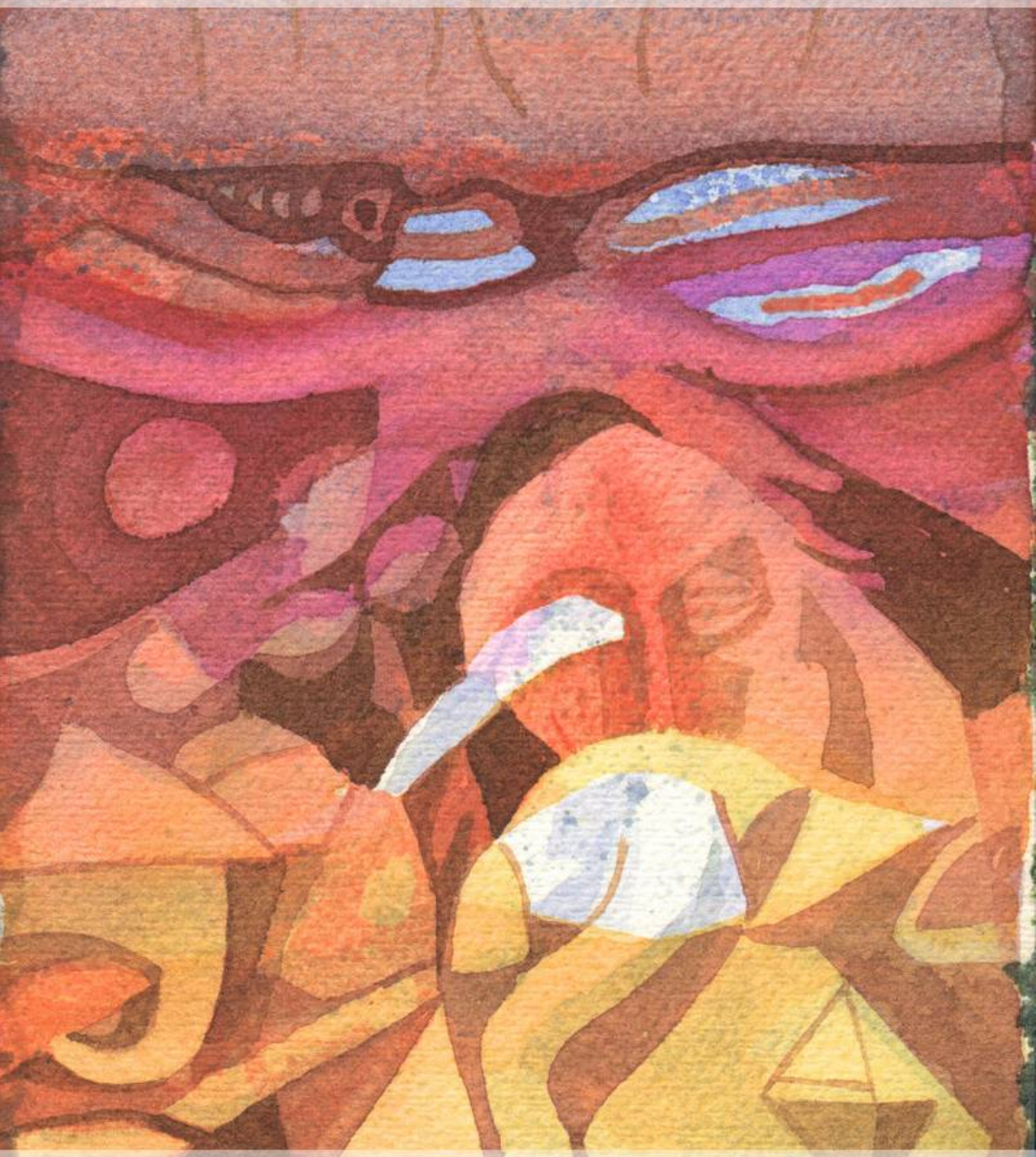
Truth and the Way



Henri van Zeyst

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Foreword with a Warning

Is there a way to the truth? Is truth at the end of the road and is the road a means of reaching the end? And who is going that way, and who is reaching the end?

One can multiply these questions: how to make a beginning, how to proceed, and what happens when the end is reached? And then a very pertinent question: why should one take the trouble to make that journey at all? What is the guarantee of reaching the end? And what is the purpose of it all? To what benefit?

Here is the warning:.

There is no end, there is no purpose, there is no benefit. There is no one going that way and no one will ever reach the end. Truth is not the end, and the path is not the means thereto. There is no answer to the question How? And the answer to the question Why? lies within each of us.

Then, why was this booklet, written and why should anybody read it? Said the Buddha:

> "One thing only do I teach:
> Woe and how its end to reach".
>
> *Dukkhanc'eva pannapemi*
> *dukkha'ssa ca nirodham.*

There is conflict in everyone of us. There is conflict in every

complex, there is decomposition in every compound, there is self-delusion in every desire which is conflict, the desire to make become what is not. It is the ending of this conflict which is the road and the end of the road. And "I" am that conflict! Don't believe it; it just happens to be so.

If you understand, there is no need to read further.

Henri van Zeyst,
Kandy,
28th August, 1977

The Noble Truths

The great German philosopher Hegel, who was perhaps the greatest of them all, once said that truth was a great word, but the actual thing, however small and insignificant, was greater still. It is the modern version of the refutation of the ontological argument, which was tried earlier by S. Anselm, and later by Descartes and Leibnitz, when they attempted to prove "*a priori*" the existence of truth, the highest, God. However noble a thought, however grand an idea, however lofty an idea, it always remains a concept, that is, a conception in the human mind, born of a sensuous perception, a reaction to a sensuous need. And as a concept it is always and infinitely less than actuality, just because it has no actual existence apart from human thought. And thus, the highest is for ever unattainable as the horizon; the truth will be for ever unknown because it is not objective; the absolute can never be comprehended because realisation is relative.

Truth is not something which can stand on its own, like a statue. It is rather a state or a statement, that is, a condition of being, a mode of existence. But that does not mean that every statement is the truth. A statement may be untrue; it may be meaningless. As a matter of fact, most statements are meaningless, because we do not know what we are talking about. A statement such as "truth is the highest" is completely meaningless, even though it sounds impressive, for we know neither the truth, nor the highest.

How can one say that we do not know the truth? Truth is an

abstract concept which has therefore no actual existence in our life of relationship. There may be things which we consider true, physical facts which are verifiable, such as: the sun shines, the water boils, the baby cries, all of which may be true at a certain moment, and even all at the same time. But that is not truth. Then there are statements which appear true for some people, e.g., there is a devil in the kitchen, but which are not true for rationalists. We have no doubt that most servants behave like devils in the kitchen, and elsewhere, but, that of course is a very relative statement, which is no deflection from the absolute truth.

And so, when we come to look at it closely, truth is a theory, that is, a rationalisation. And when we believe ourselves to be searching for truth, we are merely reasoning with ourselves, setting up a theoretical standard, which we then continue to prove to ourselves to be correct and to follow as an ideal. But, when it comes to a crisis, we fling all theories over board, all our convictions and resolutions are gone with the wind, and we rise to the occasion as we understand it at that moment. The classical definition of man as a rational animal actually amounts to describing him as a theory-making animal. But, when that animal is cornered he loses his reason, forgets his theories, ignores his ideas and meets his problem as naked as any other animal, with bare teeth and claws. Then he becomes himself, facing a true fact, without trying to escape in rationalising theories about truth.

Truth in Buddhism is not to be understood in its philosophically defined meaning of the correspondence between the intellect and the known object, for, the distinction between the knowing subject and the known object is not actual. The passive object is the end and the aim of mental action and is, therefore, an active principle, inducing the subject to action. In the actual process of knowledge there cannot be correspondence between the knowing subject and the known object while outside that process there is neither knowing nor a known. To overcome this difficulty a distinction has been made between relative truth, and absolute

truth. Relative or subjective truth is thought to be the truth in so far as it is known to the subject. It is, therefore, an act of the intellect, and thereby also a process of evolution, dependent on relative conditions, such as the correspondence between subject and object. On the other hand, objective or absolute truth is thought to be true without relation to anything, i.e. absolutely true. But as any knowledge thereof would make it subjective, nothing can be known about it.

