no doubt in our minds, that we here in Sri Lanka have preserved the essence of the Buddha's teaching in its purest form; and that therefore we have the right to consider ourselves as the guardians of the truth. In the Pāḷi canon we have preserved the entire set of doctrine as handed down by the Theravāda, the only school among more than 25 sects which has survived throughout the ages with an unbroken history, a perfect set of monastic rules, a complete assembly of discourses, an unparalleled collection of poetry of the highest order, a system of logic and philosophy, a record of debates and disputes, a mass of folklore, myths and traditions, anthologies of epigrams, counsels and advices, which it will be difficult to match in any part of the world, even in this present century.

It is certainly something to be proud of as a monument, greater than our ancient Dagobas in Anuradhapura, greater than the gigantic Buddha-statues in the rocks of Afghanistan, greater than the mystic mountain-temple, the Barabudur in Java, greater than all that, because it is a living monument, not only in the sense of contemporary existence, but much more in the sense of practicality, actuality and vitality. But as those ancient monuments in stone had to face the onslaught of the seasons, the fierce attacks of unbelievers, the careless neglect even of sympathisers, so the doctrine of the Buddha has been exposed to heretical views, sometimes stripped by speculation, other times adorned by devotion, and always weathering the changing conditions prevailing at different times and different places. And now again Buddhism is exposed to the challenge of modern society, society

in a world of advanced science and technology, ready even to share our knowledge with that of other planets.

What is this challenge and can Buddhism take it up?

A challenge is not something to be evaded or ignored. Neither can we meet the present challenge with our eyes fixed on the past. This is no time for fear or anxiety, for if we cannot meet the challenge, we are already dead. This is the time to assert our position in a new world with new values, with new prospects, with new vistas. And thus the question of our challenger is: "What can Buddhism offer to our society as we find it in this 20th century?" I quote from Prof. J. D. Bernal, a Fellow of the Royal Society, a Professor of Physics and Chairman of the Scientific Advisory Committee to the Ministry of work. I quote from "The Social Responsibility, of Science": "The most important job in the world today is to ensure that all human beings have a chance of full development. This can be done only by a conscious organised effort under the direction of the people themselves. No superior can be trusted. A new outlook and transformation of values are needed to effect these changes. The new values must incorporate the old tradition, but also bring it into relation with present needs".

Science has certainly altered the structure of society. The industrial revolution of the 19th century, which was brought about by new methods in agriculture, new inventions in manufacture, improved means of communication, developed quite naturally the international commerce and trade, leading to further discoveries and conquests.

The feudal system lost its significance and was replaced by a capitalistic industrialism which we have not outgrown yet, but which has encountered increasing challenges from the workers thus employed. They have formed their own society in trade-unions which are now state-recognised and in certain instances form the state. The result of scientific progress is also felt as an increase in the conveniences of life and a reduction of the death-

rate, resulting in a tremendous growth of population which now forms a threat to the very society which gave it birth.

Thus we see a constant change in the pattern of society and the questions which cannot be side-stepped are: "What is the place of Buddhism in this changing society? Has Buddhism experienced the influence of feudalism, capitalism, industrialism, socialism? Can Buddhism make its impact felt in our modern way of thinking and living?" The answers will depend on the way Buddhism is presented, as a religion, as a philosophy, as a way of life.

As a religion, i.e., as a religious institution, Buddhism has certainly influenced the various forms of society as inspired by changing world-conditions. It was the emperor Asoka who recognised in Buddhism a tremendous force for the pacification and unification of his domains. His stress on righteousness (*dhamma*) was not so much backed up by law, as by the cultivation of filial piety and reverence and loyalty.

The growth of heretical doctrines was not suppressed, but made the subject of discussion for nine months at a council especially convened for the purpose. The emperor treated his subjects as his children and there is no evidence of his exercising sovereign powers in an autocratic way. His missionary zeal was not a pretext for conquests of foreign lands, but was inspired by his peace-loving attitude to spread the teaching of *ahimsa*. He was not so much concerned about the consolidation of his power. And that must have been a very important contributory condition which made his empire collapse with his dynasty and personal sovereignty.

The subsequent change in society was not due to a fault in Buddhism, but to the lack of Asoka's successors in applying the Buddhist principles to their statecraft. Asoka was not a philosopher-statesman. His edicts do not mention any philosophic doctrine, not even the ultimate deliverance of Nibbāna. The doctrine of rebirth is referred to only incidentally in so far as the consequence of good actions will be happiness in this world and in the life to come. The deeper doctrine was certainly not his

strongest point. And thus we see how the Buddhist teaching of *ahimsa*, of kindness to all, was used to bring about a harmonious peaceful loving society, which would prosper without external conflict, where even the monarch was the kind-hearted patriarch, who provided not only law and order, but also shade-trees along the roads, wells at regular intervals for drinking water and other comforts, arranged for with the sole intention that men could conform their lives to the Dhamma.

We hear now-a-days much about the ideal welfare-state. And we here in Sri Lanka are certainly getting more than a fair share of the comforts provided by the state: free education for all, free medical service, free rice, subsidised rations of cloth and food-stuffs, duty-free imports of milk-foods for infants and invalids, free meals for certain categories of workers in public utility services, the cheapest transport in the world. And still we grumble if some of these services are not quite adequate. Holidays are provided for all religious festivals, even though the vacation is not made use of for the reason it is granted.

Here again, it is not due to a fault in Buddhism, but to the fact that Buddhism has not become a part of our social life, not even of our home-life, and certainly not of our individual, private life. And here, perhaps, we have touched on the most crucial point of the issue: What is society apart from the individual?

Society, be it as large as the entire human race, or as small as a newly married family—society is a collection of individuals, just as much as an individual is a collection of reactions, perceptions, ideations and conscious actions with or without the assistance of physical material. And these actions and reactions of one and all are conditioned, not so much by the past or by the environment as we are made to believe, but rather by our views on the future. Basically, nobody wants to live in the past, however glorious our history was; nobody wants even a repetition of the past; but we all want to live in the future with satisfaction, with comfort, and most of all, in security. It is this sense of security which binds people together, which makes the herd, the family, the group, the

party, the nation, the society. But, once within that group, the individual finds restrictions, because of the need to accommodate others. And so a conflict is born at the moment a complex is made.

Instead of attempting to solve the conflicts which arise in society, conflicts of race, of religion, of individual interests, by means of adjustment, giving and taking of duties and rights, it would be simpler to investigate into the cause of the complex which caused the conflict. Grouping together, as we have seen already, became necessary as a result of a desire for security, which is basically fear, grounded on suspicion. Although we live in a society, built for greater strength in mutual co-operation for purpose of security, we do not even trust the other fellow in fear that he may become too powerful and make use of society as an organ to increase his personal authority.

Such fear is there, because each one of us wants that increased power for the sake of increased security. Thus we see how the whole structure of society is built on fear. Those in power have got to the top with the consent of the majority, and are in fear of losing that power if they would lose the support of that very same majority. And so they yield to demands which are not even reasonable. And the masses, knowing that they have the power, become more and more demanding, till the tension reaches breaking point and either the established authority is overthrown by another physical power in a revolutionary coup, or by the authority assuming dictatorial powers under which no more demands can be made. This is what we see happening all over the world. For the sake of protection of society, for the sake of an undisturbed continuance of ordinary daily life, for the sake of peace within the society and with other groups or nations, we provide the power of arms to a very small section of people from among us. We train them in the art of killing, and then entrust them with our safety, our protection, our peace. But then that small section which has the control of power begins to feel its own importance and, forgetting the purpose of the existence of this

power, they either refuse to surrender politically at the demand of the majority which created them, or they abuse the opportunity by entrenching themselves for their own security, or they create a new setup according to their own views without consultation, without mandate, without authority.

And thus, if effected, a change is produced which has the nature of a dialectic and which therefore can never attain the purpose of the agitation, because the change is attempted for the purpose of attainment, at war to end all war, agitation to obtain a state of balance, opposition to obtain peace, striving to obtain rest, power to obtain security, which is but a safeguard of self against others, but which produces fear instead.

And so we are all building up a society of fear and on fear. It is fear which paralyses action and causes more fear. We are afraid of another government, we are afraid of another war, of racial hate, of failure and change of any type, because our security is threatened.

What is this security? Are our lives made secure by possessions? Are not the wealthiest among us equally subject to the absolute insecurity of what happens after death? Are our lives made secure by fame or popularity? Have we not witnessed in history throughout the world and during all ages, the fickleness and the inconstancy of public opinion, sometimes expressed by the ballot of an election, other times by the bullet of a revolution, but always suppressed by the forgetfulness, the ingratitude, the arrogant opposition of those who were nearest to us? Are our lives made secure by virtue? Do we not have to rely on books and texts, said to be sacred, and sometimes inspired, in order to believe what cannot be proved about a life to come?

And yet, that is what we mean with society which forms our background, our foundation, our protecting walls, behind which we hide and pretend to live economically, spiritually, sensually, metaphorically, culturally, politically, materially, intellectually, other-worldly. And without all that we feel lost, we feel naked, we are nobody.

Yes, that is it: society makes me somebody. And in order to be somebody I become the slave of society. If I am a Christian or a Muslim, I do not dare to deny the existence of God, although I do not have and cannot have any personal relationship with the Absolute. If I am a Buddhist, I cannot afford to deny the tenets of the Buddha's doctrine that all things are impermanent, although all I want and seek is permanent security.

How does Buddhism then provide the security which is the foundation of our fear which has created society? I repeat: the answer will depend on the way Buddhism is presented as a religion, as a philosophy, as a way of life. If we continue to present Buddhism with all the frills of adornment which were perhaps fashionable in ages long ago, the teaching of the Buddha will be placed in the same category with the rock-edicts of Asoka, and be considered as worthy exhibitions in a museum, together with the laws of ancient Babylon and Assyria. But, if Buddhism is to remain the living force it was in the time of its founder, we have to analyse, understand and put into effect the basic tenets of its philosophy as a way of life. For, if a philosophy remains a mere exercise of speculation, it may act as a brain-sharpener, but it will hardly be able to answer the challenge of our modern society. It is not enough to repeat through the senders and transmitters of the world's systems of broadcasting (the modern equivalent of the ancient proclamations from the house-tops), saying that society is rotten. For, there is no society apart from the individuals, that is you and I, who constitute society, who have made society and who are now bound by society.

It is the individual who has to grow up towards his responsibilities, who has to wake up to his relationship with others in that society, who has to realise his inner needs and his private greeds, which form his motives for seeking the protection of his security within that same society which is now crushing him as an individual, where the individual was replaced by the feudal system, and a slave was set free to become a servant in full dependence on his feudal master, where the servant of the master

became the slave of the machine and all individuality was lost in the union.

The solution is not in a classless society, but in a selfless one, which can only come in the realisation of the Buddha's doctrine of *anatta*. There is no problem which cannot be solved through the understanding of the cause of the conflict. And as every conflict is caused by a complex, it is that complex which has to be analysed and dissolved. It is the complex of suppressed tendencies against experiences. It is the desire for the continuance and security of an ideal and permanent self against the experience, against the knowledge, against the actuality of impermanence, of universal change, of absolute non-self. And that realisation of non-self is the unique contribution of Buddhism to all times. It is Asoka's application of *ahimsa*, as it was the solution of the Buddha's disciples who attained arahantship thereby, as it can be and will be the dissolution of all our modern social problems, which are based on the conflict of the individual who places himself as an entity against others, who joins with others in the union of a greater entity against other unions, politically, racially, socially, but always with the same motive of acquiring security for his imagined isolated self-individuality, which is no more than a fiction, a dream, a delusion, which can only be solved in the way of thinking and living as taught by the Buddha.

Buddhism and its Role in Politics

Politics may be described as the science of the administration of the public affairs of a society. And at first sight it would appear that there can hardly be any common ground between the public affairs of a community and the private affairs of an individual. And as religion is considered to be the concern of an individual to arrange the private affairs of his spiritual life, the parallel course of the two movements seems to be so complete that they never could or even should meet.

But the history of many ages in many lands shows us the contrary. The interference of political institutions in the private lives of individuals, as well as the influence of private views on public affairs has always been so strong that apparently the two are wedded and welded together in a way which even a divorce between state and church could not separate. The reason, of course, is (as we have seen in the previous talk on the challenge of society) that there is no society without the individual. And thus the public affairs of the state must be a reflection of the private affairs of the individual.

In a nomadic society like that of the Hebrews during their transition from slavery in Egypt to their tribal settlement in Israel, their public affairs were entirely regulated by their sacred books, said to be supernaturally inspired and revealed. But, the nature of a nation's laws will change when the tribal and feudal existence

undergoes a change. We have seen the same change in Christian lands, when the devotion of the middle ages led to such abuses of spiritual power, that a reformation became necessary to allow a more rational outlook to take over. That, of course, led to various schisms, when different views appeared to be irreconcilable. But, with our present greatly increased facilities of communication and mutual understanding, there appears to be growing up a rapprochement, i.e. a re-establishment of harmonious relations, which is often still very superficial, but which is nevertheless significant in its tendency and willingness to get together in order to understand one another, in which process a certain amount of giving and taking is necessary, rounding off the sharp edges of division.

Has such an attempt been made also to bridge the gulf between the State and the Church?

Religious feelings, whatever their source of inspiration may be, whatever may be their need and their value, are deeply ingrained in human nature. We are not concerned at this moment, whether such feelings are rational or inspired by fear, whether they are emotional or supernatural in origin, but we consider them as facts. As people are at present—not only in this part of the world, but also in highly developed countries—people feel the need of spirituality, at least to give themselves the satisfaction of rising occasionally above the dullness of the cares of material life. Thus, given the fact of the existence of religious emotions in the majority of individuals, the political ambitions of the governing body of a state cannot afford many times to overlook such a demand. Even when such demands have been officially ignored, they still had to be tolerated privately, in a way as marriage-laws have not done away with prostitution, which is sometimes legally permitted to prevent greater social abuses. This provides us with a typical example of how the two courses of public and private lives could not be kept on parallel lines. Even if the official policy of a state is said to be above religious issues and does not support

one denomination over another, there still will have to be official interference in cases of dispute concerning various rights.

