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Foreword

This selection of essays by that great Buddhist thinker of Germany, Dr. Paul Dahlke, is issued in commemoration of the Centenary of his birth: from 25th January 1865 to 1965.

The articles presented here, have been taken from the two periodicals *Neu-Buddhistische Zeitschrift* (Neo-Buddhist Journal) and *Die Brockensammlung* (Shard Collection), edited by Dr. Dahlke and entirely written by himself. From these two periodicals, which contain a very large number of articles and other writings, only a small selection can be offered here, and larger essays had to be excluded for reason of space. Earlier translations of the articles selected, as published in "The British Buddhist" and other magazines, have been compared with the German original and, some major changes have been made in them.

The author of the biographical sketch that introduces this booklet, the late *Kurt Fischer*, was for many years a friend and secretary of Dr. Dahlke. After the latter's death he ably edited the bi-monthly magazine *Buddhistisches Leben und Denken* (Buddhist Life and Thought) which, for many years presented to German readers the teachings of the Buddha, according to Dr. Dahlke's interpretation,

Two tributes to Dr. Dahlke, by Bhikkhu *Sīlācāra* and the *Anāgārika Dhammapāla*, have been included here.

Other essays by Dr. Dahlke have appeared in this series, in *The Five Precepts* (Wheel No. 55) and *German Buddhist Writers* (Wheel No. 74/75).

We are well aware that the present selection of short essays will be insufficient to give an idea of the range and significance of Dr. Dahlke's contribution to Buddhist literature which can only be gathered from his larger works. Not all of them have appeared in English versions, and even these have been out of print for many years. We hope that the present publication will be found stimulating by our readers and create a demand for a reprint of the larger works.

—*The Editor*

Dr. Paul Dahlke: His Life and Work

Kurt Fischer

Dr. Paul Dahlke was born on the 25th January, 1865, at Osterode in East Prussia. While still a child, he experienced some of the hardships of life. His father was a civil servant and a large family had to be brought up on a very modest income, so that privation and self-denial were part of the daily life at his home.

After some years at a preparatory school, Paul Dahlke attended the secondary school at Frankfort-on-Main. On the completion of his education there, he took up medical studies; and after his examinations, applied himself to homoeopathy, perceiving instinctively that this method of healing was most suited to his talent.

Dr. Dahlke was one of those physicians who are not mere routine practitioners. He was a real healer, as expressed by the German word "*Arzt*" (a doctor), which is derived from the Greek word *archiatros*, "supreme healer." So it came that this young doctor met with exceptional success and soon his reputation extended far beyond his place of work in Berlin.

But Dr. Dahlke's genius was far too active for confining itself to medical practice alone. It drove him beyond the boundaries of the commonplace into realms of thought which lay quite outside his professional work. Even in his remarkable achievements as a physician, he displayed a keen sense of actuality (*Wirklichkeit*), i.e. of "things as they really are", a mental quality with which only few people are generously endowed. It was moreover, through that sense of the width and depth of actuality, that Dr. Dahlke was drawn to fields outside medicine, to the religious ideas of the East, and finally to the teachings of the Buddha. Schopenhauer's writings had made the first impact on him, but soon he outgrew them in his untiring research and inquiry.

We cannot do better than repeat here the words by which Dahlke himself described his first contact with Buddhism and its effect on him.

"It was not in the shape of an emotional shock or of some decisive event that Buddhism entered my life. Slowly, imperceptibly, like the seed in the ground, did it take root and grew, when, in 1898, I started on my first long voyage. I had already known Buddhism for some time, but in spite of this, at that time, not India but the South Seas were the goal of my desire. Tahiti and Oweih, as described in Chamisso's writings, attracted me more than all the wisdom of India; and when, on June 1898, I landed at Apia on the island of Sama, it appeared to me as the perfect fulfilment of my life.

"After about a year I returned home again, and the Buddha's teaching must have been developing silently in me, unperceived; for already when, in the following year, I set out again on my travels, it was with India as my avowed aim: not India alone, but Buddhism.