The fallacy in this speculative theorisation is that truth is taken as something final, either as an entity or as a point further than which knowledge could never reach. Frequently in philosophy, and always in revealed religion, search for truth is an essential feature, and the attainment or realisation of such truth constitutes its goal. But the term *sacca* in Pāḷi (*satya* in Sanskrit, derived from *sat*, being), is not an ultimate truth, but the factual truth or actuality, experienced without delusion. According to Buddhism, therefore, the truth is to be found in the relative conditions of things and events. To know the truth is to know and see things as they are, (*yatha-bhuta-ñāṇa-dassana*), which is not a comprehension of the ultimate substance of matter, but an understanding of the phenomenal nature of material qualities. That this truth is a relative knowledge and, therefore, subject to change does not make it less true. And it can be universal in application without being absolute.

Factual truth is not dependent on the knowledge thereof or on its promulgation: whether a Tathāgata arises in this world, or whether no Tathāgata has arisen, still it remains a fact that all component things are transient (*anicca*), and that they produce conflict (*dukkha*) through being misunderstood, which conflict is as baseless (*anatta*) as the phenomena themselves. Thus said the Buddha.

The factual truth is presented by the Buddha in a fourfold way: the statement of the fact (*sacca*), the source (*samudaya*), its end (*nirodhā*) and the method (*magga*). And each of these four should be contemplated in three aspects (*ti-parivatta*), for

the factual truth must become known (*sacca-ñāṇa*), its function must be understood (*kicca-ñāṇa*), and its accomplishment must be realised (*kata-ñāṇa*), for the knowledge of the truth must be translated into function, if ever the task will be completed.

The first truth is the Noble Truth of conflict (*dukkhassa ariya-sacca*). It is a simple statement of a universal fact: All component, things are in conflict (*sabbe saṅkhāra dukkha*) and, therefore, involved in suffering. This universal statement, however, is not an absolute truth, as it might appear, to those who are used to see merely the opposing views of extremes, of duality, "It is, or it is not". But, here the Buddha clearly holds the relative standpoint: things neither are, nor are not. They merely arise and cease as a process dependent on conditions. Here we do not have an absolute truth that everything is sorrowful, but a conditional truth: if things are component, they can not form a harmonious whole. This is not an empirical truth, for no one will ever be able to observe all, or to experiment with every individual component. This truth is not based on induction either, for it is not generalisation from some particular instance, because it does not follow that everything is dissatisfactory when this and that are unsatisfactory. But this universal proposition is a pure analysis of the nature of composed things; for, the nature of composition includes a tendency towards decomposition, conforming to type. About this, more presently.

The statement of the first Noble Truth is thus entirely conditional and relative: if there is anything of a composed nature, then by its own nature it will tend towards dissolution, which tendency sets up an inherent conflict. Now, whether there are any composed and decomposable things or not, is not expressed in this statement: and hence, this truth is not dependent on actual facts for its veracity, though, of course, all actual facts will be in accord with this truth, which is a statement about their essential nature. And in that respect it is a universal truth. But, at the same time it is also a relative and a conditional truth in so far as it depends on actuality: for, if there would be no component

things whatsoever, this truth would become meaningless, but not untrue. The truth as such would not be affected, even though it would not have any practical application.

As regards the contents of this first Noble Truth, it comprises two terms: things composed (*saṅkhāra*) and conflict (*dukkha*). A composition always refers to an arrangement of parts fitted together, a bringing together of two or more things, events or states, which would not have come together naturally, because of an intrinsic divergence. A composition, therefore, is never an evolution, but rather an involution, an entanglement, a complication, a complex. As a composition, therefore, always requires an external condition, acting as the factor which brings about the union, the act of composition is not according to the, intrinsic nature of the two compounding elements. Thus, a composition being an unnatural complication will have I the inner tendency to solve this complex, that is, to evolve: just as plant-hybrids show an inclination to return to nature, all component things, therefore, are by nature solvent. It is this lack of harmony, which is the essence of conflict (*dukkha*). And so, the first Noble Truth can be simplified in more familiar words: Every complex includes a conflict: (*sabbe saṅkhāra dukkha*).

Conflict may assume different forms. It may be sorrow, which is suffering resulting from loss of relations, wealth, health, virtue or position. Here the conflict arises from the untoward circumstances arising in life's associations. Pain is a physical discomfort in which the conflict is due to feelings, repugnant to the senses. Grief is a mental conflict arising from regret at having failed or it may be due to misfortunes befallen to others, in which case our sympathy is frequently projected self-pity, having placed ourselves mentally in the other man's condition of life. Despair is a mental reflection on external circumstances which have gone beyond control. It is the absence of hope and, therefore, the conflict lies in the impossibility of bringing external conditions in alignment with internal expectations, whereby all further exertion is brought to an end. Disharmony is a conflict, whether it

is the dwindling of vitality, which is involution conflicting with evolutionary tendencies and which is called old age and decay, or the complete dissolution of the aggregates of the composition, which is called death.

That there is suffering and disharmony *in* life and, that this is a conflict is so evident that it is said to be, "gross and easily felt and understood by both prince and pauper". But, the first Noble Truth goes much further: *Any* complex is a conflict. The Buddha's is not merely a statement about disharmony *in* life, but it culminates in stating that *life itself* is conflict. And whether the experience is one of pleasure or of well-being, or of illness, life is a conflict because life is a complex. All the different tendencies which go into the making of a character are inclinations which show the presence of a discord and a void. Nature abhors a vacuum: and hence the very presence of a tendency, the very fact of striving proves the existence of a conflict even in happiness. That is why happiness never satisfies. One always wants more, both in depth and in duration, in space and time. But, in the midst of enjoyment and bliss there creeps in the fear of final frustration and impermanence. That is life, the complex life, which bears in itself the seed of conflict. The struggle for life is also the essence of life. And that indeed is called conflict.

Truth itself is not objective and, therefore, not absolute, but relative. And so, the truth of conflict (*dukkha-sacca*) does not lie in the objective world of events, and not in the nature of the subject either, but in the complex, that is, in the mutual reaction of both, of one upon the other. Thus, the origin of such conflict (*dukkha-samudaya*) is to be found in the manner of apprehension of the world of events, in the act of apprehending, seizing or grasping. It is the will to enjoy life here (*kama-taṇhā*); the will to live elsewhere (*bhava-taṇhā*); or the will to end life's consequences (*vibhava-taṇhā*), which gives rise to conflict. This will, desire, craving, or whatever name it may bear as a volitional activity of a purposeful striving, is a projection into the future, whether it is a positive striving to achieve, or a negative striving to

escape. As such it is a lack of actual living in the present, a lack of understanding life as actuality, by attributing to it wrong values, by creating an imaginary and ideal future, and thereby initiating a conflict. For, any desire holds within its grip a dissatisfaction, without which it simply could not have arisen. The act of grasping seems actual and in the present: but, the good perceived, in the present is sought for the sake of security in time to come, to serve a purpose in the future. Grasping in the present has its motive in the future; and as such it is not actual, but projective.

Craving for the gratification of the passions (*kama-taṇhā*) arises and becomes rooted in the senses. Enticing forms, melodious sounds, delightful tastes, alluring feelings in the senses of the body, are all perceived in the mind which through application and reflection conceives an attachment to them, On the other hand, ugly forms, discordant sounds, nasty tastes, repugnant feelings cause a perception of displeasure in the mind, which results in aversion. But, whether it is an attachment to the pleasing sensations, or aversion from the unpleasant ones, it narrows the mind which thereby becomes subject-conscious, while attention to actuality is relaxed. Those sensations, approved of and welcomed, intensify the will to enjoy, which then develops into a clinging to them. In this very clinging lies the fullness of the misery of bondage. For, the pleasures of the senses are not lasting: they, too, are complex, leading to entanglement and disharmony, because they consist of wrong values. They are, therefore, a composition of discords, naturally tending towards dissolution. The dissolution of such a discord would be a good thing in itself, but as the mind is clinging to that wrong value, it becomes a source of conflict.

When craving for sense-pleasures cannot cling any more, owing to dissolution of the senses or the fading away of the sense-objects, it will renew itself in constant re-becoming (*bhava*), thus not quenching but producing an ever-increasing thirst for life and all it stands for. Then, the very impermanence of all things might become a new source of fresh delight each time, which keeps

away the boredom and the tedium of constant and unchanging beauty and joy.