Essentially, of course, such rights are not different from the rights of family property and individual possessions, which may require a protection, which only the state can provide by law. And it would not be feasible to have different sets of law to fit different occasions. But the issue lies much deeper. It concerns the structure of the state which again depends on the nature of individual characters. It is, in the ultimate as well in the immediate sense, the individual who constitutes the state. It is also the individual who makes the state, and it is the individual who formulates the policy of the state. But, then what has happened is that the state and the policy, which were provided for the welfare of the individual primarily, now expect the individual to provide for the welfare of the state. Essentially, It is a case of a patient going to a doctor to obtain relief in his illness, and giving his doctor implicit permission to inflict a certain amount of restriction and even pain on him for the sake of his health, which is the greater good. Thus, it all hinges on ends and means.

And that is the point where the teaching of the Buddha can help us, and his teaching alone, just because it is not a teaching of the means to the end, even though the Noble Eightfold Path appears to lead to a goal, called Nirvāṇa.

A policy, a body of laws or legal enactments, is a means invented to regulate individual behaviour in a society where man cannot live as an individual. And thus the illness is accepted (not merely treated as a fact), but accepted as a necessity, as an essential part of living. It is an admission that sane living is impossible. And so, all laws are based on the principle of insanity. Consider, e.g. the various manifestos of opposing political parties by the time an election is round the corner, when the individual voter has the only chance in four or five years to be an individual who has the power to make or to break a government in so-called democratic countries. His vote is solicited with many promises of greater welfare in the comfort of living, in the exercise of rights,

in the provision of health and education, all dressed up in the local colours of the needs of the time. But, basically, they all promise the same things, because people want those things. They all promise freedom in the exercise of religion, because everybody wants that for his own religion. In the modern socialist state, all parties work for the material uplift of the underdog, the underprivileged, the poor, the worker, because they constitute the masses, and by means of the vote they hold the key to power for the moment. But, if all have that same goal in view, what prevents them from amalgamating, from uniting, or at least from cooperating to bring those common ideals into effect? But here the real opposition comes forward, because each one wants to reach the end according to each one's individual method. And thus we differ in the means, even where we agree in the end. And as we cannot unite in the means, we oppose with other means, and the end is not reached. Thus the separation of ends and means leads to chaos.

Politics, as I have said already, as a science of administration of public affairs, is a means, a method, a form of procedure to attain the end which can be put very broadly as the greatest happiness of the greatest number of people. And on this basis is prepared also a certain amount of inconvenience which has to be borne by a minority for the sake of the welfare of the majority. In justification of this attitude examples are shown from the applied science of medicine where sometimes pain has to be inflicted by the surgeon for the sake of a cure which is more important. The weakness of this argument is shown, however, in history, where this principle is always applied by those in power over those who have no say in the matter. Even in the spiritual field we have witnessed how dissenters have been burnt to death in order to save their souls from eternal hell-fire.

It is always a question of the means being adjusted to serve the end. And what the end is to be is determined by those in power. Very often, e.g. in the case of children who cannot be expected to judge conditions of living, owing to their lack of

understanding and experience, the decision has to be made by more mature minds. But it does not follow that experience leads to understanding, or that understanding grows with age. And thus, although certain preventive measures will be necessary to safeguard the inexperienced from their own impulsive activity which could lead to their own destruction, all possible precaution should be taken, even in the education of children, to make the subject understand the necessity of restriction.

And so we return to the distinction between means and ends; and to their separation. As long as things are done for the purpose of achievement, we are building up on the basis of conflict; we prepare for war so as to secure our peace. And that is in short the history of human conflict, the struggle for life, for possession, for satisfaction.

The fact that it has been thought necessary to draw up a code of law to regulate the various aspects of relationship between the members of society, between employer and employee, between husband and wife, between neighbouring properties, and ultimately between states and power-blocks, is already a sign that relationship was not understood, that we need the policy of convention, tradition and actual legislation by the state or by religion, that we merely live together for the sake of greater security, that we have not outgrown the animal herd-instinct, that the foundation of our relationship and the basic reason of our policy is nothing but mutual exploitation which needs to be kept within workable limits by the administration of law, which is politics.

Relationship as we know it has something of the nature of an illness. As long as there is no illness, we are not aware of health. Similarly, relationship as a healthy contact between individuals is so natural that it is not known. The only relationship which *is* known, is that which makes its presence felt as friction, that is an unhealthy contact, a conflict. Thus, relationship as we know it, is a constant friction, a misfit which we try to adjust through political administration of social laws. What we call relationship, then, is

not relationship at all, but a constantly intensifying process of opposition, of exploitation, of friction and conflict. Although we have never understood the meaning of relationship, yet we try to regulate it through convention, tradition, moral law, civil law, penal codes and political pressure.

Yet this relationship of friction has an extraordinary revealing power; for, the heat of this friction is like a feverish temperature which is not an illness in itself, but a symptom of infection, of disorderly functioning of glands; of interference in the routine working of the organs. So the contact in relationship is felt only in opposition, as a symptom of misunderstanding. And instead of trying to find out the cause of such friction, we merely avoid contact whenever possible, as in contact is felt the experience of friction (*phassa-paccaya vedanā*).

But why should contact mean conflict? There appears to be something radically wrong in our way of approach to life, if all our contacts should produce nothing but conflict.

The reason is to be found in the manner of approach and contact. If contact is made in a spirit of opposition, of exploitation, of expectation of profit, there cannot be understanding, because the motive of the approach has already been established in advance; it has become a means to the end. And thus, from contact arises feeling, and from feeling arises craving (*vedanā-paccaya taṇhā*).

True relationship becomes impossible as long as I am afraid of being contacted. When a person comes to see me and I place myself at once on the alert, thinking: "What does he want from me?" I have already closed my heart, even though I open for him my door with social politeness. And in the reverse case, when we go to meet somebody, are we not almost always doing so, in order to get something out of that contact? Whether it is the economic profit expected by a commercial traveller, or the sentimental gratification expected from an hour's gossip, or the spiritual profit expected from meditation or prayer in communication with the supernatural—essentially it is the same type of profit-seeking which urged us to establish this relationship, which is opposition

rather than contact. We all are constantly building these walls of self-protection which at the same time isolate and prevent any sane and natural contact and understanding. This isolation-policy, whether in private or in society, individual or racial, makes any kind of normal and healthy relationship an impossibility, for we never try to understand ourselves, nor our motives, and perhaps most of all we never try to understand the other. Hence there can be no love, no harmony, no unity in our relationship, which thereby becomes a policy of egoism, suspicion and opposition, of disharmony, conflict and hate.

And with that kind of policy we try to protect and administer our society. Is it a wonder that we are living on the edge of a volcano which is always threatening to blow up our whole structure, and which actually within our own lifetime has brought untold misery and suffering twice over already, while a third eruption appears to be not far off? And still we are talking of the great lessons experience can teach us. Two world-wars have only taught us to prepare for a third one.

What are we doing to understand our youngsters who not only are drifting without leadership, but who are rightly suspicious of any attempt to control them? They at least have realised the futility of expectation, of reliance on others, of striving for security. Twice over within twenty-five years, a whole generation of young people in several countries has been wiped off, while those who were too young to be sacrificed have now grown up in disillusion, without faith, without religion, without discipline. And what has Buddhism to offer them? Have we nothing better to offer them than the hope of reincarnation, when conditions may be even worse? Or a faint glimpse of the highest bliss, called Nirvāṇa, which nobody understands, which nobody can describe, and which therefore does not hold any attraction?

Real contact in true relationship then is only possible, if I am prepared to come out of my fortress and go to meet the other to understand him. Most people are always ready to teach others, but how few are ready to learn? Experts are sent to other countries to

teach the under-developed nations the technical know-how; but is there nothing that those experts can learn from those nations which had a perfected culture even centuries before those highly developed countries were discovered? Similarly, is it not possible to sit down in quiet thought at the feet of some elder, instead of rousing the feelings and cravings of others without providing them the means of satisfaction? Not teaching, but learning is the beginning of understanding. But as long as every nation protects itself and its commerce with all kinds of tariff-walls, import duties, export regulations, immigration laws, passports and visas, they isolate themselves more and more, till they find that their surplus in one commodity will not buy them a sufficiency in another. And that is the beginning of a new conflict.

All this seems so extraordinarily simple and self-evident, that it is really more than surprising that people do not act accordingly. But there is the fear to step out of the fortress; nobody wants to be the first, in fear that he may be the only one. And so we continue talking about disarmament and an international police-force at the same conference table, while in the home-countries the ammunition factories are doing overtime work. It is fear which prevents understanding, and without understanding we may sit side by side at the same table, we may sleep together in the same bed, we may speak the same language, but there will be no contact, no communion.

Then, where to begin this mutual understanding, without which all policies are but structures of fear and defence? We must begin to understand relationship, or rather the bases of relationship, not as we imagine that it should be, because that we do not know. But let us begin to understand relationship as we know it, i.e. in conflict and opposition. Standardised truths do not give a solution. The teaching of non-Violence (*ahimsa*), of loving kindness (*mettā*), of compassion (*karuṇā*) remain but empty words, as long as it is not understood that violence and hatred are simple reactions which depend in their arising entirely upon the conditioning of the mind. This conditioning of the mind

is a process of rationalisation, which has given Buddhists the opportunity of eating meat and fish with a clear conscience, as long as they do not kill with their own hands, i.e. as long as they can find somebody else to do the dirty job for them. It has produced such anomalies as the justified and legalised killing of a murderer; or defensive wars in which millions are sacrificed who wanted nothing but peace, sacrificed for an idea, an ideology, an idol.

The world is living through violence in its different degrees of exploitation, economic cut-throat competition and actual warfare. And any violent reaction thereto merely increases the hate which is prevailing everywhere. Now, instead of preaching non-violence, shouldn't we begin with trying to understand why there is hate? For, non-violence is an ideal, but hate is a fact which cannot be argued away by talking about love. Hate is opposition: I against the other. Why am I against the other? Because he forms an obstacle to my expansion. That means that it is not really the other man who is the cause of my ill-will, but that it is my desire for expansion which produces the conflict. Or the process may be the reverse: I form an obstacle to the expansion of another; he wants to remove me and I object. Why do I resist? Because I want to continue, I want to progress, I want to expand, I want to live in security, I want to be. Now I am at the moment not concerned with the other man's feelings, his desire for expansion, his hate; but I am trying to solve my own problem, which is the fact that I hate him. It is the expression of this feeling of hate within me, which is a self-expression which makes me feel powerful and violent. In violence I feel myself stronger and, hence, more secure. If I am not stronger physically, I try to be more clever, more cunning. But it is violence all the same, which is my reaction to the desire to maintain my position, to preserve my possession, to continue what I am in life, in name, in influence, in relations …all of which is politics. I feel that in myself I am nothing, but I hide that empty shell subconsciously even for myself under the

external show of action, of expansion, of power, of politics, which is opposition, violence and hate.

The daily questions: What has Buddhism to say to the workers? What can Buddhism do in Vietnam? etc. are all as futile as a question about a Buddhist mission to the moon.

In attempting to find a solution there, we are only trying to escape this one inescapable problem which is the conflict within myself. All violence, hate and opposition have only the one motive: the prevention of the truth becoming known, the truth that I AM NOT. The race to conquer space, which has resulted in a magnificent, scientific victory, witnessed by all, is in actuality a ridiculous although expensive child's play for prestige, proving superiority of manhood by scoring a first. That is the spirit of all competition, be it in sport, in business, or in a general election.

Buddhism has no ready-made solution for an armistice in the Middle-East, because Buddhism is not interested in oil. Buddhism has no five-year plan for unemployment, because an honest worker who does not exploit others through his laziness, will always find a job, although it may not be at the top. Buddhism has no answer to the periodical waves of starvation in various parts of the world, because we know that there is sufficient for all if there is no hoarding, no cutting down of production to maintain high prices, no working for greed instead of need.

But Buddhism does know that the answer to all this can only be found in the individual who alone can change his outlook on life from his self-centred egoism to the broader aspects which can embrace all, in equal love and compassion, if there is the acceptance and realisation of his no-self, which is the truth that I am not an entity to be made secure, but that I am a wavelet in the process of the rolling-on of the river, which ultimately will flow down into the sea, not forgotten or swallowed up, but in peace with all, and free from all.

Are Economic Values Relevant?

We may put the question in a different way: Is not Buddhism a religion with a moral code for renunciation, in which property has no place? The implication is that Buddhism is not for the world, but only for the monastery. And of course, it is easy to show (in the texts as handed down the centuries) a predominance of references to the monastic life. One of the three collections or Piṭakas is exclusively dedicated to monastic rules of discipline, the Vinaya. The collection of philosophic treatises, the Abhidhamma, is frequently so scholastic that it does not appear to have any relation to the day-to-day life of a layman in an organised society where production and distribution of a country's resources are of prime importance. Finally, the collection of discourses in the Sutta Piṭaka, although containing some admonitions for lay-people, are mostly addressed by the Buddha to his monks, either in assembly or individually.

Without losing ourselves in the various theories of political economy and schemes for the re-distribution of wealth, all of which are means of organisation of society with a view of giving the greatest possible happiness, comfort and security to the greatest number of people, we should look into the matter more closely in order to determine the nature, the purpose and the accomplishment of property.

What is property and what have we made of it?

Property in the true sense is that which is proper to one, that which belongs to one not merely as possession, but as one's nature. Thus, combustibility is the property of certain gases, but gas is not the property of the cylinder which contains it. Similarly, man's property is his manhood and not his wealth. Knowledge and experience are the property of an individual, but his books and instruments are not. That which is proper to one's nature cannot be lost without destruction of that nature. Thus, knowledge can only be lost by the loss of one's rational and intellectual nature. Forgetting is not a loss of knowledge, but a temporary impediment which prevents the sub-consciously stored-up knowledge and experience becoming available. Thus, I do not have property, but I am that; just as water does not have wetness, but is wet.