Is not the sea made beautiful by the rise and fall of her waves? Do not the different seasons add to the attraction of nature? Those changes, however, are not attractive in themselves; they are only appreciated because their beauty is so baseless and because they cannot be esteemed for long. It is only their frequent change which makes them tolerable.

In this manner then arises the craving for permanency in the impermanent, a form of idealism which in olden times was called eternalism (*sassata-diithi*). It is craving for permanent existence (*bhava-taṇhā*) which, although expressing itself in many forms, is always based on a wrong view of individuality (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*). It is either matter itself which is thought of as indestructible, or some psychical functions as sensations, perceptions or ideations, or even knowledge itself, which come to be regarded as qualities of some permanent entity, or as identical with an indestructible life-principle, or as residing in an eternal soul or vice versa as a spiritual substance residing in those phenomena.

Such eternalistic views of individuality originating in a desire for permanent existence, have led in the history of philosophy to Pantheistic Monism which holds that everything is a development of an immaterial and super-sensual substance; to Plato's Animism believing the human soul to be both immortal and eternal, that is, pre- and post-existent; to Realism, giving in its exaggerated form real existence even to universal concepts, or in its moderate version believing in a metaphysical essence, apart from individual characteristics; to Ultra-Dogmatism, accepting the reliability of first principles *a priori.*

There is still another way in which the mind might try to solve the conflict of life, namely, by refusing to see its complexity and conditionality. Then, life becomes a succession of events without any consequence. It is the extreme view of Materialism, called Annihilationism (*ucchedadiṭṭhi*). This craving for annihilation (*vibhava-taṇhā*) is not so much a desire for the end of life, as a

belief that actions in this life will have no further consequences. It is a view, therefore, which encourages joyful living to the utmost, as with death everything is finished. Naturally, such a view of life leads to extreme selfishness, it stimulates the chase after individual pleasures even at the cost of loss to others. But it is impossible for an individual to break away from a life in which his process of action is so entangled with that of others, that any attempt at isolation can only complicate the complex more. Thus, even this craving for the annihilation of the consequences of action does not solve the problem, but is the source of a more intense conflict.

Thus, desire for the pleasures of the senses leads to conflict, because it is an attachment to a wrong value which can never give the satisfaction hoped for. Desire for continued existence is a source of conflict, because it is a search for the permanent in the impermanent. Desire for the annihilation of the consequences of life produces more conflict, because of its tendency towards isolation, which produces a sharper contrast between the delusive opposites of self and others. Such is the Second Noble Truth, the truth about the origin of conflict (*dukkha-samudaya*).

Knowledge of the presence of conflict and understanding of the source of its origin still leave unattained the realisation of the cessation of the conflict (*dukkha-nirodhā*). This forms the third Noble Truth, which is the only logical conclusion to be drawn from a fact arising in dependence on a condition, namely, that with the cessation of that originating condition the effect will also cease.

The process of solving the complex and thereby ending the conflict will be, therefore, a process of eradication of the root-condition, which, as we have seen already in the second Noble Truth, is craving in its various expressions. And where that craving has arisen, there also it must be abandoned and dissolved, namely, in the will. Thus alone can be brought about the cessation of this entire complex of conflict (*dukkhakkhandassa nirodhā*).

But, this process of cessation, removing the source of conflict,

should not become a quest for happiness, which would be at most a subtle substitute for the more gross kind of craving just abandoned. Any kind of happiness which possibly can be thought of will have the hall-mark of impermanence, and hence the search for it contains the seed of conflict. And so, the quest cannot be for a positive goal but only a negative one: the cessation of conflict (*dukkha-nirodhā*). Only he who has no desire to control anything, but who is inspired by the irrepressible need to become free from all delusion, he has truly entered the path to perfect bliss in the cessation of the conflict through the solution of the problem. In recognising the source of the conflict in himself, man is able to solve that conflict in himself by removing that source. The conflict began by attaching wrong values to physical and psychical phenomena. Hence, by means of a re-valuation, that attachment will naturally cease. It is a process of cessation through understanding. Cessation is not of being, for there is no permanent soul, substance or entity to cease; but cessation is of becoming, that is of the arising of the volitional activities which led to the repetition of rebirth of the complex. Thus, cessation is not a doctrine of rationalised suicide, not of annihilation, and hence it does not lead to asceticism. Only in one sense does the Buddha admit to be an Annihilationist, namely, in so far as he teaches the annihilation of the passions and defilements.

The method of achieving such cessation constitutes the last of the four Noble Truths, the means towards the end, the path that leads to the cessation of conflict (*dukkha-nirodhā-gāminī-paṭipadā*). This we shall deal with in three subsequent chapters, according to the ancient division of the Noble Path into *sila, samādhi, paññā*, but in the order of appearance in the Noble Eightfold Path: insight, virtue and concentration. It is a path of understanding and practice, whereby the truth can become known, its function understood and its accomplishment realised. Thus it is that the truth can make us free in the final deliverance of Nibbāna.

Insight and the Noble Path

The Noble Eightfold Path (*ariya aṭṭhaṅgika magga*) is a road of moral living, a path of righteousness, which has eight constituents, dealing with spiritual training, mental development and moral conduct. As a whole it is the final of the four Noble Truths, which after the diagnosis of the conflict and the discovery of its origin and cessation, proceeds to find out the method that leads to the cessation of conflict (*dukkha-nirodhā-gāminī-paṭipadā*).

In the first sermon, the Buddha spoke to five ascetics who were at that moment not even followers of his. To them he showed, therefore, the right path with understanding, action and mindfulness, which thence became stereotyped as the Noble Eightfold Path. Subsequently, however, in the *Maha-cattarisaka Sutta*,[1] when many of his followers had progressed from right, understanding to perfect insight, the Buddha made a distinction, where the right eightfold path appears to be motivated in view of merit (*punnabhagiya*) and therefore clings to rebirth (*upadhivepakka*) an is still intoxicated with desire (*sasava*); and where the perfect path, which is not intoxicated with desire (*anasava*) and which is transcendent (*lokuttara*), that is, a path of saint-hood (*ariya-magga*), is not an eightfold, but a tenfold path. The path with eight components is the learner's course (*aṭṭhaṅga-*

[1] M. 111, 74.

samannagata-sekha-paṭipadā) whereas the path of ten is the path of perfection, (*dasanga-samannagata-araha hoti*). In the latter one, right concentration (*sammā-samādhi*) leads further to perfect insight (*sammā-ñāṇa*) and to perfect deliverance (*sammā-vimutti*), the end of the Noble Path.

It is worth noting that the Noble Eightfold Path has not found a place in the Book of Eights of the Aṅguttara Nikāya, whereas the ten stages of perfection, which are said to be utterly pure and clear and which constitute the perfect path, are fully dealt with in the same text in the Book of Tens.

On the occasion of his first discourse, the Buddha gave us a mere outline of the path, a bare enumeration of its eight sections, as right understanding (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), right intention (*sammā-saṅkappa*), right speech (*sammā-vācā*), right action (*sammā-kammanta*), right mode of living (*sammā-ājīva*), right endeavour (*sammā-vāyāma*), right mindfulness (*sammā-sati*) and right concentration (*sammā-samādhi*). Elsewhere, this path is called the method for the realisation of certain conditions for the sake of which the brethren lead a religious life; and those conditions are more sublime than heavenly pleasures, for they culminate in the realisation, in this present life, of that emancipation of mind and heart, which is arahantship.

When the Buddha, therefore, spoke of his teaching as the middle path, he did not try to reconcile the two extremes of materialistic self-indulgence and idealistic self-denial, but avoiding both he taught the path that leads to the cessation of conflict, which produces virtue and insight and which leads to the tranquillisation of deliverance and the supreme insight of enlightenment. This course covers a man's moral life (*sila*), his power of concentration (*samādhi*) and his understanding of the truth (*paññā*).

In this and the following two chapters we shall deal with the Noble Path from these three aspect of *sila, samādhi and paññā*, but in the order as the eight constituents are usually referred to. And therefore, we first shall speak of insight (*paññā*) and the

Noble Path, which includes right understanding (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) and right intention (*sammā-saṅkappa*).

Although understanding leading to insight seems to form the achievement and attainment of the goal of the journey on this road, it is mentioned first to enable one to have a view of the goal from the outset. For, unless at least the direction of the path is known, progress thereon cannot be assured. If the goal is self-seeking, either in indulgence or in asceticism, the path will naturally be understood in terms of self; and then the misconception of individuality or self-delusion will form the most decisive step on the wrong path. Thus, where misconception of individuality (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*) is the first and most formidable fetter, preventing even the entry on this path of holiness, the right understanding of the real nature of that "self" is sure to lead to the deliverance of such delusion, which is the realisation of the actual truth. Actuality is the complex nature of existence, the unreality of the phenomenal world, the conflict in the mental world between the universal process of change and the desire for stability; it is the conditionality of events in their arising as well as in their cessation. Thus, the right understanding of actuality in the complex nature of existence is the understanding of relativity and conditionality without a supernatural cause or absolute first beginning. The unreality of the phenomenal world should be understood as the unsubstantiality, egolessness, the total absence of any kind of essence or soul or entity supporting the constantly changing phenomena. The actuality of the conflict in the mental world should be understood as "thought in action" and not as a faculty of thinking; as actual thinking without a potential thinker. By conditionality of events should be understood their origination and cessation in dependence on conditions which merely offer the opportunity for the arising of an effect, without causing the effect by necessity.

Thus it is said in the *Maha Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*[2] that right un-

[2]D. II. 312.

derstanding is conviction through insight (and not mere knowledge) of the four Noble Truths, the universality of conflict in whatever complex, the internal cause of conflict which is craving, the cessation of such conflict through the cessation of cause, and of the course which leads to the cessation of this conflict.

In answer to a question of someone from the Kaccayāna clan, the Buddha replied that while people usually base their understanding either on existence or on non-existence (*atthitanceva natthitanca*), one with right understanding of the arising of world-events does not subscribe to the view of annihilationism; while he who with right understanding sees the actual passing away of world-events does not subscribe to the view of the eternalists. To possess right understanding is said of him who sees impermanence in the physical and mental aggregates. Through such right understanding he experiences weariness with worldly life; and through the destruction of passionate delight his mind is set free.

The most comprehensive exposition of right understanding may be found in the *Samma-diṭṭhi Sutta*,[3] where Sāriputta discourses on the subject in great detail. It is the comprehension of what is wrong and right, namely, killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, slander, harshness, gossip, covetousness, aversion and delusion; and the ten opposite virtues which abstain from these evils. It is the comprehension of the root-conditions thereof, which are greed, hate and delusion, resulting in evil action, and the absence thereof resulting in good actions. Such comprehension will make one free from all addiction to lust, will remove all inclination to repel the unpleasant, will abolish all attachment to the latent tendencies which consider the "I" as a separate and abiding entity, will expel all ignorance and thereby become the cause of the arising of true knowledge which is the end of all conflict here and now.

Further, one may be said to have right understanding if one comprehends the entire process of nutrition, its arising, its ces-

[3] M. I, 46–55.

sation and its working, that is, nutrition of the physical body, nutrition by which the external impinges by contact on the internal, nutrition which feeds volition, and nutrition which is mental.

Right understanding also means the comprehension of the four Noble Truths of conflict which is found in birth and death, in all the experiences of the five groups of physical and mental aggregates of clinging; comprehension of the cause of conflict which is craving for sense-pleasures, craving for existence or craving for annihilation; comprehension of the cessation of conflict which is the giving up, the renunciation, the release, the detachment from all craving; and comprehension of the method leading to the ending of conflict which is the Noble Eightfold Path.

Right understanding, moreover, includes the comprehension of the origination, the process and the cessation of old age and death, of birth, of becoming, which is the process of existence, of craving, of clinging, of sensations, of contact, of the six sense-spheres, of the mentality-corporeality-combine, of karmic formations, of ignorance: and also of the mental intoxicants of sensuality, rebirth and ignorance.

All this is the right understanding of the goal which is deliverance from all delusion. It is the first kind of knowledge, called the general knowledge of things as composite, and which includes the understanding of the three characteristics of impermanence, conflict and soullessness. They have to be seen as one, for he who perceives sorrow, but not the intrinsic transiency and insubstantiality of the conflict, has nothing but the pain thereof without the hope of deliverance.

From the realisation of the true nature of things, right understanding will develop insight into the working of the process of nature. The knowledge of composite things as waning and waxing is not a mere observation of growth and decay in nature, but it is the right and complete understanding that there is nothing but a process of becoming, which is the understanding that becoming

is ceasing. Though this step should follow quite logically, yet it is a difficult one for many who in the very fact of becoming find all their delight. But when becoming and ceasing are seen as two aspects of one process, then the reaction of insight into what is to be feared will arise naturally. Such fear should lead to understanding of the danger which is inherent in clinging to mere processes of cessation: it should also lead to understanding of the reasons to be disgusted with such an empty show.

With this is reached insight in the real nature of the path, for now theoretical knowledge is producing the fruit of practical understanding which is necessary to proceed on the path. A desire to be set free and the knowledge thereof will grow out into a contemplation of the same three characteristics of transiency, conflict and insubstantiality, but with the increased insight as from a higher plane. With a view on the goal they constituted earlier mere general knowledge, but with the intensified view on the path to the goal they become more specified. Thus, insight of indifference to the activities of this life will be a natural consequence of this disgust and deeper understanding, where even-mindedness is not due to lack of interest, but to the lack of self-interest.

And so is attained insight in the delusive nature of action, that although there is a road, there is no traveller. It is the knowledge which qualifies for the path of holiness; for with this understanding is broken the first fetter of self-delusion, which transforms the worldling into a noble one, the average person into a winner of the stream of holiness which finally leads to the ocean of Nibbāna.

"Everything that lives is holy", said Blake, but one would like to improve upon that by saying that everything that lives is *good*. It is not that goodness is easier to define than holiness, but it is certainly easier to recognise.

Goodness is not merely a discharge of a proper function within the limitations of nature: for that could be natural goodness without any moral implications; whereas holiness might be

found as a moral function by-passing the limits of nature. And so, holiness has the atmosphere of the supernatural which is not found in "everything that lives". Goodness need not even be a state; it might be a transformation, a change, an evolution. Such a change need not lead to a new standard; for, evolution can be continued. In fact, evolution, or change (to include also involution) is the very essence of life. But, change would not be the essence of holiness which should be the attainment of perfection. Perfection then is static, but goodness is growth; and that is life.

This makes it so difficult and practically impossible to lay down standards of goodness, of morality, of holiness, when it is not possible to have fixed standards of living. In other words, goodness changes with life, because "everything that lives is good".

But this poses some difficulties, because there is no doubt about it, that the very process of living can only be maintained by actions which are the very opposites of living. The maintenance of life includes the necessity of destroying life. It is a natural evil which is beyond the freedom of choice; and the performance of it is not one with deliberation and intention. Antiseptics, antibiotics, germicides are only scientific compositions, the action of which is naturally found in the blood-stream of any individual. In fact, no evolution is possible without involution, which means that no birth is possible without death. This essentially destructive function of involution or decay is therefore a natural evil without any moral involvement. As no intention is attached, it has no moral value, and is, therefore, ethically neither good nor evil.

Then, why do we call it "evil"? This is, of course, an entirely relative concept, which considers anything "evil" which obstructs or destroys the continuance and development of the formation of individuality, without considering that the destruction of an obstruction may be naturally good from many other aspects.

And so, we shall have to refrain from thinking in terms of natural good and natural evil, as such distinction is not based on nature, but on an unenlightened psychological attitude towards

an individual aspect of life. Life itself, as a natural process, cannot be evil; and everything that lives is good. But, that does not mean that life cannot be made evil by moral, or rather immoral, implications. And this brings us to right intention (*sammā-saṅkappa*).

Understanding and misunderstanding, morality and immorality, approval and disapproval in general, depend largely on the angle from which they are observed. It is the view one takes (otherwise called the intention), which makes the difference. Actions in themselves are neutral, and they are largely mechanical reactions; but, the intention of an action makes it good or bad.

There is a difference between purpose and intention, and it is that difference which makes it possible to have right intentions, while the same cannot be said about purpose. For, a purpose is always the desired effect or expected result. In other words, a purpose is always something in the future, and that makes it ideal and non-actual. And what is not actual cannot be said to be good. Intentions, on the other hand, are not outward views, but inward headings of the mind. Purpose and intention, therefore, differ both in the nature of the action and the object. A purpose is set up beforehand and becomes the goal of striving, while an intention may be spontaneously arising according to the mind's inclination and understanding, thereby leaving the action untainted by craving and producing a pure action (which is not *karma*, but *kriya*).