What actually happens through the misunderstanding of the I-process is this: As the "I" fears discontinuity, and as it cannot have anything proper to its nature to continue, being a process of delusion, it has made property in order to continue therein. It is indeed property in the accepted sense which makes the "I", which names the "I", which protects the "I". Thus the "I" lives in its possessions, and is its possessions. It does not have possessions, but the possessions have it. Without a name which is the past, without an ideal which is the future, without a title which is a label to be known by now, without beliefs which are investments which give spiritual security, without possessions which give psychological security, the "I" simply is not.

Property in itself, therefore, has no significance, but it becomes the field in which the "I" has taken roots and where it can grow. For, property can be enlarged. Property gives influence and power; and that makes the "I" grow. It is the wrong valuation in which people imagine to have property instead of being their property, i.e. being what they truly are, which is the chief hindrance preventing them to realise the truth. For, in the consideration of possessions as property, the "I" is expanded to include the material objects; one speaks and thinks of "my" house,

etc.; and thus, through identification with the material world the spiritual life becomes materialised.

This has been recognised in its effect, although not in its cause, by all religious founders and reformers, by all spiritual leaders, who (all of them) have advocated a life of renunciation as remedy. Most of them meant an actual separation from the material world, though a few also emphasised that unless possessiveness or the idea of "mine" is renounced, the mere physical breaking off from the world would be insufficient, so long as the world of "mine" remains within.

Property can be of many kinds. Most people possess their wife, unless they are so modern as to live together for the eye of the world, but actually allow each other to go their own way, in which case we cannot call them husband and wife. People possess their servants and exploit them, as they possess any hired article to be made use of to the fullest extent and returned when no longer required. People possess their children to make their name continue to live in them; and hence they frame their lives in systems of education, in organised religions, so that they may be the true picture of their parents. People have made property of their name and title, as much as of their house, land, car and bank-balance. People possess their ideas and their beliefs, and with the help of them they live self-contentedly in a world all of their own.

Now, this idea of ownership cannot be merely given up as one might relinquish some object, because the idea is the subject, the "I"; and without those properties—extensions though they be and unreal—the "I" feels stripped and lost. Moreover, the giving up of possessions may establish a new kind of ownership, the ownership of virtue, and the "I" becomes spiritually rich and famous in its physical renunciation and poverty. Thus, even poverty can become property.

Then, how are we going to deal with property? This question has been the focussing point of all economic conferences as well as of political currents. Some would give the fullest liberty to

private enterprise, thereby encouraging competition for the sake of increasing the country's Income and general progress. Others, while making a fine distinction between private and personal property, will condemn the former and permit the latter. There are the capitalistic and the communistic views of property. There is the natural view that what I make myself is mine, and the supernatural view that I am only the caretaker of what is truly God's. But as we have seen already several times when dealing with other problems, our approach is in the wrong direction, so that we do not even touch the real problem. For, here the problem is not how much or how little I should be allowed to possess, but why do I want property at all? If I understand that, the question about "how much?" might lose all meaning, perhaps.

As already pointed out, the different kinds of property, my wife, my car, my faith, my title, all are means of expressing myself, of giving myself that sense of security without which all continuity is painful. What we really want, therefore, is continuity in security; all the other things are means thereto. The desire for continuity in security is not an actually present need, but a psychologically created need, the fulfilment of which can only lie in the future, or rather, which can never be fulfilled, because I shall never desire discontinuity and insecurity as means of self-expression.

Needs we have. Food and clothing and shelter are essential for physical existence; hence they are present needs. This present is not necessarily limited to this very hour. He who starts ploughing the field only when he feels hungry, will have died of starvation long before he can reap the harvest. Thus, working in the summer in order to have food in the winter is still the natural care for an essential, present need. This is never a problem, for it is our rational nature itself which stimulates this urge. But what nature does not do is to give a psychological value to the material needs of the body and its senses. Then, a physical need is made into a psychological greed through the spirit of acquisitiveness.

The Buddha does not refuse to look at the immediate physical

problems of daily life. On the contrary, he has given them a priority over all else. *Eka nāma kim*? What is No. 1? *Sabbe satta āhāratiṭṭhika.* All beings exist on food. Food for sustenance of the body; thought for sustenance of the mind. He delayed on one occasion the delivery of a public discourse to enable a hungry man to be fed; for no concentration of mind is possible on an empty stomach. He advised the layman Sigala to open a savings account with 25% of his earnings to provide for the time when he would not be able to earn any more. But he certainly did not want him to encumber himself with possessions which would bind him with the attachment of clinging and pride to the conceit which says "I am" (*asmi-māna*).

It is not possible to draw a general line between need and greed, between physical satisfaction and psychological acquisitiveness, for that depends on each one's understanding of himself. There are physical needs which are inborn, so to say, like the need for food; and there are physical needs which we have created by our psychological greed, such as smoking, without which some people cannot actually do their work. Further, the urge for the satisfaction of some physical need will be stronger in some than in others. And it is this exactly which causes so many social problems. Each one, therefore, will have to find out for himself, whether need drives him or greed. To discriminate between the two is so very difficult, because we have formed the habit of hiding our real motives even for ourselves. Self-knowledge then again holds the key to the solution of the property problem.

Why do I want property? Whether the motive be need or greed, I want property to be secure. Satisfaction of a desire gives me momentary security. The satisfaction of the moment does not leave anything to cling to, and thus it cannot make the "I" grow; but the "I" becomes firmly established if I can procure its continued security; for only then is expansion possible. In other words, in seeking satisfaction of a need there is no "I"-thought, as the problem is the immediate, and that problem is solved in the present. But psychological greed is not an immediate problem,

but rather one of continuance, and it contains, therefore, nothing but the "I"-thought. It is a continuous problem which cannot be solved, because it is not the object of satisfaction which is desired, but the continuance of the "I" through that object, through that satisfaction. And so the procurement of that object has not solved the problem of continued greed.

Thus, the problem has shifted from property to the question of why does the "I" want to continue in property? The answer is obvious! Because the "I" is its property. The two cannot be separated. Just as wetness cannot be separated from water without freezing or evaporating the water, in which cases it ceases to be water, so property cannot be separated from the "I" without making the "I" cease. Here we see then the trick the mind is playing on itself. The "I" makes property in acquisitiveness; and property makes the "I" in continued security. Without "I" no property, and without property no "I". Then who wants property? Not the "I", for the "I" is the property; and apart from the property there is no "I".

This whole play has been set up to delude the mind to identify itself with something which is non-existent. Thus can mind deceive itself. But, as soon as the mind understands the real character of this play, as soon as it can look through the game, the game is up, and the mind is free. In separating the two, the "I" can crave for property, it can pretend to have property and to continue through property. But what can be obtained can also be lost. And therefore, property needs protection, which means opposition and conflict.

In understanding, however, such separation is impossible, as the "I" is seen as the property. Then there is no problem of acquisitiveness, neither of protection; for what is proper to it cannot be lost. Without the need for protection there will be neither opposition nor conflict. "Happy indeed we live", said the

Buddha, "we that call nothing our own, feeders on joy, like the bright gods[1]".

But, why then should the mind thus deceive itself by setting up this puppet regime of a deluded "I"? Because the mind is after sensate values. It identifies itself with pleasurable sensations, while it rejects the unpleasant ones. As pleasurable sensations are not always available, it preserves the memory of such experiences of the past. Thus, while the mind links up the different experiences with which it has identified itself for the sake of gratification, a series is formed, which gives the impression of continuity, though in reality they are all dead experiences of the past. But this living in happy remembrances is satisfying when nothing else is available; and thus continuity is sought. The "I" being a process of delusion, having nothing of its own to continue, begins to acquire property in order to continue therein.

Now, what can be done to un-deceive the mind? First of all, we have to become aware of the working of the mind, then of the meaning of property, the nature of the "I", and ultimately of the value of sensate experiences. An experience has only value for the moment that it lasts; and the mind does not require more, for at every moment there is a fresh experience available, as long as it does not distinguish between pleasurable and non-pleasurable ones, rejecting the latter while retaining the first. If the mind is pliable and alert, there is no need of identifying itself with any. Then there will be no psychological memory left, which is the cause of the "I"-delusion. If the "I" is not born property has no meaning, for there cannot be the sense of "mine"-ness. Without the "I" there is, therefore, no method for un-deceiving the mind, but in simple awareness of what is happening, the process can continue without developing into a problem. As a rolling stone gathers no moss, so the ever-renewed process of thought cannot give rise to the misconception of a permanent "I"

[1] Dhp. v. 200.

with all its problems and conflicts. Then there can be no desire for self-protection through a name, a belief, or through property.

Renunciation of possessions in Buddhism is not understood as a monastic vow of poverty. Want is never a virtue; it can easily become a vice, for out of need arises greed. But, when possessions are seen as means of self-extension and security in conflict, they will be shunned by a wise man as objects of contamination. Then, renunciation will be a purification and an emancipation. It is the feeling of inner poverty which makes us search for fulfilment in relationship and in property. And that poverty-sensation is due to the impermanent nature of all things, of the mind as well as of the senses of the body. Instead of trying to understand impermanence and our relation to it, we merely search for permanence; and not finding it anywhere, the mind creates it through the "I"-delusion which in isolation creates the idea of property in which to continue in security.

But, if we try to understand impermanency, what do we see? In impermanency there is no security, it is true; but why should we want security, if there is nothing to make secure? For, in impermanency there is no being in static existence, but only a process of becoming which is to be born every moment again. In impermanency every moment has the ecstasy of a new discovery, of a fresh beginning. Who has not felt in his life, now and then, the desire to begin all over again, to forget all those mistakes and make a fresh beginning from the start? That joy we can have all of us, not once or twice, but every moment of the day, by living fully in every experience without clinging to it in identification, by living with the spirit of adventure, without attachment or repulsion, without opposition in relationship, without projecting ourselves through property, but with complete awareness, fully awake, fully alert, fully sensitive. Then we do not ask from life, because we are living. We do not believe, because we know. We do not feel related, because we are one in love and understanding. And if in understanding we can let that "I" go, and with it its acquisitiveness, its attachments to name, fame and property, its

clinging to beliefs and particular friendships, then we shall feel the freedom of the man who recovering from a long illness is able to walk again without crutches. "A man is rich in proportion to the things he can afford to let alone". That is freedom; that is bliss!

And so, Buddhism can not only face the challenge of our time, as a steward, entrusted with the management of man's real property, but also provide the proper answers to those great questions which dominate life in the world, life in society, life in the factory, life in the family, life in the monastery, life in solitude. For the challenge is always within; the economy of living is not just an administration of resources, but a judicious handling of the situation which has become a problem through misunderstanding, which has become a conflict in self-searching security, and which has its solution in the understanding of one's nature as one's only property.

If that is understood, the past cannot haunt us any more with its regrets, the future cannot allure us with its promises; but that little moment of the present, that precious island of time in the ocean of Samsara, holds all the joys of creation and fulfilment, which cannot grow old, which cannot be stolen, which cannot decay or corrupt, just because each moment is a new blossom, a new vision, a new experience, in which the "I" has no place, in which property is meaningless, just because it is the unrelated and absolute freedom and deliverance of Nibbāna.

The Basis of Science

It is not only in this twentieth century, but from the moment that man maintained that everything that can be doubted must be doubted, from the time that observation and experiment were substituted for ancient speculation, that is from the time of the birth of materialism and the subsequent upsurge of science, from that time on has natural science challenged supernatural religion, has human intellect challenged superhuman inspiration, has free thought challenged dogmatic faith. And so in this series we have to face the issue once again: Can Buddhism meet in our time the challenge of science?

In our present time, the challenge of science is so much more forceful than the challenge made by the experimental methods of Francis Bacon in the 16th century, who did much to free the human mind from misconception. It was a natural follow-up through the breach, forced by the natural science of men like Copernicus, Galileo and Kepler. Giordano Bruno was excommunicated and burnt alive; Galileo preferred to live for science. But he was compelled to disavow his former opinions and made his formal submission to dogmatic faith, so as to preserve his mind and life in the service of scientific thought. They were great, brave men, for not only did they have to face an enormously powerful and united opposition, but their convictions were based on the imperfect results of experiments with undeveloped and almost crude instruments, many of which were far below the level of most of our children's toys.

The discovery of radio-activity and that of nuclear energy have increased man's power to far beyond this earth, allowing him to land on far off planets with split-precision of time and direction with remote control, across distances which remain beyond our imagination, although we live in the midst of them.

And together with these discoveries have grown our knowledge and understanding of the phenomena in the universe around us; and the application of that knowledge has brought about great changes in our ways of living, from concentrated coconut cream to synthetic textiles, with light, power and water brought on tap into our bedrooms, with refrigeration and electric cooking becoming part of an average household, with radio and television for the home, computers for the office, amplifiers for the church, and international travel being reduced from weeks and months to a couple of hours. Unable to cope with it all, we have to take so much for granted that we fail to realise the enormous amount of labour involved in their production, all of which is directed by the human mind.

The progress made in medical sciences has reduced the death-rate, has made it possible to perform operations on organs, the mere touch of which would earlier have been the cause of certain death. It has given relief to incurable diseases and has restored to normal function a human organism with artificial components.

The repercussions in other fields of thought were not slow in showing themselves. Materialistic philosophies compete successfully with idealistic systems of thought; and the ancient religions have begun to feel the need of a renewal, of a reformation of ancient dogmas, of a revaluation of spiritual relationship; for, to meet the challenge of science one can not any longer rely on blind faith, particularly in view of the fact that the ancient faiths have provided us in the past with pictures of world-events which are not only out of line with modern concepts, based on experience rather than belief, but are almost an insult to the human intellect with their absurd representations, bordering on hallucinations. And so, when we have to discard those fancied views of

the past, of the origin, of creation, we cannot rely on those same sources for their predictions of the future, of the end of the world, of eternity. Yet, those are the very things religions are dealing with, exclusively and essentially, and it is on those grounds that religions cannot meet the challenge of science.

If we take certain texts as an essential basis, then even Buddhism might not be able to face the onslaught of scientific thought and fact. For, in Buddhism too, we come across texts which describe cosmic events in terms which show a preference for fiction over fact. But fortunately, in Buddhism we are never told that those flights of imagination form an essential part of the doctrine of the Buddha. Books of prophecy, as the Anagatavamsa, contain as much pious imagery as the Book of Revelation, the Apocalypse, in their descriptions of Ketumati and the heavenly Jerusalem, respectively. Streets of gold will have no value, when gold becomes cheaper than tar; and so all those descriptions are to be taken relatively and not scientifically.

Of course, the Buddha did not teach science, but he adopted a most scientific method; and the conclusions arrived at by that method fully meet the conclusions of the most advanced theories of modern science. And it is in that sense that Buddhism can with confidence meet the challenge of our time, the challenge of modern science.

Let us see a few examples.

First of all, the scientific method. It has been proved that an accumulation of information can never lead to knowledge and understanding. The fact (even if repeated a thousand times with identical effects) that water boils at a temperature of 100 degrees Celsius, does not prove that it is essentially so, for it depends on the atmospheric pressure. The higher the altitude, the rarer the atmosphere, the lighter the pressure, and the result is that one cannot boil an egg in the open air on top of the Himalayas.

Information does not lead to knowledge of the true type: this is called induction. The fact that all my ancestors have died is no

proof that I shall die, even though it is most likely, most probable and so certain that I would not like to bet on the contrary.

Knowledge can come only through analysis, through understanding the causes, the conditions, the reasons why an event takes place. For then only we know that, if those conditions are repeated, the same results will take place.

This is called deduction, which comes through analysis, the only scientific method of investigating the nature, the composition, the working of an event. Only through analysis and deduction can we arrive at sound, systematic and accurate conclusions.

This is the method adopted by the Buddha, which earned his teaching the name of Vibhajjavada, the teaching of analysis. E.g., man dies, not because his ancestors have died, but because he is born. For, whatever arises, will cease; whatever is composed, will decompose; and so, whatever is born, will die (*sabbe saṅkhāra anicca*).

The Buddha, and many others including ourselves, have found out the fact of suffering, so much so that we seem to spend our whole life and all our energy on the pursuit of relief: physical medicine, mental comfort, spiritual consolation, investment, pension, and insurance-schemes, belief, prayer and sacrifice. But, whereas we try to overcome suffering by pursuing material and spiritual relief whenever there is a depression, an experience of ill-health or financial difficulty all of which amounts at most to a suppression or an escape, the Buddha alone goes to the root-cause of the disease. This he has put extremely concisely in his four Noble Truths, and with slight expansion in his doctrine of dependent origination (*paticca-samuppāda*). There he found not just a fact, that there is suffering, but in analysing the cause he found that everything is *dukkha* (*sabbe saṅkhāra dukkha*), not because my toothache is painful, not because the death of my child is sorrowful, not because the loss of my job is causing financial embarrassment, not because the promotion due to me and given to another is felt as a social rebuff, but because of an essential conflict between the fact of universal impermanence and the de-

sire for my individual permanence. The analysis of the conflict shows its nature, its basis, its essence; and therein lies its cure, namely the dissolution of the misconception of individuality, the impossibility of permanence in a process, the unsubstantiality of a conflict.

This scientific and analytic approach by the Buddha has been applied by him in every sphere of investigation. Not only were molecules seen by him as composites of forces without substance, but those very forces of atomic energy were analysed as the positive and negative forces of attraction and repulsion, of cohesion and solidity, which maintain the magnetic field in equilibrium and prevent the splitting of the atom when left unattended. At the same time, these opposing forces, just because they are dynamic, keep on shifting and are as it were manoeuvring for strategic positions. Such movements of energy and change in conditions and relations bring about the heat of friction which is the phenomenon to be observed in action.

But it is not only matter which has been analysed into the four primary elementary qualities, showing thereby their elementary tendencies of love and hate; it is not only matter which has thus been analysed into events or phenomena without the occurrence of a substance or no-umenon; but is also matter shown as being capable of evolution and involution, without creation. The Buddhist theory of evolution does not only go much beyond Darwin's famed theory of the evolution of species, which still leaves room for the primordial creation of the principal genera, but includes even the law of conservation of matter and energy in its final analysis of matter as energy.

Like science, and unlike other religions, Buddhism is not interested in the beginning of a creation, in the existence of a creator before the beginning, in the existence of eternal life-to-come. For, such are not practical speculations and have no bearing on factual existence as an experimental event with conflicting data and problematic incompatibilities. Life is seen as a symptom of a disease and is not sublimated as a preparatory stage for a

higher life, supernatural existence, life everlasting. The disease is diagnosed as a mental conflict, a schizophrenic attempt of a disintegrating personality, attempting to hold on perpetually to an ever-changing pattern, placing its ego in the centre of a whirlpool which can only drag it down, building up its defences through property, name and fame, never finding a solution, because only seeking itself, trying to escape from actuality into the ideal, the recurring round of saṁsāra, where greater effort merely leads to greater confusion and self-delusion.

In order to understand this process, the mind is analysed in its different layers of subconscious reactions (*vedanā*), semi-conscious perceptions (*saññā*), sub-liminal ideations (*saṅkhāra*), and formal concepts of consciousness (*viññāṇa*). And nowhere in this process is encountered a permanent soul, an abiding entity, a continuous self, as the bearer of those phenomena. Here too, life is seen as an evolution from conditions which arise and cease. And the individualistic misconception of life is seen as an attempt to arrest this evolution, to remain as a static ego in the vortex of existence, inexorably swallowed up and perpetually resisting, which is the conflict of *dukkha*.

This conflict is the only basis of Buddhism, as the Buddha said: *dukkhañc'eva pannapemi dukkhassa ca nirodaṁ*: "One thing only do I teach, woe and how its end to reach". It is the only observable symptom on which experimental science can work. No speculation on life after death, no theory about the beginning of the world, no conjecture about the continued existence of the Buddha. Here is only the solid recognition of the fact of conflict, and its cause in misconception; and then, of course, its remedy in right perception. To see things as they are (*yatha-bhuta-ñāṇa-dassana*) gives the detached view of the pursuit of science for the sake of science.

In Buddhism, even the so-called good life is not to be pursued for the purpose of achievement, of attainment, of reaching a goal. For, all that would involve a search for self-gratification which becomes impossible in the realisation of no-self.

An act should not be a mere reaction either; but a perfect act must be a pure act, i.e. an act without the admixture of purpose, or of response; it must flow forth from direct understanding and comprehension. Not knowing what truth is, it will reveal itself when all negations which are the false are seen as false and untruth. The realisation of the truth is a scientific discovery in the fullest sense of uncovering what was covered up by beliefs and desires, by speculations and self-projections, by greed and self-delusion. That is why Buddhism can always accept any challenge from science, for Buddhism is scientific in its analysis, its approach, its methods; scientific in its deductions, in its objects, in its aim; scientific in its ontology, in its psychology, in its ethics.

The evil in the world exists only in the conflicting mind of the ignorant. It is in ignorance that evil is conceived, born and reborn. No supreme God is held responsible for an ill-balanced mind, for a disease-ridden body, for a hateful disposition, or a lustful character. Neither can these deviations from the norm be attributed to individual acts, as individuals are born with such deficiencies and abnormalities. And yet, a scientific attitude will look out for a natural cause, which therefore must have existed before birth. And so the twin theories of karma and rebirth are the natural outcome from the observable maldistribution of health and opportunity from birth. But the Buddhist doctrine of rebirth remains subject to that of non-entity, no-substance, no-soul; and thus there is no transmigration of a soul from life to life till ultimate reunion with the source of life is attained. But there is action; and action is reborn as reaction. That is *karma* and *vipāka*. Rebirth is never that of an individual, because in the ultimate sense there is no individuality as a permanent, transmigrating soul or entity.

The most recent successes in medical surgery with transplantation of vital organs, culminating in heart-transplants, have brought into focus once again a point of divergence between science and various religious systems. Whereas for most religions the heart has been considered the vital point of life, in so far as the

extinction of life coincides with the stoppage of the heart-beat, we now find that in modern surgery the heart is actually removed and the heart of another person, recently deceased, put in its place. This has given rise to conflicting problems about clinical death. In the process of this operation there are two hearts which have stopped functioning, and therefore, there should be two deaths. The two hearts are exchanged and one person revives with the other man's heart. And so the problem is: if the heart is the seat of life and residence of the soul, who is the person revived? Is he the owner of the heartless body with the foreign heart, or the original owner of that heart now living in a new body? For Buddhism there does not exist such a problem, for, as in science, the heart is just an organ with certain functions. Likewise there are other organs which are also vital in the sense that life is not possible without them. Such is the liver which removes all the poison from the body and without which the entire system would be poisoned beyond redemption. So are the lungs which provide the oxygen to the blood, without which no organ can survive, etc. Now, the replacement of one organ or even of several does not constitute a change in the essence of the physical constitution, in a way similar to a replacement of parts in a motor vehicle. It is exactly because there is no individual entity, substance or soul, that those changes do not affect essentially the characteristic structure of the process. In fact, in the structure of the living body, human or not, such replacements are taking place all the time, when cells die and are replaced, forming new tissues, new organs, etc. It is the function of nutrition, through which decay is set off by growth. In Buddhism, the heart is one of the 32 parts of the physical body, helping in its particular function the continuation of the process called life. And thus, Buddhism has been prepared to meet this particular challenge for the last 25 centuries within the limitations of human memory and history.

There is no conflict with existing doctrines of karma and rebirth, and hence not even a challenge, which might have become a problem. An individual is a process of action, and his vital

organs are only impermanent instruments through which this process continues. And if the instrument wears out, even if all the instruments of the human body wear out, still there is no problem, as action will find other instruments which will respond through reaction, which is rebirth.

This rebirth of action without an actor is taking place all the time. But only when a reaction is produced in the moral field, do we speak of karma, which carries the factor of intention and volition (*cetana*). It is this intentional reshaping of action which is called rebirth in Buddhism, which is a re-becoming of the impetus to further activity. Each deed therefore, carries within its own action all the tendencies, inclinations and disinclinations, which gave the impression, the impulse, the propelling force from the past into the present. And so, the present will be carried on into the future, enriched by its actual experience of the moment, enslaved by its own movement in the new life, till the dawn of understanding will dispel all ignorance and delusion as regards the nature of this process without self. For, with the realisation of the void of this self-deluded process, the process cannot proceed. In the discovery of the false there is truth. In the disclosure of ignorance there is enlightenment. In the cessation of becoming there is the deliverance of Nibbāna.

Can We Rise Above Morality?

In religious circles it is often believed that much confusion could be avoided in preventing a total disintegration of morality, if scientists would stick to their electrons and realise that human beings do not fit into mathematical equations. On the other hand, those who have supreme faith in material progress feel that systems of morality are too much of a brake, and that expediency should be the sole guidance and motive for human action. It is strange to note that both these extremes tend to ignore the individual by submitting him to the institution of which he forms part, either the church with its predetermined moral principles, or the party or state which can only think collectively of the greater good of the majority, and which, therefore, can only approve of actions which are expedient. An so, although in most respects there is neither co-operation nor understanding between the material and spiritual power-blocks, yet they will agree in principle that it is better, that it is more expedient, if one man were to die for his people.

I think that both are wrong in formulating their principles of discipline or virtue, and then sacrifice the individual for the sake of upholding those principles. It is the collective attitude taking precedence over individual existence. But, if morality would be a virtue at all, it should be freed both from utilitarian fetters as

well as from dogmatic chains. For, where is virtue, if it is forced either by law or by fear?

And here, Buddhism is facing a double challenge in our modern time, not only from the dogmatically established principles of idealistic religions, but also from the totalitarian principles of a materialistic society. The Buddha in his time had to fight the rigid caste grouping of society, based on sacred texts and traditions, a fight which has not brought total victory in a world which is still riddled, in East and West, by its castes and classes, races and colours, political theories and ideologies.

In appearance we have made progress, for, an individual, although born in a certain environment, is not bound to it inexorably. In theory at least he can make himself free from the religion of his parents, from the patronage of his society, from the country of his birth. In fact, how few there are who dare to make use of the opportunity when offered, to make a clean break, a fresh start, a truly new rebirth? And yet, that opportunity is offered every time when there is a challenge. And we have seen during these last few talks, how our present time is full of challenge, that is of opportunity for awakening, for rebirth, for freedom.

In our present time we are facing the challenge of a complete breakdown of morality, a total disregard for authority, a final disintegration of values. And in meeting this challenge, it is no good to turn up with new values, greater authority and superior morality. But we must bring to bear our understanding and apply our whole being to this question of a breakdown.

First of all, when we speak of a breakdown, we mean a collapse, a failure, a prostration, of an accepted standard of behaviour, of economy, of power. But that is not meeting a challenge; it is a condemnation, an opposition, a rejection, even before investigation, before enquiry or understanding. How can we meet a challenge, if we do not understand? So, what is value? What is the value of authority? And what is the authority of morality? Then the next question would be: Why do we want any of them?

And perhaps a final question: Is the collapse of a thing which does not work a real breakdown? So, what?

Value is the quality an object has, which makes it fit for exchange. That is called its surrender value or purchasing power. It is an appraisal in respect of something else. The value of banknotes lies in the fact that we can purchase goods with them. This example shows that value is not necessarily something intrinsic in the object, but is a quality given to it either intentionally or by circumstances. The value of gold is only circumstantial, due to its rarity. If there would be more gold than silver in the world, the value of these two precious metals would be inverted. The rarity of an article can be due to its scarcity in general, or to an extraordinary demand which the market cannot satisfy. But if there would be no demand, even the rarest article would lose its value. The regulation of the supply according to the demand has produced all the controls with which we are so familiar from time to time, control of petrol, textiles, food, paper, etc., which become necessary occasionally, because in his demands man has no self-control. Thus, value is always based on desire, demand. Economic values and spiritual demands only differ in degree.