While developing right understanding (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), thoughts must also be properly coordinated and directed by directions. Co-ordinated thinking is the real meaning of the word *san-kappa*, which indicates harmonious thinking without isolated or selfish thought. Still, not all co-ordinated thought is rightly co-ordinated. There is volitional intention (*cetana*) in every physical, vocal or mental act; it is a general mental factor which occurs in any mental state. Therefore, intention is not always the same as desire, though sometimes it may be so.

Intention is the driving force which, if evil, will make an act evil, if good, it will make an act good, while without it there would

be merely mechanical reactions. Intentions, therefore, have a creative power in them, which may be for good or for bad. Hence not all intentions, but only the right ones, find a place in the Noble Eightfold Path. A rightly co-ordinated intention is one without selfish views which would make it isolated, narrow and not in harmony with the full process of nature or with progress on the path to the goal as realised by right understanding. It is, therefore, an individual disinterestedness with regard to particular actions, as the view is taken of the whole. Hence, the Buddha spoke of right intentions as views of renunciation, views of good-will and views of harmlessness. Only a detached view, therefore, can be a right intention, as only in detachment the mind can turn away from worldly pursuits and selfish purpose, and be directed on the Noble Path.

It is always extremely difficult to distinguish intention from purpose, as difficult as thinking from wishing. In order to think without wishing, there must be an immense clarity of objective thought, which refuses to be side-tracked by speculation and interest; there must be also a practically infinite sincerity which knows nothing of self against others, but which is merely on seeing things as they are. That is also the essence of intention, which is to be bent upon, to incline towards investigation with the awareness of a truly open mind, without bias, without prejudice, without goal, and that is the very opposite of purpose. We should not confuse either, of course, with that kind of pious resolutions which (they say) form the pavement of the road to hell.

Right intentions, therefore, are right views, which are able to comprehend the process as a whole without individualistic and abstract concepts. Such a view will not be the narrow range of an individual vision which is coloured by personal likes and dislikes, love and hate, attraction and repulsion, be they physical or mental; it does not isolate the wave from the ocean; it does not dissect a living organism to find out what makes it live; it does not speculate on the essence of existence, on the substance of phenomena, on the abiding entity of the absolute. But, right view

is always aware of those subtle moves of the mental process, in which the mind has set up itself as an arbitrator, as an independent judge or witness of a passing show, whereas in actuality the show takes place in the mental process itself. I am that show, which is impermanent, full of conflict, and full of ignorance and ambition and pride which says "I am".

Right view sees all that, and realises the truth of that delusion, and so is free of it. It seems a contradiction to speak of the truth of a delusion, but it is no more than a paradox, seemingly absurd, though well-founded on fact: the fact that we are deluded; and that is the truth. But he who sees that truth is no more deluded, for he does not stand apart as a witness, he does not discover a principle of action and of thought; but he realises that there is no actor and no thinker apart from acting and thinking. And in that right view of non-entity, there is the view of totality, of conditionality in arising and ceasing, which leads to perfect co-ordinated thinking (*sammā-saṅkappa*), the only basis for right action, right speech, right effort, of which we shall speak next.

Virtue and the Noble Path

The Noble Eightfold Path leading to the cessation of conflict is a method how to bring about understanding which is insight leading to enlightenment. The conventional order in which the eight constituents are presented, and which we follow on this occasion, is not an order of logical or chronological succession; for, one does not cultivate the insight of right understanding before getting down to the practical aspects of the development of virtue in speech and behaviour. If that is obvious, it should be clear also that the Noble Path is not a road of progress but one of approach. If insight is the gateway to deliverance, then one cannot approach that gateway ultimately only in a way of understanding which is theoretical. In order to obtain such understanding one needs also some preparation in the manner of approach. And that is the way of virtue in speech and behaviour.

Right speech (*sammā-vācā*) is placed first of the sections classified under right conduct (*sila*), because, if the tongue is well controlled, all conduct will be curbed; It is, first of all, the observance of the fourth precept which a Buddhist undertakes to observe by abstaining in the fullest sense from lying words (*musāvāda-veramaṇī*). That includes not only lies, but all efforts made to injure the good name of somebody else, by circulating bad reports through slander, by openly advancing some serious untrue charges through defamation, or by maliciously misrepresenting

another's words or deeds through calumny. It includes further all kinds of harsh language, vulgar, abusive, quarrelsome or invective language. But reproachful words, directed to persons deserving reproach, and used by persons whose duty it is to correct them would not be harsh language, as long as it is consistent with decency and propriety of speech. Wrongful language includes finally even vain talk or gossip, in connection with which the Buddha admonished his monks: when you are gathered together there are two things to be done: either talk about righteousness, or observe a noble silence. Maha Moggallāna explained this *ariyan* silence as the attainment of the second stage of mental absorption (*jhāna*) when all mental babbling ceases with the ending of reasoning.

But the abstinence or refraining from these various types of wrong speech is only the negative aspect of right speech. Even so, for many it is already much to be sincere in this negative way. Some are not true became they do not know the truth. In their wrong belief and constant refusal to be enlightened they miss the goal, because they refuse to see the path. Their ignorance is blindness through delusion. Few are not true, because they do not want to be true. That, of course, is sheer wickedness. It is intentional untruthfulness of which the Buddha said, that he who can tell a deliberate lie is capable of, committing any crime. A bodhisatta, in all the many lives of his preparation for the highest enlightenment may commit, all kinds of evil deeds, but he will never utter a deliberate lie; for, that would make him turn his back to the goal in his search for truth. And again there are many who are not true, because they do not know how to be true. It is their ignorance of the path, while conventional life in the world is so hypocritical that they are not even aware of the insincere lives they are living. For many of them, untruth has become a necessity for living.

But one who walks on the path, "speaks the truth, is devoted to the truth, reliable and worthy of confidence …He never knowingly speaks a lie, neither for the sake of his own advantage, nor

for the sake of another person's profit, nor for the sake of any gain whatsoever. What he has heard here he does not repeat there, so as to cause dissension there ...Thus he unites those that are divided; and those that are united he encourages. Concord gladdens him, he delights and rejoices in concord; and it is concord that he spreads by his words. He avoids harsh language and speaks such words as are gentle, soothing to the ear, loving, going to the heart, courteous, dear and agreeable to many. He avoids vain talk and speaks at the right time in accordance with facts, speaks what is useful, speaks about the Dhamma and the discipline; his speech is like a treasure, at the right moment accompanied by arguments, moderate and full of sense. His is called right speech."

To be able to speak not only with sincerity but with truthfulness, one has to live the truth for oneself. For, then alone is one able to declare from one's own experience: "So it is", without relying on the fickle and fallible authority of others. Right speech of this kind leaves a deep mark of conviction on a susceptible audience. The effect may be of the nature of a shock, but it will be a salutary awakening; for, the tongue of the wise is health.

As regards right action (*sammā-kammanta*), there is, in the purest sense, only one kind of action deserving that name, and that is the kind of action which does not deviate from the right path with secondary or ulterior motives. An action which is done with the purpose of obtaining something to which that act is related in the same way as an instrument is associated with the material which it is going to shape, such an action is not a pure action, but a means to an end. Whether there are ends *and* means, or whether ends *are* means, is largely dependent on the misinterpretation of action.

An action which is operative under a predominating control, such as an ulterior motive, is not efficient in itself as it serves another's purpose. Any such action, which may be good or evil from a utilitarian viewpoint, is a reproductive action (*janaka kamma*) with a willed effect (*vipāka*). It is a means to an end and,

therefore, not complete in itself. It is the end in view which gave the impetus to, and which became identified with, the means. In this sense, the end was the means, that is, the condition (*paccaya-hetu*) which made the, action reproductive.

But this is not so if considered from another viewpoint that the means is merely instrumental to the effect without causing it in the ultimate sense; it may be fertilising, but not producing it, unintentional and incidental. Such an action is done in a mechanical or purely reactionary way; and here the means and the end are not identical in any way. Neither of these can be called right action. For, an action, the end of which has become the motive of its arising, is incomplete in itself; it is projected into the future by purposeful striving. And the action, in which the end is dissociated from the means in a purely reactionary way, is a mechanical action, or rather a reaction.