We seek values in all our possessions—whether they be objects of sentimental value as old letters, or living relations, friends and family, or spiritual acquisitions, such as virtue and merit—we seek them only for their quality of exchangeability. With old letters we can revive happy moments of the past, because we preserve only sentimentally pleasing letters, the nasty ones we tear up at once. Books can be reread whenever we want them, and hence they prove to be our best friends. In family-relationship we seek mostly self-gratification, while in virtue and meritorious actions we try to secure our future life.

But, as we established already that values do not belong to the object or to the action intrinsically, but are superimposed, it will be clear now that valuation is entirely subjective. The old letters have only value to me and to my sentiments. My relations I love, because they are mine; for, though I may sympathise with

somebody else's loss, I do not feel the same sorrow as when the loss is my own. But there is a general reluctance to apply this fact of subjectivity also to spiritual values; and yet, if we are sincere, we shall have to admit that the principle of utilitarianism is the deciding factor in morality. It does not pay to murder somebody else, for, if the police catches me, I shall be hanged in this life, while the law of *karma*, or retribution, or the justice of God (according to the different interpretations of different religions) will see to the effect in a life-to-come. And thus we make a virtue out of necessity and call that non-violence. As soon, however, as the moral stigma is removed from violence and killing, as in an international war, then even murder becomes a virtue, and we call it patriotism.

Thus, it all depends on the demand, i.e. on our desire for an effect, whether and to what extent we value an action or an object or a person. Even so-called absolute value is, of course, entirely psychological, for it is a standard conceived by the human mind. And from this it follows immediately that this value cannot be absolute. It may be logical and psychological, but it cannot be absolutely ontological; for, value is always relative and hence can never be absolute. Moral order which is based on a supernatural order is but the expression of man's ignorance of nature; for only ignorance of nature can postulate a super-nature which is beyond conception. Co-operation with such a supernatural plan by fitting oneself into this supernatural order, would be also a supernatural motive of morality, morality with a purpose, i.e. the purchasing power of morality.

Another form in which the so-called ideal, absolute value can be moulded, may be the authority of a principle which, owing to its abstract nature, assumes supernatural attributes. Thus, a moral world-order, or Kant's categorical imperative, or Nietzsche's superman, or Karl Marx' dialectical history of human evolution, or the new order of totalitarianism, may become the standard, or the absolute value on which all other values depend.

It is a universally observable fact that the more power a man

possesses the less he will feel the need of morality. And, *vice versa*: morality will be preached by those who do not have the weapon of power at their disposal. Those who are aware of their greater strength will easily indulge in war and persecution, be it for political, religious or economic reasons. Thus, holy wars have been waged under the direct inspiration of prophets as Moyses and Mohammed, or with the direct sanction of the church-authorities, as the crusades and the holy inquisition. But for those who lack that power is given the refuge of the commandment: "Thou shalt not kill".

This shows that there are different kinds of morality: for the strong ones: Might is right; and for the weak ones: Blessed are those who suffer persecution. The nobility of suffering is extolled by those who suffer, and morality is preached to the powerless. Morality is the weapon against those in power, and thus morality has become an instrument of hate without which there would be black despair for the subjected masses. This desire for morality is, then, essentially nothing but a desire for power, to obtain which the only means at the disposal of the weak is to be good. But to be good in order to be strong is a purposeful action, which shows that goodness may be abandoned as soon as power is obtained. And that indeed we see happen in the history of the world throughout all ages. In misery man turns to God in prayer, he does penance in sack-cloth and ashes to obtain forgiveness for his sins, and preaches to others to follow that example. But, when firmly established in power, man assumes authority and even divinity, he lives on the emulation and flattery of his subjects and makes himself the centre of a new cult.

All our concepts and generalisations about morality, therefore, are like paper money, which for the time and under certain conditions may and does represent value, purchase value, but no more. Our ideas of morality have no value in themselves, but serve as a means to obtain something higher. Thus, in the same way as monetary values fluctuate according to the speculations of demand and supply at the exchange, so moral values are unstable

and subject to change according to the mental concept and the ideal standard of absolute value which they claim to represent.

Even so, although denying the existence of a permanent standard of morality and refusing to give it an absolute value, yet I do not want to minimise the usefulness of the same. What is useful, however, is not necessarily good, except perhaps from the viewpoint of its end. When morality as utilitarianism is considered good, it is but putting it in different terms, that the end justifies the means: End good, all good!

Usefulness has its value, as long as the means are not confused with the ends. But here already I have to contradict myself, for the confusion is exactly caused by separating the means from the end. Whatever action we perform, it if is done with the purpose of achieving something, or of attaining a goal, that action itself loses thereby its own significance as it becomes a means towards an end. Then the end is different from the present action which is reduced to a mere instrument to be cast aside as soon as the goal is reached, or as soon as it proves to be incapable of leading thereto. There is nothing objectionable in this attitude as long as we are dealing with material values. To drive a nail in a wall I need a hammer, but as soon as I find out that a wooden hammer is inefficient for driving a metal nail into a hard wall I will throw it off. Or when a metal hammer has done the job, even then the hammer is put aside, as it is not longer wanted. When, however, it comes to psychological values we are not so quick in understanding.

Psychologically we perform many actions we clearly do not perform for their own intrinsic value. Many people are prepared to put up with a great deal of inconvenience and incongeniality, uninteresting office work, the routine of which makes man more like a machine, hard manual labour the strain of which makes man more like a slave. It is true certain immediate needs of food and clothing require immediate attention, and that will necessitate immediate action which can hardly be called purposeful action, as man is driven to them by sheer necessity; they are rather spontaneous reactions. Just as when my house is on fire I will

throw water even on my books—an immediate reaction to the fire, but not to the saving of the books. In an emergency there is no time for deliberate action; the crisis makes us so keen that immediate action is taken with only the cause of the crisis in view, not the possible consequences. Thus the thought that may possibly spoil my books by soaking them with water simply does not arise, though that would have been the first thought under any other circumstances.

The performance of an action as a means to obtain a certain result makes that action incomplete, for it is not performed for its own sake; it has only value in so far as it can bring about the desired effect. If, on the other hand, an action is performed because of its own necessity, i.e. without a purpose beyond, it will be a complete action, the means to its own end. With its completion it will not have projected itself and thus it cannot become the condition for "rebirth".

Now, moral actions are never of this kind, for morally good is skilful (*kusala*) and morally bad is unskilful (*akusala*). If this skilfulness of an act is well understood, we can see the usefulness of morality and at the same time its valuelessness, however paradoxical this may sound.

One of the useful aspects of morality is that the idea of goodness has given man for his life a moral value, which frequently has prevented him from perishing in the current of life; it has given him strength in his weakness, a backbone in his fight against his lower nature, an ideal for his striving. But has this been of any real assistance to him? To feel courageous, because one imagines to be backed by a superior force, is only self-deception, for this feeling has not given additional strength; and as soon as this feeling departs, the subsequent dejection and sense of frustration will be worse than the original knowledge of one's weakness.

Good and evil, morality and immorality, strength and weakness, are only relative values, and there is nothing evil or weak in itself. But society and moral theology have labelled certain actions, which now stand condemned before the eyes of the world.

It is that condemnation by public opinion, or the punishment by a divine judge, which is feared; and that feeling of fear gives the necessary stimulus to act bravely.

But can an act which is motivated by fear ever be brave? Can a man who will only act when stimulated be called strong? Thus morality has not given any true assistance, but its imaginary help has drugged the mind and left it weaker than before.

And so, seeing that values are only subjective and relative, seeing that authority is but a means to an ideal end, seeing that morality is but a weapon in the hands of the weak to make themselves feel strong, we must also see that the entire structure which tries to control man's action is absolutely without foundation, without inner strength, without basic principles. One should, therefore, not be surprised at the failure of the teaching of morality when facing actual life. One should rather be surprised that the collapse has not occurred much earlier, and that some people still have some ideals left.

As it is always the case, the approach has been wrong. We begin with a set of principles, like rules of grammar, but when we find that a language is not spoken according to the rules, we first condemn the usage as slang; and when slang has come to stay, it is allowed as a poor relation and an exception to the rule. But the rule remains. The validity of the rule, the validity of its authority is never questioned, is never understood, therefore. So it is with moral principles. They have not given us the knowledge of good and evil, but they have made good and evil. Different religions have different sets of moral rules, e.g. allowing bigamy or polyandry, for one but not for another. The state can appropriate, requisition, acquire without compensation, but an individual will go to jail for a similar act. Homicide and murder are legally condemned, except for the judiciary who have the power to apply capital punishment. Is it possible under the circumstances not to be confused? Is it surprising that students become rebels, that individuals take the law into their own hands?

It is not a reformation in religion, nor a revolution against

the state which can take up this challenge; for they will only substitute the existing rules by a new set, and thereby substitute disorder by chaos.

But the challenge can be met by a new approach, not idealistic, but realistic. We want values, and up to now we have been providing values, as we provide lollipops to children: spiritual values, encashable in a future life; economic values, realisable in a reformed society; cultural values, produced in stage-set and music; viable values in better living conditions. But do we ever ask ourselves the question, the basic question, the prototype of all further problems: Why do I want values? Is it not because I am afraid to be without values? Who am I without economic security, without social status, without intellectual grading, without spiritual future? Is not the entire structure of self made up of those values, which we now know to be subjective (i.e. not realistic) and relative (i.e. not intrinsic), values which have a purchasing power for the ego? And what is the intrinsic value of that Ego?

It is at this ultimate destination of our enquiry, that Buddhism, and Buddhism alone, can take up the challenge of our time and of all times. For, in Buddhism alone we find the problem bared to its deepest foundations in its basic teaching of *anatta*. The problem of authority as that of morality, is the search for the establishment of the self on a permanent footing, the search for the everlasting soul in the process of change, of evolution and involution. It is that search for the permanent in the stream of impermanence which caused the conflict, which is experienced as suffering and sorrow, grief and dissatisfaction, frustration and despair. It is the search for the "I" which cannot be imagined even without values.

And so, with the realisation that there is no substance underlying the changing phenomena, no entity of mind apart from the fleeting thoughts, no real existence of a soul underneath the changing conditions of becoming and ceasing—with that realisation of the void of conflict (*dukkhe anatta*) ceases all effort of

escape, of control, of search; for the answer to the challenge does not lie in the ideal, but in the actual.

When all values are seen in their true worthlessness, they will cease to mesmerise. Then action will be done in the understanding of the need of such action, not for the purpose of reward or virtue. And in the understanding of need, there will be the cessation of greed. And that is the end of morality.

The Absence of Religion

Religion is usually understood as a system of faith and worship. But, whereas most systems of religion are founded on individual revelations of a supernatural origin, we also speak of a natural religion, which is a human recognition of a superhuman controlling power, entitled to obedience by its very power.

A power of supernatural origin, claiming absolute submission to its laws, would obviously have to manifest its power in order to establish its authority. The contact of the supernatural with the natural is called revelation, which is a disclosure of what would normally remain hidden. Supernatural religions will claim to have received such revelations and also claim supernatural interventions, called miracles, as proofs of such revelation and authority.

Natural religion claims to possess knowledge of the supernatural through the application of the natural human intellect, reason and understanding, providing logical arguments and formal deductions in support of its claims of relationship with the absolute. There are metaphysical proofs of causation and change, physical proofs of motion and purpose, moral proofs of the necessity of ethics and the consensus of all people regarding good and evil. Arguments have also been devised to prove the existence of a supernatural absolute a priori and as a categorical necessity.

It will be fairly obvious that most of this does not constitute a challenge to Buddhism, apart from saying that Buddhism is not a religion.

To define religion, not as an institution but as a concept, will be as difficult as to reconcile the various kinds. For a sceptic religion will constitute but a bundle of scruples which impede the free exercise of human faculties. Materialists think of religion as an illusion at the best, or rather as a drug, it stimulant, opium. For a faithful believer, religion is an inwardly cleansing force, or his relation to the supernatural belief in spiritual things. Rabindranath Tagore spoke of religion as an attempt to reconcile the contradiction between the brute nature of man and his transcendental nature, an attempt to remove all barriers which prevent the unity of love, and which obstruct the fulfilment of life.

Religions cannot really be discussed, for they are growths of thought. To understand a phenomenon it must be seen in the environment which produced it and which influenced it. It is against its own background that any thing or fact should be judged in all fairness. Apart from that background, things lose their perspective and assume distorted proportions. Lifted out of their environment, cut away from the conditions which produced them, all facts lose their actuality and become infertile speculations. Hence, religions cannot be discussed as isolated facts, but must be seen and understood as growths of thought.

Religion, then, is a mental growth. If growth is little, religion will be crude. The fact in itself is not blameworthy for the poverty of the effect. One does not blame a baby, if he is not six feet tall and not ten stones in weight. The weakness of the baby is a fact we have to put up with, and which no argument can overcome. It has simply to be outgrown. But, to outgrow is not the same as to grow up. When a small growth grows up, it becomes a big growth. This fact of its greater size may point to deeper roots, but not necessarily to better fruits. A man must outgrow his childhood, as otherwise he will remain his whole life an oversized baby, grown up physically, but mentally underdeveloped.

Man, being bound by the laws of nature, binds himself still more to that environment by laws of morality. For, nature is

neither moral nor immoral. The distinction between good and evil is not to be found in nature itself, though all religions teach morality as man's chief duty. Thus, if religion is taken as a system of morality, we can embrace all religions as striving with one purpose, though the means differ, and though the end is not understood by all in the same way.