There is still another possible combination in which the means becomes the end; for example, in some people who make of the act of eating (which is a means of preserving life) the chief purpose of existence: they live to eat, instead of eating to live. They confuse the instrumental conditions (*nissaya*) with the principal condition (*uttama hetu*). It does not require any explanation to to understand that this too cannot be right action. And yet it is this type of action which is most frequently indulged in not only in its more gross forms such as the slaughter of cattle for the sake of taste-satisfaction, or the violation of another's marital rights for the sake of one's own gratification, but also in the more refined and generalised actions which may even be legalised, such as capital punishment. All such actions are misfitting means towards a wrong end. And abstinence therefrom becomes in a way right action.

Meritorious actions (*puñña kamma*) are also good to some extent; but, as they lead to, and are intended to lead to, rebirth which is a continuation of the conflict, they are means to an end, and, therefore, incomplete in themselves.

A right action in the fullest sense is beyond merit and sin,

and it has in it so little of what is usually meant by activity, that it can only be conceived and observed in negations: abstinence from killing, abstinence from stealing, abstinence from wrong gratification of the senses. For, the rightness of an action does not depend on the activity itself, but on the mental attitude, which is the approach. An action which is done for the purpose of acquiring merit may be a good action (*kusala kamma*), and under the proper conditions it may produce a effect (*kusala vipāka*), but that does not make it a right or perfect action (*sammā kammanta*). An action which is done for the purpose of acquiring merit or for the sake of obtaining a happy rebirth may be skilful (*kusala*) towards the attainment of the desired end, but in the ultimate sense it is a mere reaction, because the view of the expected reward was the motive and the driving force, to which stimulus the so-called good deed was a reaction. Such actions are not complete; they are performed physically in the present, but they are enacted mentally in the future. Hence they are not completely actual and not actually complete or perfect.

Good actions, therefore, just as evil actions, are reproductive, and their effects are likewise called good and evil, respectively; but as the continuation of the process of self-delusion is at the same time continuing the conflict, the difference between good and evil is only one of degree. The Buddha compared man's actions with a raft wherewith to cross a stream; having reached the other shore, the raft is left behind, however useful it has been: "Not only evil deeds, but also good deeds must be left behind".

In the *Maha-cattarisaka Sutta*[4] the Buddha makes the following distinction in a twofold right action that has its share in merit (*puñña-bhagiya*) and which therefore clings to rebirth, is still intoxicated with desire, and does not appear to be very perfect; the other is right action which indeed is perfect (*ariya*), not intoxicated with desire, transcending, and which form part of the path. The first type is good action, for it abstains from killing,

[4]M I. III, 74.

from stealing, from indulgence, but with a motive. The second type is perfect action pertaining to the path, because the restraint is a development of perfect thought (*ariya citta*), of a thought free from intoxication (*anasava-citta*).

A right action, then, must be a pure, a perfect, a complete action, an action performed entirely in the present, physically and mentally, and thus a fully actual action. Inducement by reward, restraint by fear of punishment, obedience in response to legal obligations, can never form a basis for right action. But, to abstain from killing out of respect for life, to abstain from stealing out of respect for property, to abstain from gratification of the senses beyond their physical needs out of understanding that they will develop a psychological greed if indulged in beyond that limit—those are right actions, for they have the fullness of motive and effect in themselves. They are not mere means, but ends in themselves. Hence, they do not project themselves into a further process of karmic result (*vipāka*) as they are not reactions themselves, but intelligent actions. Such right actions are pure actions which do not lead to conflict, because in their simplicity they are not complex; they do not lead to rebirth, because they are non-causal (*kriya*). They may be called inoperative, as they have neither moral nor immoral significance; hence they are also called indeterminate (*avyakata*), and actions of mere doing (*karanamatta*). As all other actions have the tendency of reproductivity and, therefore, may lead to rebirth if other conditions are favourable, this is the only action which, spontaneous in its arising from the understanding of a need, does not lead to the implications and complications of greed and conflict, which will thus completely solve the problem and lead along the Noble Path to the final deliverance of Nibbāna.

Right living (*sammā-ājīva*) is the earning of one's livelihood by no wrong means. Wrong means do not include wrong actions such as theft. These have been dealt with and are included in right and wrong action. But, there are other actions, such as buying and selling which are perfectly justified in themselves, and which yet

become wrong means of livelihood if the articles for sale are going to be harmful. Thus, the living by the sale of deadly weapons, of meat and fish, of intoxicants, of poison, of contraceptives to cause an abortion, of pornographic literature and obscene pictures, of white slavery for the purpose of prostitution, or any kind of exploitation which is living on the labour of others while withholding from them a decent living wage, cannot be called right livelihood.

And that is about all the average man knows of this very important and practical part of the Noble Eightfold Path. One should, however, enquire deeper to find out what has brought about these wrong means of livelihood. If people sell meat and liquor, is it not because there is a demand for those commodities? Shops and markets are not charity institutions; they are run for the purpose of making profit, which, however, can only be expected by catering for they demand. Thus, the root of wrong livelihood does not lie with the salesman, who takes his opportunity together with the risk, but with the wrong living of his customers. If some do the slaughtering, it is because others want the meat. If some women are prepared, frequently constrained by circumstances, to offer their body indiscriminately for hire, it is because there are so many men who want sexual satisfaction without the bondage of a married life; or because a hypocritical society has outlawed an unfortunate girl for a mishap in her inexperienced youth. Wrong livelihood then is conditioned by wrong living. It is greed, lust, selfishness, desire for power in many, which stimulates the acquisitiveness in a few who make a profit by wrong livelihood. Our inner demands, therefore, have created the outer opportunity.

Right living is, therefore, not only a life which is harmless, but a life which is free from greed and selfishness, which is not isolating itself in self-satisfaction, which is not opposing itself to others by comparison, or placing itself above others by judgement. Right living is a life of simplicity, which, however, is not the same as renunciation. Not the fewness of possessions make

a life simple, but the freedom from possessions. True simplicity does not necessarily give up all possessions, but it is not possessed by them. Right living is a life without acquisitiveness, without specialisation, without rights and privileges, which are all expressions of self-deluded isolation. And when there are no rights, there are no duties either.

Such is the freedom of right living which arises in the understanding that every complex is a conflict, that rights and duties arise from opposition, that all opposition is delusion. And with that understanding come also contentment, happiness and fullness of life. Then, life does not mean any more the manner of living; it ceases to be a toy thrown about by the ups and downs of circumstances; for, then it will have transcended all phenomenality, all misery and conflict, all isolation, opposition and delusion. And that indeed is right living on the Noble Eightfold Path.

Although frequently interchanged as synonyms, there is a very different meaning originally, between energy and effort. Energy is the capacity to produce force; it is an inner work: en-ergy, mostly a latent ability which requires a suitable environment, such as an impelling condition, to become an active operation. It is not activity itself, but the power to work. Hence, one speaks of static or latent energy, which, however, is merely potential and not actual. Only when it operates actually, it obtains value. It is like an account in a bank from which moneys may be withdrawn for actual purchases. Energy, therefore, is more of the nature of a characteristic, and as such it is classified as a mental factor (*viriya cetasikā*).

Effort (*vāyāma*), on the other hand, is an outgoing strength (*ex-fors*) and the actual calling forth of the inner force (*en-ergy*). In appearance it is like a means to an end; for, effort is required in any attempt to reach the goal. But, as in right understanding (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) the end calls for spontaneous action which is the means without a purposeful projection beyond the immediate need, so right effort (*sammā-vāyāma*), as an endeavour to reach the goal of the Noble Eightfold Path, does not extend itself beyond removing

these obstacles on the path which have arisen, or, better still, preventing them from arising, or trying to bring about favourable conditions, or improving the same. Obstacles which will have to be removed are attachments to sense pleasures and antagonistic dispositions, which each in their own way make the mind selfish and isolated. Evil sources which should be prevented to pollute the pure atmosphere on the Noble Path are the different forms of evil company. This may be in the form of so-called friends who with their wrong example might exercise an evil influence; or in the form of pictures, books, films and songs, which produce an evil effect on the mind. Even certain tastes and smells have a tendency of weakening a person's determination. Thus, by guarding the senses and by protecting and restraining the faculties of body and mind one exerts right effort. These are the various aspects of prevention and cure.

On the other hand, right effort has also its positive applications in the culture (*bhāvanā*) of the many factors contributing to enlightenment. Favourable conditions which may be a help on the path are the cultivation of mindfulness (*sati*), the spirit of investigation (*dhamma-vicaya*), inner energy (*viriya*), sympathetic interest (*pīti*), peacefulness of mind (*passaddhi*), concentration (*samādhi*) and a balanced disposition of even-mindedness (*upekkhā*) in the vicissitudes of life. For, such dispositions are based on dispassion, lead to cessation and end in self-surrender. If those conditions have already been brought about, they should be furthered and promoted with right effort, by means of recognition-with-understanding whatever may be the event of actuality.

It should be noted that in all these four kinds of supreme effort there is nothing of purposeful striving.

All right effort is entirely focussed on the present moment in order to solve the problem of the actual conflict. In purposeful striving there may be a resemblance of effort in an attempt to reach a goal; but such a goal is never present, and hence the problem and the conflict are not actual, but ideal. Such attempts, then, are more of the nature of a trial in the sphere of experiment and

speculation. But right effort has nothing vague or experimental about it, as the purpose is well defined and understood by right insight. The purpose of the holy life, said the Buddha, is neither gifts, nor honours, nor a good name, which are as leafy twigs in a tree; neither is it excellence in regulated behaviour, which may be compared with a branch in that tree; neither the bliss of concentration, which is equal to the bark; nor yet penetrating insight, which is like green wood. The purpose of a holy life, its heart and its goal, which is like the heart-wood of a tree, is the fixed and unalterable deliverance of the mind (*Maha-saropama Sutta*[5]).

Virtue as a part of the Noble Eightfold Path includes the observance of precepts as part of one's ethical training. But, the observance of even a greater number of precepts, the eight or ten precepts, does not bring about that higher virtue (*adhisila*) which is found in perfection, not as a restraint, but as coming from inner necessity. That alone is real virtue which needs no persuasion of righteousness, no inducement of reward, no compulsion of authority, no background of fear, but which comes from clear understanding and perfect comprehension. Then there will be truth, not in a mere abstention from lies, but in dedication to sincerity of living, without compromise, without hypocrisy, without selfishness. That is noble virtue on the path of perfection.

[5]M. I, 192 ff.

Meditation and the Noble Path

We shall now conclude the present series with some reflections on the last two constituents of the Noble Eightfold Path, namely, right mindfulness (*sammā-sati*) and right concentration (*sammā-samādhi*), which are made complete on the path of holiness by perfect insight (*sammā-ñāṇa*) and perfect deliverance (*sammā-vimutti*).

Mindfulness means awareness and attention. It is not a method with a specific purpose, but it can assist us in performing any action with greater accuracy; and so it becomes a most efficacious instrument to success in any sphere of work, and can be applied to any action, physical or mental, moral or immoral. Even a housebreaker needs this alert watchfulness; for, awareness and attention will focus the thought on the work at hand and prevent distraction, which is usually the cause of misapplication of energy, of accident and failure, mindfulness is the most typical of all the constituents of the Noble Path, showing the overall importance of direct understanding, of living in the present, of spontaneous action. Understanding without this actual alertness will easily develop into academic speculation; without this ever-vigilant watchfulness, living becomes a purposeful striving for the future; without this spontaneity, action becomes tendentious and calculated, which may be skilful (*kusala*), but far from perfect (*ariya*).

Right mindfulness is a kind of direct experience which does not rely on thoughts or feelings of another person, or of tradition, or of conventional society. It is an awareness of the component parts of an action: its motives, its agencies, its constituents, its material, its background, its foundation, even the source of its origination. For, all that together forms the action which is the "I". Right mindfulness is not concerned with the outer world as such. The outer world as the world of experience is only a reflected world. It is in one's own action that one has to solve the conflict arising from contact (*phassa*) and sensation (*vedanā*), from reaction (*saññā*) and ideation (*saṅkhāra*), which form the conscious process (*viññāṇa*) of karmic action. Thus the Buddha's way of meditation is not a method of filling a certain period, of the day with beautiful thoughts, emotional sentiments or inspiring truths. His method is the method of analysis (*vibhajja*) through mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*) about which he said that it is "the only way that leads to purity of life, to the complete overcoming of anxiety and complaint, to the annihilation of conflict and sorrow, to the attainment of the goal, the realisation of Nibbāna[6]".

This method of right mindfulness is fourfold.

1. It is to be mindful of the body's actions such as breathing (*ānāpāna-sati*), of its reaction (*sati-sampajanna*), its postures as a whole (*catur-iriyāpatha*), it's formation of parts (*patikkula-manasikara*), its composition of material qualities (*dhātu-manasikāra*) and its stages of corruptibility (*navasivathikaya*).
2. It is to be mindful of feelings and sensations (*vedanānupassana*), to be aware of their arising, reflecting, on them as just feelings, without attachment to the pleasant ones, without aversion for the unpleasant ones, without neglecting the neutral ones. It is to be independent from them, whether they originate from an external condition or from an inner disposition.

[6]M. I, 63.

3. It is to be mindful of thoughts (*cittanupassana*), seeing their roots of lust (*rāga*), hate (*dosa*), delusion (*moha*), detachment (*vita-rāga*), placidity (*vita-dosa*) or comprehension (*vita-moha*); seeing the character of those thoughts as recollected or distracted, attentive or fugitive, lofty or lowly, liberated or fettered; considering them one and all as just thought (*atthi cittaṁ*).
4. It is to be mindful of mental states (*dhammānupassana*) associated with the five hindrances of sensuality, ill-will, sloth, worry and perplexity; to be aware of the arising of those mental states, of their continuance and of their ceasing. It is to be mindful of the mental states connected with the five factors of clinging to existence, i.e. matter, sensation, perception, differentiation and consciousness; or belonging to the six spheres of sense-organs and sense-obects; or to the seven factors of wisdom, namely, mindfulness, investigation, energy, rapture, repose, concentration and equanimity; or belonging to the four Noble Truths, always reflecting on the actual nature of events and experiences: "This is conflict, and this is its cause; thus it ceases, and this is the path that leads to its solution".

It is said that whoever would practise those four methods of mindfulness, if only for seven days, may expect to reap one of these two fruits: the perfect insight of arahantship in this life itself, or at least the state of no-more-return to this world.[7]

Right mindfulness, then, leads to insight, because it is awareness of the true nature of an action. Awareness is knowledge without assertion or comparison, without denial or acceptance; for, all these judgements are the expressions of the reflecting self, which distorts the view in isolating itself from the conditioning environment. It is the delusion of self which approves or disapproves of certain feelings. But by mere attentiveness, watchfulness, awareness and mindfulness those feelings will be

[7] D. II, 315.

perceived as sensuous reactions to the environment. The understanding of this action-reaction-process (*udayabbaya-ñāṇa*) will overcome all misconception about individuality, whereby the root-case of the conflict will have been removed. Then, no thoughts will arise such as: "I feel pain or pleasure"; but simply: "this is feeling"; no thoughts as: "I am freed"; but simply: "this is a liberated thought"; no thoughts as: "this is my body"; but simply: "such is matter, its origin and dissolution".

Thus, right mindfulness solves the problem of conflict, just because it has no purpose of its own. For, while it is through purposeful volition that opposites are created as the cause of all conflict, pure mindfulness avoids all such complications by merely seeing things as they are.

As regards right concentration (*sammā-samādhi*) there is frequently a great deal of confusion about the terms meditation and concentration. Concentration, as the word indicates, is a form of attention which brings it in line with mindfulness; and also a form of reflection, brought about by various forms of spiritual exercises (*kammaṭṭhāna*) and mind-culture (*bhāvanā*), such as recollection of the virtues of the Buddha, reflection on death, analysis of material elements, contemplation of various devices to keep the mind from wandering. All these exercises are only preliminary stages (*parikamma*), and they will cease to be exercises when they approach concentration (*upacāra-samādhi*), which culminates in one-pointedness of mind (*ekaggatā*).

In its undeveloped state, concentration is present in any thought as the mental factor (*cetasikā*) of one-pointedness of mind (*cittass'ekaggatā*), but then it is a mere intellectual element without any ethical significance, to be compared with the consciousness of an amoeba; it is the germ of concentration. Both, one-pointedness and concentration, have therefore something in common, namely the bringing together of the powers of attention in one central point. Concentration, then, is called "the power of individualising, developed by practice", for it focusses the attention on one point, whereby distracting influences are kept at a

distance. This is the checking of the five hindrances, when full ecstasy (*jhāna*) may occur, which is truly right concentration.