Morality, then, being the backbone of religion, the question now becomes: Is the need of morality a natural tendency, a universal inclination towards rest and equilibrium? Is it necessary to have an organised morality when natural functioning of relationship breaks down? Why is there an occasional breakdown?

The need to satisfy the primary wants for protection, for food, for warmth, is rightly considered innate, for it was craving under its different aspects which gave birth to the new life. Striving for satisfaction is thus the natural tendency of all that lives. And because the primary wants are the same in all races, with only slight variations due to differences in climate, the natural law will be the same in all nations and races, at least fundamentally. It is to this natural law, common to all, that man reacts. And as man's nature is fundamentally the same everywhere, it might be expected that his reactions to that natural law will also not be greatly different. "The reaction of the individual to his environment" would be an acceptable definition of religion, as it explains the origin of religion, as well as the similarities and differences of religions. The stronger a man's reaction to his environment becomes, the more it proves that he is subject to it; for, a reaction is only an attempt to become free. When there is yielding, there is assimilation and absorption. And that is the freedom from the law, because then there is no more opposition or problem or conflict.

Where then arises the conflict which results in this reaction, this struggle for life? It arises in man himself, who divides his intellectual process and his emotional process. And whichever part dominates, that will be his method of reaction and his bent of religion. But if one would not separate the two processes, but

if one would understand one's emotions as reactions, one might also react intellectually to those emotions, by understanding them as reactions. Then there will be full assimilation, a yielding to nature's law. And that would be the end of "religion".

Though morality must find its foundation in the necessary nature of things—and the supernatural, therefore, has nothing to do with real religion—it is the unexplained nature which gave first rise to faith. To a man with intelligence there are no mysterious things, only things he does not understand. But to a man without intelligence, the things he does not understand become mystifying and the cause of fear. As the Buddha said[2]: "Wheresoever fear arises, it arises in the fool, not in the wise man." And thus, for the unintelligent the distinction between the known and the unknown becomes also the distinction between the natural and the supernatural. Nobody has seen the beginning of the world, therefore faith says that such beginning must be the creation by some supernatural creator. The unknown causes of natural phenomena, such as an earthquake, sun-eclipse, lightning, pestilential diseases, are made into supernatural events which man cannot control, which he therefore naturally fears, and which he hopes to placate by irrational means as prayer and sacrifice. It is the natural birth of religion as an outgrowth of fear. Man's reaction to his environment becomes his religion. When that environment is not known, or not understood, his religion is one of fear. And so is his morality. But with the elimination of superstitious fear will come a spontaneous denial of the supernatural, leaving a pure morality for morals sake and not instigated by a wish for reward or fear of punishment.

I shall not deal here with those forms of bigotry and narrow-mindedness which have turned the practice of religion into a private bargain between man and his god, in which transaction the priest as a broker gets the better of both sides. Such cankerous growths do not form a serious challenge to Buddhism, as they

[2]M. 115.

cannot truly be said to form part of any religion. But the use of rituals with their suggestion of the mystical forms of placation of the unknown forces in the universe has been so roundly condemned by the Buddha, as to be named as a serious obstacle (*saṁyojana*) on the path to perfection. Psychologically, they are dictated by a sense of guilt which underlies the fact of misadventure. Thus, undesirable effects are attempted to be warded off by prayers, charms and sacrifices. Ceremonies and rituals should, however, not be lightly set aside as children's play, for they have grown out of fear and superstition, a sense of guilt, an inferiority complex, the result of ignorance, a misunderstanding of the mutual play of forces in nature around man with the forces within him. As man has created his gods as a result of that fear, the mere destruction of temples and churches will not suffice to destroy man's ignorance and fear. Man may destroy his idols and then turn to new gods with new names, a totalitarian state, social convention or public opinion, which may be reincarnations of the old ones, reborn in man's desire for power, for security, for continuance, although actually they are creations of fear, fear to be alone, fear to be without support, fear to be a non-entity.

By religion in the true sense, i.e. not a supernatural system of dogmas, but a natural system of thinking and living, we must understand a world-conception which can serve as a guide through that world, to individuals who live in that world, not as isolated entities but as social beings with mutual rights and duties. Even those rights and duties should not be understood as individual possessions, but as relations in and to the whole, based on cooperation and interdependence. Religion must be a principle, a norm, which regulates our conduct intelligently; morality based on reason. It is this double aspect which is essential to religion, which will prevent natural laws to be explained as supernatural events. It must be knowledge with a practical application. But as the application must be always based on a new understanding of an always new problem, from moment to moment, the norm of religion cannot be a standard for all individuals at all times.

Knowledge which cannot be made practical is vain speculation which develops pride and conceit. Practice without knowledge is blind faith and superstition. But when the universe is understood as natural, and life in the universe (be it intellectual, emotional or passionate) as subject to the same natural laws, the religion must also remain natural: morality will be natural and life will be good and rational. If religion is thus defined as a guide through life in a normal way, (and that is the reason why the Buddha called his teaching the Norm, the Dhamma), the difference between religions will depend on their outlook on, and on their conception of life.

Seen from this angle, Buddhism can face the many challenges from religions, old and new. All religions claim to show the way to the truth. Their founders have discovered the truth, they say, and their words, though simple in themselves, are explained by their disciples. Yet, though the truth has thus been discovered, the way shown and the method explained, truth itself remains as far away from us as ever, it remains a mystery for which many have sought a solution in vain, and the quest for which has been abandoned by many more. Religions as such, that is as organisations, have failed to substantiate their claims of showing the way to the truth. In most people, as in most religions, the quest for truth, for realisation, emancipation, enlightenment, has taken a positive form. That means, they are aiming and striving with purposeful agitation to attain a state of perfection which they know of only in their imagination or on the authority of others. Truth becomes an ideal, made by the individual himself, before he starts on his self-imposed task to discover what he himself has hidden, and what he imagines to be the truth and which he adores as his god.

Religion, thus, becomes a questioning as to the aim and the goal of life. In this questioning lies the initial mistake and the ultimate failure of the search. The goal is set in advance, and life must be directed towards that aim. Thereby life is made artificial, unnatural and bound to become a mechanical reaction, even when

spiritual values are involved. For, whether a desire for a celestial reward, or fear for punishment forms the background of morality, such virtue is not a true deed performed for goodness sake, but a reaction of selfishness. It is action chosen with a purpose, not for its own value or necessity.

The true value of an action is not in its future effect but in its present need. And hence, an action performed with a purpose in the future is not an integral action. Only the understanding of a present need can make an action complete. That need must be both felt and understood to produce a true action. If one of the two is missing, it will naturally result in an emotional satisfaction or intellectual speculation neither of which is complete in actuality, being wanted to satisfy only one aspect of life. If the goal of our striving, i.e. truth, is known, that means we are in possession of the truth and searching becomes impossible. If that goal is not known, even then striving is impossible, for we would not even know the direction in which to begin or continue the search. We would not even know what we are looking for. Thus, all our striving is finally not for the attainment of truth, but is a search for a shelter to find there comfort, consolation, an escape. We try to penetrate the veil which hides the future, to build up securities in coming lives. To support us in our perplexity we search the past by means of our memory, in order to form a standard of living, a method wherewith to guide our conduct. Such a standard is thought to be necessary, because religions have become organisations, forming groups of individuals, striving with the same means for the same end. And in order that all can be grouped together, a standard-morality, a model-faith, an ideal religion becomes necessary. To attain this ideal the individual has to be effaced. And hence, all religions will stress the need of subordination of the self. An individual's religion then seems to be an absurdity. And yet, the religious need will always be a problem, a conflict between an individual nature and a suspected super-nature. Revealed religions will try to solve this problem with reflections on the past: creation, original sin, redemption,

resurrection, re-incarnation, etc., which lead to the inevitable speculations on the future: life after death, soul-theories, heavens and hells, etc. This searching in the past and in the future according to a certain standard can never be a search for truth. For, truth is ever present, ever living; it cannot be found elsewhere, neither in books, nor with teachers, nor through rites and rituals.

The long history of the human race is dominated by his belief in and servitude to the supernatural. The speculations of the primitive man on the nature of the strange forces around him have been replaced by theological arguments. But, though nature has been explained by science, still supernature is holding its ground in superstition, when lack of knowledge gives rise to fear. The idol of roughly hewn stone has made room for the spirit of God, but the fear which created the one as the other remains the same throughout. The unknown nature remains the line of division between the two camps of Materialism and Idealism into which philosophers have divided themselves.

The unknown inspires fear not only in children. It is the unknown which is responsible for the herd-instinct throughout man's life, and which makes him feel uneasy when alone in body or in thought. Man is indeed a social animal, and his need for comfort and consolation in companionship has penetrated his mental as well as his physical cosmos. For, also in his way of thinking man fears to be alone and in the dark. Thus his different religious systems and organisations are merely reflections of this primitive need for shelter, an expression of his fear.

If this, then, is the challenge which other religions can offer, Buddhism need not waver one moment, for it is exactly its refusal to cater for fear, its denial of the supernatural, its deviation from the path of inspiration, its disinclination of organisational activity, which not only make it stand apart from all other institutions, but which constitute its strongest characteristics.

Thus, the differences with Buddhism are to be found in its goal, its methods, its origin, its purpose, its striving, its morals, its approach, its solution, and in the ultimate truth. In fact, there

is hardly any contact, any point of comparison between supernatural religions and Buddhism, except for the fact that Buddhism is a way of life.

Let us take these points one by one, briefly.

The origin of Buddhism does not lie with its founder, the Buddha, for there have been many Buddhas in the past, there will be many in the future. The origin of Buddhism does not lie in revelation, but in the fact of conflict within the human mind. In a world of events of unsatisfactory values, we do not seek values in other spheres, for we do not seek happiness but truth. And truth is to be found in facts. Well, the first fact which strikes us is that we want better conditions of living, greater security of existence, freedom from restrictions. We want what we do not have; we aspire for heaven, because we live on earth we hope for the eternal, because we live in time; we expect everlasting bliss, because we live in constant conflict; we search for the absolute, because we only know the relative; we grope for the ideal, because we do not know the real.

This life of escape knows many forms, and religion is one of them. Buddhism refuses to escape from the actual, and therefore makes this very conflict its foundation. The goal of Buddhism is not to escape from conflict, for that would merely constitute another problem elsewhere. We want to solve *this* problem, which is the conflict between fact and desire. But to solve a problem we must understand it. We cannot rely on somebody else to solve our problems, for these problems are of our own making. And so we search for the nature and the cause of the conflict. It is no supernatural conflict, for it is within ourselves, and so we cannot expect a supernatural solution either. The conflict is between the fact that all things (including we ourselves) are transitory and do not give, therefore, any stable basis for security. Yet, security of continuance is the basic idea of all our desires and striving. And this opposition between the fact of transitoriness and the want of security is the essence and the cause of all friction in life, all struggle for existence all striving for eternity.

As the goal of Buddhism is the solution of this conflict, the method has to be towards the dissolution of the cause of this conflict. The conflict is caused by the fact of my impermanence, which causes a friction with my ideal of continuance. And in the face of the universal fact that there is no continuance of any abiding entity, soul, substance, self or ego, it must be realised that this friction is only a conflict of ideas, of ideology, not of actuality, because there is no permanent self. With the breakdown of the ideal, the fact remains without conflict. The method used for attaining this goal which is the cessation of conflict, is not supernatural, but psychological. Through psycho-analysis the root of the problem is exposed, and there we find a fallacy. The knowledge of this fallacy as false, that is the truth, the truth of the fact that there is no "I", and therefore no conflict.

The method, used in Buddhism, to make this individual discovery—which is not in the nature of a revelation, nor inspiration, and which does not necessitate a supernatural intervention of grace, predestination or miracle—is the method of analysis. We must take a firm stand on facts and refuse to be distracted by ideals. Ideals are existing only in our minds. Of course, the interpretation of facts is also mind-work, but we have a sure psychological guide-line in this mind-work, namely the disagreeable. The mind has the tendency of building up the self in continued security, for without that there is nothing to live for. And so, when in our self-analysis we come across some unpalatable facts, the tendency will be to ignore them. Well, it is exactly there that we have some indication of the correct direction. This following up of the unpleasant, rather than being doped with self-satisfaction, has given sometimes the impression that Buddhism is pessimistic, that we are preoccupied with and even obsessed by some phobia, for which our psychiatrists have not invented a term yet. The contrary is true: as Buddhists we are not afraid of the unpleasant, we do not run away from conflict, neither do we find a masochistic delight in suffering. But, whether a fact is acceptable or not, we should investigate it; and if our first reaction is one of rejec-

tion, that is also one of the surest signs that we are on the right track, because the selfish mind is inclined to reject what does not provide support, growth and security.

And so, it is hardly possible to speak of the purpose of Buddhism, unless it be that of self-knowledge. We do not visualise a purpose of life, for that would be idealising. When life is understood as a basic conflict between facts and ideals in every sphere, we should not ignore the facts and run after ideals. If life is a conflict, it is a disease which must have been caused by some unnatural action which has produced this upset in nature. Life is not the goal of living, but as a conflict it is a symptom. According to Buddhism we are born into this life as a result of earlier karmic activity, i.e. actions with craving, with self-projecting tendencies. And so, there is no purpose in cultivating this life, which is conflict in essence and effect, but our attention must be drawn to the cause of this symptom. We do not cultivate a stomach-ache, but we should find out the cause thereof. And if the cause is traced to a certain indigestible food, the only remedy is abstention, however palatable that food is.

And thus, in self-analysis we should find the constitution of this "self". In a non-idealistic approach we should find the bare facts underlying the symptoms of this life of conflict. In attention to facts as they are, and in awareness of events as they occur, we should understand the conditional relationship with others in this same life. In understanding the hollowness of our ideals, the meaninglessness of our social behaviour, the harmfulness of unintelligent religious observances, the danger in cultivating ideals even though they pretend to be a striving for perfection—in that understanding of actuality lies the solution of all our problems. For, in the understanding of the actuality of non-self is removed the prime factor of all conflict. In the realisation of this ultimate truth lies the emancipation from all religions.

Philosophy Reconsidered

Philosophy is a study of the most general causes or principles of things, especially dealing with ultimate reality.

Although most religions will have some philosophic leanings, philosophy pure and simple has no leaning towards religion as a system of faith and worship. The reason is that philosophy has the human intellect as its basis of research, whereas most religions claim a supernatural origin of inspiration, revelation and destination.

Buddhism as an ethical way of life with a method of discipline, practice of virtue and mind-control, with a doctrine of death and rebirth, has certainly many of the makings of religion, but has no share with the supernatural aspects thereof. As regards its outlook on life, it has all the aspects of a philosophy. Here we find the practical aspects of philosophy in its logic of the four Noble Truths and the doctrine of dependent origination; and its natural ethics of the Noble Eightfold Path, mental culture and meditation. The theoretical aspects of philosophy are found in Buddhism in its ontology of the characteristics of impermanence and insubstantiality of all phenomena, and in its psychology of the problem of conflict, which constitutes its special metaphysics.

From time immemorial, i.e. from the time even before the Buddha, till this present century, people have been speculating, theorising and moralising. Many of those thinkers had their

convinced followers who formed themselves into a school of thought, reflecting the main tenets of their master's views. These views were, of course, many times conflicting. Sometimes pupils developed the teaching of their master, with the result that they can be placed in groups and finally separated into two main camps, more or less in the way of political parties, forming a coalition and an opposition. As it is the case with all opposition, the left will challenge the right, and *vice versa*.

This has happened also during the long ages of the history of thought when the superiority of the mind was challenged by the expediencies of material life. And so there will be a challenge of philosophy, whatever may be the camp to which one adheres.

Buddhism is placed in a slightly more difficult position, as the Buddha has always firmly refused to align himself with either side, which represent either the extreme of materialism, or of idealism. Thus, Buddhism as a philosophy has to face a double challenge from both extremes.

The division into these two main camps has originated in the abstract viewing of existence, either from the physical or the mental point of view. Certainly, a human being can be seen in action; and such action will be a physical action, inspired by a mental action; but that mental action itself may be the outcome of physical conditions. And so, whenever the stress is on the physical side of life, such school is classed as materialism. And whenever the mind is treated as an independent entity, such school is classed as idealism. Both are attempts to explain the ultimate nature and the causes of the phenomena of the, universe. And as those phenomena fall easily into the two groups of physical and psychical nature, it has been almost unavoidable that the many philosophic systems have also lined themselves up, together with the great division of matter and mind.

Many names were given to those various schools, depending on the special distinctions within each group. For, though all attempt to grapple with the problem of knowledge, they see knowledge either subjectively or objectively, thereby isolating

the subject from external objects. It is dualism in its most general form which lies at the root of most systems, although they give priority and superiority either to matter or to mind.

During the time of the Buddha, i.e. during the 6th century before Christ, an Ionian group of thinkers were speculating on the ultimate nature of the composition of all things. They attributed divine intelligence to the material substance of the universe, thus seeking the absolute in matter. Subsequent Eleatics looked upon being and non-being quite logically as opposites; but, where non-being was nothing, being for them was the absolute. It is during this same period that we hear in India of the existence of the two great divisions of thinkers, the Eternalists and the Annihilationists. The Eternalists regarded bodily shape, sensation, perception, mental differentiation, or consciousness as the self, or the self as having those qualities, or being in those qualities, or those qualities being in the self, making thereby twenty different speculations, which, however, agree in this point that the whole of the experimental world, material or mental, external or internal, is dependent on the self. For those idealists, said Dr. Paul Dahlke, "actuality is obliged to adjust itself and form itself after the concept".

Eternalism was professed by the Vajjiputtakas and the Sammitiyas, who branched off from the orthodox Theravāda already in the 4th century B.C., i.e. hardly 100 years after the death of the Buddha. They are the Puggalavādins or Attavādins, the believers in the existence of a personal entity, or immortal soul, or perduring vital principle, in other words they are the animists.

Opposing them, but by doing so falling into the other extreme, are the Annihilationists. They too believed in self, but that self would not survive its present life, but be annihilated at death (*uccheda-diṭṭhi*). The Annihilationists' view is stated in the Aṭṭhasālinī[3] to consider matter, or sensation, or perception,

[3] III, 2, 1.

or mental formations, or consciousness, as self, which therefore ceases and perishes with them.

But the Buddha's standpoint has never been with either form of speculation. He formulated his middle path, avoiding both the idealism of the Eternalists and the materialism of the Annihilationists. His stand, however, did not prevent further speculation. Idealistic speculation survived not only, but reigned supreme with dogmatic faith for more than 2000 years since the Buddha accepted its challenge. Only in the 16th century after Christ it was the development of natural science which made observation and experiment take the place of ancient speculation and idealism. Then materialism became the keynote of thought with Bacon's Empiricism, followed by the criticism of Rationalism and a replacement of Monotheism with Spinoza's Pantheism. Rigid materialism is found in Hobbes' Nominalism and Locke's Sensationalism, although compromises were thought out by Leibnitz in his intellectual idealism, by Berkeley in his objective idealism, by Hume in his sceptical idealism. But they only led to the reactions of the German idealists, Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, with their transcendental, subjective, absolute and logical idealism, respectively.

The reaction to this tidal wave of speculation by German idealists came with more speculation in the empiric field by Comte's Positivism, Mill's Utilitarianism and Spencer's synthetic Evolutionism. Karl Marx, Haeckel and Nietzsche subsequently left their mark not only on the field of philosophic speculation, but profoundly influenced the world politics of Lenin's Dialectical Materialism and of Hitler's National Socialism. Intuitionism, Existentialism and Transcendental Evolutionism of Bergson, Kierkegaard and Teilhard de Chardin, respectively, bring us up to our present age, in which we find the teaching of the Buddha still being challenged, but not conquered. For, where other philosophic and religious systems required modification, reformation and even justification, Buddhism has remained basically unaltered, characteristically based on facts and actuality.

Philosophers on the whole—and the Buddha was no exception—are men who are sick of the meaninglessness of life. They are tired of a constant struggle of life which does not lead to victory. Sometimes this tiredness gets a tinge of despair, as it was in the case of Schopenhauer, but other times it became a stimulus to react, a challenge to defy, a rousing call to grapple with the problem which has so far refused to yield its solution. Their works are a protest against the futility of existence within the chaos of living. But after more than 2000 years of philosophy we are not very much wiser, and not a step nearer a solution; for life is still a confusion, a perplexity, which appears so meaningless and which yet is so persistent, that ages of search have not found the key which could perhaps open the door which may lead to freedom and let in the light of understanding. And in the meantime, life is slipping away with the impudence of a confidence trickster who, after having persuaded us to entrust to him our most valuable possessions, slips away, leaving nothing behind.

Yet, the true philosopher continues to dream of that key, the philosophers' stone which can turn base metals into gold, chaos into order, conflict into peace, a key, a stone, a simple tool like a pair of pliers perhaps, that will give us a grip on life.

The temptation of the first men, according to the allegorical story in the Bible, was a suggestion to eat from the forbidden fruit in order to become like God. Man's experience of the world, then as now, is basically an experience of limitation, which tempts him to reach beyond, to climb the highest mountain, to conquer outer space. And man is always willing to struggle with his limitations, because we all want freedom, because we all feel fettered by our limitations, even though we do not immediately realise the nature of our bonds. The scaling of Mount Everest, the breaking of the sound-barrier, the conquest of the moon, have not reduced that sense of restriction.

Artists and thinkers alike, that is those who want to express their emotions and their thoughts, feel themselves trapped in

their own limitations; and they want to free themselves from the basic weakness of society, from the inherent contradictions of existence, in order to escape from the pending and certain defeat of human values, to emancipate themselves from the scientific slavery, which reduces man to a machine.

All forms of art, impressionist and expressionist, all forms of thought, idealistic and materialistic, experience this frustrating sense of limitation. Man's deepest problem is his lack of freedom. But, although he wants that freedom, its need has not become an absolute necessity for living, as the air we breathe. Centuries of submission to conditions beyond our physical control have dulled the mind to such an extent that life in prison seems preferable, because it provides an immediate security. Men have built themselves personalities and have isolated themselves in individualities, in the same way and for the same reason as they have built their houses, to protect themselves from the world, from the insecurity of existence, from the friction which is life. And then they are forced to live in them, and become prisoners. They exist, but do not live.

Thus, human life will always be futile, for life is lived only at half pressure, either emotionally, or intellectually, either idealistically or materialistically, as an Eternalist or as an Annihilationist.

Normally inhibited by the requirements of the body, the body drags us down. Centuries of discipline, education, social customs and taboos have put on all the brakes, and the engine cannot pull away to be free. Whereas such discipline aims at the restraining of energy without understanding its source even, a total understanding with intellect and emotion might provide the correct connections, regulate the outlets, physical and sentimental, so that there would be no conflict of will, no desire for supremacy of one over the other, no friction between need and greed. But as long as seeing, hearing and living is habitual, the senses will be dulled, and existence will drag on through its monotonous round, neither in satisfaction nor in dissolution, not even aware of the basic error which has been accepted as the foundation of

all systems of thought. For, the agony of questioning everything is a pain which may not bring improvement, which, after all, is very relative. But questioning certainly deepens; and increasing depth may lead us to the foundation, the basis of existence, which is not the same as its purpose, which has always been the object of the quest for truth.

When the heat generated by a fire is too low, it will never make the water in the kettle boil. Similarly, when the psychological pressure of consciousness is too low, i.e. when the flame of awareness is not bright enough, there will never be that characteristic heat which alone can result in the explosion of enlightenment. Mere argument, logical reasoning, intellectual discussion, is not enough to produce that total revolution which will affect one's entire life, emotionally as well as intellectually. When there is a leakage of energy, there cannot be a gradual building up of this pressure. Knowledge of suffering as an acknowledgement of a fact may merely lead to the search for an escape which is a leak and dissipation of energy. Only when it is realised that everything, every complex, is conflict, because the root of it is in the nature of the complex, of the seeker, of the escapist himself, then and only then can the conflict build up a pressure akin to despair so great that all attempts of escape are seen as futile, and the conflict must be faced. Then only can there be the explosion of the conflict, a suicide of the deluded "I". As said the Bodhisatta in his last life on the eve of his enlightenment: "Let my flesh and blood dry up, rather than from this seat I will stir until I have attained that supreme and absolute insight".

It was the discovery of this basic error which became the foundation, the characteristic, the essence of the Buddha's philosophy. It is more than an attempt to explain the ultimate nature and causes of the phenomena of the universe, of the phenomenon of man. For, Buddhism takes indeed a place unique, because it does not side with any school or group. The ultimate reality of the phenomena in this universe—and the chief phenomenon round which all others centre is the "I-self"—is according to Buddhism

neither a materialistic plurality, nor an idealistic duality, not even an individualistic unity.

Perhaps closest to the Buddha's philosophy has come Comte with his Positivism, for he too rejects materialism and its absolute causality, as well as idealism with its postulate of independence for an absolute being. According to him the task of Positivism was to see the connection between empirical facts, classified either as static relations when simultaneously occurring, or as dynamic occurrences when there is successive interconnection, a relationship which in the Paṭṭhāna is referred to as co-nascence (*sahajata*) and mutual interdependence (*anna-m-anna*), or as contiguity (*anantara*) and continuity (*samanantara*), respectively.

But Comte does not attempt to show the reason why there should be any connection at all, and how the intellect observes these links. "Science has nothing to do with first principles", he said; "such principles are involuntarily in the human mind, and are not debatable". Later, Comte stressed more and more the subjective side of knowledge, regarding knowledge from sociological and biological viewpoints, asserting that knowledge is determined by nature. Thus, knowledge arises as a satisfaction of a subjective mind. And that brings him again nearer to Buddhism, where it is said that volition (*cetana*) is an essential factor in any thought.

Further development by Taine and Huxley resulted in a doctrine of Phenomenalism, admitting only a succession of phenomena. It could not make itself completely free, however, from the "I"-concept, which was seen by them, not as a carrier, i.e. a substance or entity, it is true, but as a collection of qualities of the nature of a light-beam, which has no individual existence, but yet retains its individuality as a permanent possibility of eventfulness.

And here, of course, the Buddha's philosophy is widely divergent. Here we have no speculation on possibilities, but a doctrine of actuality. Knowledge is empirical; but whatever is based on observation and experiment is still subjective, subject to the conditions under which the experiment is tested, dependent on the

knowledge which interprets the results of the experiment, and liable to correction when the experiment is repeated under more perfect conditions. Such knowledge, therefore, will always be imperfect, being induced from incomplete data.

But, as a doctrine of actuality Buddhism is interested, not in the unknown reality which has no relationship with the changing world of events, but in the events themselves, that is in their action upon the human mind and in the mind's reaction thereto. And in that doctrine of actuality there is no place for speculation on the possible, on the ideal, on the absolute, but only for awareness, i.e. observation of the reaction to events. In the awareness of actuality lies the solution of all problems, because all problems and conflicts arise only in actuality. And so we find the Buddha basing his philosophy, not on speculation of an idea, an absolute, not on conjectures of value and utility, not on opinions of time and space, but on the actual impact in the human mind of desire and frustration, of love and hate, of friction and conflict.

In his four Noble Truths he lays the basis of his doctrine on the universal fact of conflict which is the essential characteristic of all struggle for existence. And there also he gives the basic cause of the friction which causes the conflict. Then, in his doctrine of dependent origination he bares those foundations of all human conflict and traces their origin to the primary error which has been ignored throughout the centuries, the error which places a misunderstanding of individuality at the centre of all philosophic thought. This greatest psychological discovery of all times, the doctrine of non-entity, he then develops, in all its aspects and applications, into a doctrine of actuality which is karma, a doctrine of natural ethics which is rebirth of action and reaction, a doctrine of logic which is not rigid causality but conditionality, a doctrine of psychology of an individual without entity, a doctrine of ontology of a world of events as a process of evolution and involution without creation, a doctrine of eschatology without a purpose or a goal, but which leads logically, emotionally and intellectually

to the cessation of all becoming, the suicide of that misconceived "self", which is the ultimate release and emancipation of Nibbāna.