The path which leads to the different states of ecstatic mental absorption (*jhāna*) and to the checking of the hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) is called the path of calm or tranquillity (*samatha*), because it lulls the passions. But, control or tranquillisation is still far from overcoming or uprooting. In this respect, the mental culture along the way to tranquillity (*samatha-bhāvanā*) cannot be the culmination of right concentration and the attainment of the final goal of the Noble Eightfold Path. This can only be reached by that kind of meditation which is insight (*vipassanā*).

Cultivation of the mind, or mind-culture, is a method in the practice of which concrete ideas and images are presented and introduced in order to fix the mind. The object-matter of this fixation is not important, but it should be chosen according to the inclinations, the abilities, the mental dispositions of the subject who practises concentration. For those who are more emotional than intellectual, the devotional aspect will have greater appeal than a psycho-analytical approach. In early Buddhism with its emphasis on insight, the devotional aspect is not found; or, if it is hinted at at all, it is more likely a later interpolation. The veneration of deities is non-existent in the canonical texts, but we find to the contrary the gods paying homage to the Buddha.

A predominant feature in these spiritual exercises is their rational outlook of analysis. Discursive thinking and concrete images form the concentration stage. Analysis of material things, earth, water, fire and air lead to mental absorption, when matter as such has given way to the mere abstractions of extension, cohesion, caloricity and vibration (*paṭhavi, āpo, tejo, vayo*). Watchfulness on inhaling and exhaling of the breathing process (*ānāpāna-sati*) stands in a class different from the breath control exercises of the yogi; for, in Buddhist concentration on this object-process, there is no retention, no control, no regulation of breathing, but simple watchfulness, which notes the nature

of each breath, as long or short, as smooth or interfered with by foreign thoughts.

The breath is the object-matter, but the object of purpose is watchfulness of the mental states arising during this process; mindfulness is indeed the key-word in concentration. It is an objective way, (not a purposeful way) of looking at a thing freed from considerations of ones personal reactions to that thing. And this opens up a different viewpoint altogether.

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

Their only usefulness exists in the weakening of the different obstacles on the road to perfection. But, far from being perfection themselves, such mental states of absorption may even become obstacles. Still, if skilfully handled, they may be a great help in the overcoming of the hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*), but nothing more than that. If, however, practised with attachment, or sought for the purpose of spiritual delight, they will merely create new ob-

stacles which may prove insurmountable, owing to their subtle and spiritual nature. Thus, a discursive tendency (*vitakka*) may easily become a speculative tendency, where higher truths are merely analysed for one's' intellectual satisfaction, without being lived and realised. Further and sustained application of thought might develop into attachment to one's own opinion and become stubbornness. But even so, there remains the absorbing interest to the exclusion of all other concern. And thus, the objects which held the mind enthralled in sensuality and anger cease to be of importance; and with the casting out of those first hindrances, there is induced the means of attaining quietude. This is the reason why this line of concentration is called the culture of tranquillity (*samatha bhāvanā*). Sensuality and anger are certainly among the most disturbing elements in the way of mental peace.

With the overcoming of these two formidable hindrances, progress will appear easier, but the obstacles will also become more subtle. For, with the apparent defeat of the two most crude passions, there might set in a self-complacency which can only lead to sloth and torpor of body and mind. And thus, interest must be maintained and developed into a delightful zest and spiritual joy (*pīti*). Physical and mental laziness can be overcome by concentration on the various postures of the body; thus, concentration on walking will keep body and mind alert. But this spiritual joy should not be developed into a state of mental inebriation, for that might lead into a further obstacle, the state of agitation and worry. Agitation is the unsettled state of mind which anticipates achievement; it implies the element of desire, which causes mental unrest by looking into the future. Worry, on the other hand, is a mental unrest which repents the past; it is an unsettled state of mind caused by regret. But, concentration must be of the present if it is to develop into an equanimity of spiritual well-being where all desires are suspended. For, then alone, all doubt, leading to wavering and unsteady indecision, can be overcome by the final stage of mental absorption in one-pointedness of mind.

The tranquillity of this thought-process may create the illusion of attainment, but in the comparative freedom from sense-pleasures there may, remain an attachment to emotions. It is this attachment to mental delights which has still to be got rid of in a set of further and more subtle forms of concentration, less material and hence called formless (*arūpa*). Instigated by a desire for virtue, for perfection, for wisdom and truth, they have no limitation in their objects; unbounded space, infinite consciousness, nothingness and imperceptibility, where the goal does not appear to be the purification of thought, but rather the suspension of the entire thinking process (*saññā-vedayita nirodhā*).

As concentrations on abstractions, they surmount the limitations of time and space, the restrictions of logic, and reasoning, the confines of ego-centric selfishness. All the same, it should not be overlooked that, however wonderful may be such absorption and rapturous ecstasy, it is still far from a definite solution, or rather dissolution of the problems of conflict. For such cataleptic suspension of sensation, of perception, of the passions, is also a suspension of mental apprehension of actuality, and is thus, in fact, an escape from conflict rather than a solution. If the conflict is created by the individual mind, the solution must be found there also, not by escaping, but by concentrating on actuality, which then ceases to be an ecstasy of tranquillity to become an actual meditation of insight (*vipassanā-bhāvanā*). Then, the questions of God and Soul, of eternity, of creation cease to have any meaning, for the one question now has become: Why do I want God ...beauty ...truth unless I am *not* truth? Then, the question is not: "Who is God"? Or "what is truth"? But: "who am I"? And the answer to that will be truth.

But that answer cannot be found outside myself, but only in the actual process of actuality. Then, without any thought of "I" or "mine", every experience is seen just as such, without the colourings of likes and dislikes, without the restrictions of choice. It is pure existence, freed from any mode or model. It is the realisation that the unrest of impermanence has become a

conflict, only because of the opposition of "self" and no-self. In the realisation of no-self alone all problems are dissolved.

Although this completes the Noble Eightfold Path, it is still the learner's course of virtue, concentration and insight (*aṭṭhaṅga-sammanagata sekha-paṭipadā*). The course of perfection leading to sainthood has to continue from here on with perfect insight (*sammā-ñāṇa*) and perfect deliverance (*sammā-vimutti*) and comprises therefore ten constituents on the path which is now utterly pure (*parisuddha*) and completely clear of any obstacle (*pariyodata*). It is at this stage that right concentration becomes perfect insight. This is indeed a mystic experience which cannot be described, cannot be communicated, cannot be shared, cannot be taught. It is not an emotion which can be observed, analysed and remembered, but a complete and total transformation, only comparable to the awakening from a dream.

Mental culture through insight (*vipassanā-bhāvanā*) has only three kinds of contemplation, each of which may lead to emancipation. These three forms of contemplation have as objects the three characteristic marks of all component things, namely the mark of impermanence, of disharmony or conflict, and of insubstantiality. But they are so intrinsically linked together, that they form only three different aspects, each one implying the other two. They are the three gateways through which release is effected. This mystic experience of perfect deliverance (*sammā-vimutti*) is not a process, and the transition from the path of deliverance (*ariya-magga*) to its fruition (*ariya-phala*) is instantaneous. The path leading up to this stage, however, has been speculated upon, and an analytical method has been devised of sixteen stages of a gradual realisation, based on cognition and subsequent comprehension of each of the four Noble Truths. But in this, from very early times, opinions in the various schools of original Buddhism have differed, as they differ up to the present time. Texts can be found to illustrate the opinion of a gradual realisation, as well as the standpoint of instant realisation. The question as to whether the defilements should be cleared away before realisation can

begin to dawn, is mere speculation, as in realisation all defilements are cleared. It is the realisation of the void (*suññā*) of the I-concept which makes impossible any movement, any evolution, any rebirth of that concept, of that supreme delusion, of that basic ignorance which caused the anguish, the opposition, the conflict, called *dukkha* . This is the meditation which not only concentrates on the non-substantiality of objects and phenomena, but which abandons even the subject of the meditator, which results in a twofold emancipation: the deliverance of heart and of mind (*ceto-vimutti, paññā-vimutti*), the extinction of the defilements in the emotions and the extinction of ignorance in the purity of insight, which is the perfect deliverance (*sammā-vimutti*). For it is the realisation that there are no hindrances, no problems, no more conflict, because there is no more delusion of "self". It is the end of the road, the end of becoming, *bhava-nirodho Nibbānaṁ.*

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.