Applied Psychology

Actually there is no challenge from the part of psychology. It is perhaps the other way round. It is Buddhism which is in a strong position to challenge certain claims or suggestions made in the name of psychology during the last fifty years, for such or similar approaches were already made by the Buddha 25 centuries ago. And it is therefore a fitting conclusion of this series of challenges to consider the position of Buddhism and psychology, where Buddhism now takes the lead and proves its age-long superiority.

Both Buddhism and psychology are mainly concerned with the normal (and sometimes abnormal) reactions of living and rational beings to the various changes in their environment. The chief interest of Buddhism being its investigation into the origin and cure of internal, human conflict, called dukkha, brings it in line with that modern branch or psychology, which is psychopathology and which deals with deviations from the normal, with disordered behaviour caused by mental illness, and with suggestive treatment to bring the abnormal back to normal.

Psychopathology is dependent on psychology, because it draws on its principles, which have been established by analysis and experiment. Then we have further the science of treatment of psycho-pathological cases, which is called psychiatry, and which, as a branch of medical practice, is concerned with the treatment and cure of mental disorders. In the science and study of medicine there are, of course, the parallel studies of the body and its disor-

ders, called physiology and pathology, respectively, dealing with the physical organs and their diseases.

Buddhism does not neglect the body, but accepts the position that many physical disorders find their origin in a disordered mind, such as gastric ulcers being caused by mental worry, various skin-ailments being symptoms of a mind in distress, and epileptic fits being the result of mental insecurity causing hysteria. And so, Buddhism may be said to be the earliest system of psychiatry or the treatment of psychopathological cases, for Buddhism is exclusively devoted to the mental process in its normal and abnormal functioning, to the rectification of such abnormalities by means of analysis and research into the causes and contributory conditions, and to the solution of the mental problems causing the psychological conflict. All this is done on the basis of psychological analysis through logical deduction from biological facts.

Thought is not a mere product of the brain, as bile is secreted by the liver. For, although some very complicated calculations can be worked much quicker and with absolute accuracy by a computer, while the human mental process is much slower and subject to distraction and hence liable to make mistakes, the point is that the computer itself is a product of human intelligence, and it can provide solutions on the data fed into it, again by human intelligence. So, the brain too is only an organ through which thought works; it is but one in a long chain of operators which keep the process of thought going. It is not, however, a thought working with the brain-machine, but it is thought at the end of a process, beginning in the behaviour of matter, observed in the senses, responded to in perception, formulated in a concept, and finally grasped at in consciousness—it is at the end of this fivefold process of grasping by thought that the picture is complete with the assistance of objective material for contact, of sense-organ for feeling, of the nervous reactionary system for perception, of formulative and selective ideation for concepts and comprehensive awareness for understanding.

Only by being based on factual behaviour can psychology be appreciated as a science, for, human behaviour as the expression of emotion can provide the scientific data for analysis, without which no science can progress. This method was known to the Buddha, who based his sixfold analysis of character of greed, hate, delusion and their opposites, on the empirical evidence of human behaviour, on man's way of walking and sleeping, dressing and eating, his interests and antipathies. The individual is seen as a functioning organism, but the intellect is taken in as the sixth organ, thereby salvaging man from being reduced to a reactionary mechanism. And according to his behaviour, which shows his character, he is advised to select his topic of mental concentration or meditation. Thus, a man with a lustful temperament, which is shown by his dance-like walking, his fondness for smart appearance, his pleasant and flattering talk, would be ill-advised to meditate on loving kindness, which might only increase his passions.

The question has been asked, how behaviourism can be made compatible with the facts of hallucination. Here again we find the answer in Buddhism, where we are taught that the chief hallucination or delusion of self as an entity or soul is the very basis of all behaviour, be it in lust, hate or ignorance. For, all behaviour which is self-expression, self-expansion, and hence self-delusion, is entirely shaped by that basic misconception of a separate, isolated, independent entity, which in its isolation creates opposition, struggle and conflict. Thus, a behaviour which is not based on this self-hallucination would not be an attempt at self-expansion and expression, but would be a direct answer to an immediate challenge to action, a response based on the understanding of the necessity of action, without projection into a possible future result.

In sleep, this self-consciousness, which controls behaviour while awake is mostly absent, except perhaps for strong habit-formations which tend to conform even unconsciously. It is in sleep, therefore, that dreams are to a great extent free from

social restrictions and inhibitions. And so it is to dreams that psychiatrists turn for revelation of the unconscious, that is of the true process of the individual, the reality hidden under the actuality. That is also the essence of Buddhist philosophy, which even in its ethical doctrines is more a psychology than a religion.

Now these biological facts may be quite normal in the sense of conforming to accepted standards. Thus, the physical pain of an expectant mother in childbirth is considered normal, although it is not improbable that most of such pains are caused by an abnormal deviation from natural living by the human species in the animal kingdom. Buddhism does not advocate a reversion to the ancestral type, which at any rate would take as many millions of years of involution as it has taken to evolve in time. And thus, many facts of existence may be taken as normal in the sense of standardised. But this rule of standardisation should not be carried too far, to the point of abnormality becoming the standard of normal life, especially when the acceptance of those standards would involve such serious conflicts which threaten to disorganise the rational flow of existence. Changing fashions in dress appear periodically and have been found to be expressions of the attitude of a younger generation, usually a mild revolt against existing conditions for which the old-fashioned are held responsible. A certain amount of exhibitionism is not only understandable, but is even necessary, as is the need to advertise a new product to familiarise the unacquainted and to overcome the anticipated resistance of orthodoxy and conservatism. They may even seek expression in anti-social practices, which may vary from car-stealing to sexual offences. But then they are not committed for the purpose of the immediate effect, e.g. not for the purpose of getting a car or sexual satisfaction. They may be comparatively trivial indecencies scribbled on a wall, or even homosexuality. But the reason of those commitments is elsewhere. They are forms of perversion, which again is a form of rebellion. Young people are not sexually frustrated, but they resent domination. The mere sight of a policeman on the campus may result in a riot

among the students. There is no provocation, there is nothing personal in their outburst, but there is reaction against authority, because authority stands for domination.

Domination in an excessive degree, such as Hitler's domineering influence over his youth movement, may find its source in a very small way in a domineering parent, to escape from whom youths get together in gangs. But there they must have their leader too, one with strength of character, perhaps, and with real qualities of leadership. But those are rare, and so frequently the leader is a bully and a very poor substitute for a domineering father. Then, leadership becomes established by fear, and the weak member in a gang loses his self-confidence and is frightened into subservience and obedience by the leader and other members of the gang. If an individual tries to break away from such influence, he becomes obviously anti-social and is liable to commit crimes against society, though not for personal gain.

But we should not stop at this explanation of symptoms, but examine their causes. Why do some try to break with convention? And why do others cling to tradition? This is the type of psycho-analysis which was formulated in the teaching of the Buddha 25 centuries before Freud began to formulate his theories. And those theories have been followed up, enlarged, deepened, contradicted, reversed, and still they are based on sources of evidence which frequently do not go beyond clinical data. It is on data obtained in the course of medical examination of individual patients that doctors have based their definitions, which actually do not go beyond theories of induction. Reports of patients and of their progress under stimulation have been reduced to general evidence, which certainly have their own merit and value, but remain for all that a quite insufficient basis for a truly scientific theory. The result is a wide divergence of opinion in some of the major issues, growing out into schools which are opposed to one another in their conclusions, as well as in their methods.

Experimental methods are always difficult and sometimes impossible. For, it would not be ethically correct to test one's

hypothesis regarding the cause of a mental aberration by inducing a similar cause in a normal being, in the expectation of learning whether a similar abnormal mental state would arise as a result of that inducement.

But certain observations are so general in their recurrence that a working hypothesis could be established. And then, if on the basis of such working hypothesis further observations are analysed and found to be in agreement, the case can be converted into a law. For instance, one may wish to enquire into the reason of a certain behaviour, or why a person reacts in a peculiar way. Behaviour, which is a reaction to environment, may then explain much of the background of such reaction, if generalisations are found to be constant. Or one may approach the problem from the other side: what would the natural or rational or logical reaction be under definite conditions or influence? If then the facts corroborate the predicted results of the analysis, it would have greater scientific significance, it being a case of deduction rather than induction.

Let us take an example: Greed reflects a psychological need. This conclusion is based on the following findings which we need not develop into greater details, as they are quite obvious even to an untrained mind.

1. There would be no greed, if there were no need, as both belong to the same category of want, which is essentially the absence of something.
2. Sometimes greed persists after a physical need has been satisfied. A person is thirsty and he drinks till satisfied; but there remains a desire for drink, which is now no more a physical necessity, and which, therefore, represents a psychological need.
3. Therefore, greed is a desire for the satisfaction of a psychological need.

This analysis of greed, however, would not teach us very much, unless we can learn the reasons of this search for the satisfaction of a psychological need. What need can there be

for the mind to wish for satisfaction, once the physical need has been satisfied? Now we are not concerned any more about any particular desire for satisfaction which is only in the mind, but with the psychological question: Why should a desire in the mind persist after that desire in the body has been satisfied? It is obviously to satisfy some other kind of desire which is essentially mental, and which therefore cannot be drinking or smoking or any other sense-satisfaction. Still, it is a desire to continue that action. The satisfaction, therefore, is not derived from the actual performance of that action, but from its continuance. And thus, the psychological motive of greed is the satisfaction derived from the experience of continuation. Whereas the bodily senses are satisfied with the fulfilment of their physical needs, the mind will not be satisfied with anything less than continuation. Why should that be?

We have observed already earlier that there would be no greed, if there were no need. Then we saw that the physical need formed some basis for the arising of greed, as it is said in the *paticca-samuppāda*, the doctrine of dependent origination, "in dependence on contact arises sensation, in dependence on sensation arises craving".

Now we have moved from the physical into the psychological sphere, but even here the same thesis holds good: there would be no greed, if there would be no need. And so, the psychological desire or greed for continuance is based on the need of continuance, which here is also psychological. One can only desire what one does not possess. And therefore, if there is a desire, it indicates the absence of the object of desire. If then the mind experiences greed for continuance, based on the need for continuance, it can mean only two things:

1. the mind has no continuance, and
2. the mind must have continuance to exist; its very existence depends on continuance.

This is indeed a conflict, a psychological problem, so fundamental that all other problems can be reduced to this simple

formula. It is no longer a question of satisfaction, of the pleasurable to be accepted and the disagreeable to be rejected, which is all very elementary to be found in any textbook on psychology. Here it is the most vital question of existence itself, the essence of existence, not the mere form of existence.

The mind, that is the *ego*, must continue in order to exist. But in action, that is in actuality, there is no continuation, but only reaction. Continuance is a stay, a maintenance, a duration involving time, the present persisting into the future. Without that uninterrupted sequence in time, there can be no individuality. And without individuality there is no ego, no self, no substance, no entity, no soul, no "I", no God. And that is indeed the position of Buddhism, in its most distinguished doctrine and absolutely unique teaching of *anatta*, further than which no system of psychology has ever gone, or indeed ever can go.

And this is our challenge in our modern time, as in all times, a challenge to philosophy to provide a substance underlying the phenomena, a challenge to religion to prove the existence of an everlasting soul, a challenge to morality to find a permanent basis for its ethics, a challenge to economy to establish abiding security, a challenge to science to produce an entity in the process of change, a challenge to any brand of politics to constitute order without authority, a challenge to modern society to provide an escape which is a solution to the every-day problem of conflict.

Yet, all this can be found in this teaching of the Buddha, which is perfect in its origin, perfect in its development, perfect in its application.

In psychoanalysis the mental process is shown to be a reception of sensations (*vedanā*), a perception of reactions (*saññā*), a conception of ideas (*saṅkhāra*), all of them forms of capturing the object needed for continuation of the "I", which is born in self-consciousness (*viññāṇa*). It is in understanding that this process of grasping is nothing but a process (which has therefore no perdurance, no essence, no reality) that the process may continue without grasping.

It is a basic tenet of psychiatry that in the foundation of a problem lies its solution. In re-living an incomplete experience, that event can be understood; and thus the problem dissolved. We all have experienced this incompleteness in living, which makes us dream in wish-fulfilment, when the process of thinking is loosened without inhibition, when the animal nature throws off its civilisation, when social conventions are discarded. They are only symptoms, showing the root-causes of the disease, the unfulfilled desire, the hunger for self-expression, the greed to continue, without which there is no meaning in life.

But, the experience to live without self is never attempted; for fear prevents a total release of habitual inhibition. To be without a background of the past, without a security for the future, means for most of us fear in the present, which prevents us to analyse the situation to find out whether there is any cause for fear at all. Fear is always at the bottom of every conflict. It is fear which prevents us to discharge the explosive energy which can blast a road to freedom. It is fear which prevents us to abandon the values of the past, even when they seem useless. It is fear which prevents us to step out into the, unknown future, because we prefer the known strife to the insecurity of the unknown.

And yet we know that the present security is but that of a deluded and egoistic isolation, which in its process of isolation is building up a defence in opposition, the cause of further strife and conflict.

And so, with the full understanding, which is comprehension, that this ego is but a camouflage to protect that senseless desire for continuation of the impermanent, a shield, not more than a shadow, to protect that insane projection of an individual process of action and reaction, a disguise and a covering up of the void of an empty process—with this complete comprehension and realisation it becomes impossible to build up resistance, to form an opposition, to, live in isolation. Thus, the teaching of the: Buddha that all is void of self, demolishes the foundation of the entire strong hold of self-delusion, and then in the absence of a

self there is no more conflict, but the ending of strife, the cessation of becoming, which is Nirvāṇa.

About the Author

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

He died on September 15th in 1988.