"In the spring of 1900 I reached Colombo, and had the great and good fortune to find at once good teachers who could give me instruction on Buddhism: Sri Sumaḍgala Thera of Maligakanda Vihara, at a suburb of Colombo, was already an old man, but his intellect was still astonishingly keen; and Nyanissara Thera, his first co-worker, who took his place after his death, and who now, unfortunately, has also passed away. Then there was the young Bhikkhu Suriyagoda Sumaḍgala of Sri Vardhanarama (Colpetty) with whom I have ever since kept up a close friendship; and finally, the Pundit Wagiswara (Vācissara) who, at that time, lived at Payagala, on the South Coast of Ceylon. To him I owe most of my first understanding of

Buddhism, because it was he who could best adapt himself to the Western view point, and also had a thorough grasp of English.

“It was then, in 1900, that I made my official entry into Buddhism and its teachings. Since that time I have been constantly travelling back and forth between India and my native Germany; and most of the time I was ill, partly due to the climate, partly through my own fault: being dissatisfied with these restless wanderings, and yet ever drawn back to India.”

The outcome of this inner awakening to the Dhamma was a number of books, the real value of which lay in the fact that they made Buddhist thought accessible to the outlook of the Westerner.¹ Most of Dahlke’s major works have been translated into English, and some have also been rendered into Dutch and Japanese.

There will always be people who combine energy and purposefulness with an original and creative mind. To their ranks belong all who are called “great men.” Such was the mind of Dr. Paul Dahlke who occupies quite an exceptional place in the history of Western thought. He possessed not only an incredible store of energy, combined with a keen intellect, and an artist’s sensitivity and creativity; but—and here lies Dahlke’s special greatness, he also had a keen sense of actuality which rose above all conventions. As a result of that exceptional combination of qualities, he had a strong urge towards inner purity and honesty which did not allow him to shrink from the most radical consequences of his thought .

Up to the year 1914, Dr. Dahlke undertook several journeys to many of the great countries of the world. He once said jocularly of himself: “I was like a comet, swishing through the world.” But the strongest attraction for him were the places of ancient Buddhist culture, chiefly Ceylon. Shortly before the outbreak of the first World War, Dahlke had returned to Germany, and owing to the changed conditions consequent on the outbreak of war, he found himself confined to his home country. The only way by which he could adapt himself to circumstances seemed to him the resumption of his medical practice, given up completely during the latter years; and soon it became known among his avid patients, that Dr. Dahlke was again employing his great medical knowledge and skill in the service of the ailing.

But more and more the knowledge grew in Dahlke that there was no greater need for the peoples of the West than a true understanding of Buddhism. His earlier writings had already served to introduce this teaching; and now Dr. Dahlke saw the necessity for producing reliable German translations of the Buddhist scriptures. Though there existed in German language a great many translations from the Pali texts, almost all, and especially the well-known renderings by Karl Eugen Neumann, were more or less tainted with admixtures foreign to the spirit of the pure Teaching. Thus originated Dr. Dahlke’s translations of the Dhammapada, and parts of the Dīgha-Nikāya and Majjhima-Nikāya. These books were not mere translations; they were at the same time works of doctrinal instruction in which the author, in copious explanatory notes, embodied the results of twenty years’ study and personal experience. At that time he also started a quarterly periodical, the New Buddhist Journal” (*Neu-Buddhistische Zeitschrift*), entirely written by himself. In that magazine, he showed in a unique, and ever fresh and stimulating way, how Buddhism can have a decisive influence on the solution of all great problems of life.

But a spirit so bent on the realization of what he knew to be the Truth, could not for long be satisfied with mere literary work in the cause of Buddhism. Soon arose in him the idea of a “Buddhist House” which was to be a meeting place for those who were no longer in accord with their inherited religion and felt that materialism was not in keeping with true human dignity.

¹ See the list of Dr. Dahlke’s works at the end of this book.

A few years after the end of the first World War, just when the difficulties due to inflation of the German currency were at their peak, a favourable opportunity for acquiring about nine acres of wooded land at Frohnau presented itself, in a suburb of Berlin. Now Dr. Dahlke devoted all his energies to the realization of this great idea: to establish a home for Buddhism in Germany. The task was completed very slowly, in gradual progress. The difficulties with which he had to contend, may be estimated from the fact that the currency inflation in Germany had almost obliterated his financial means for carrying out the project. Thus the money needed for constructing the House had first to be earned, day by day, by hard work, in Dr. Dahlke's consultation room.

Nevertheless he was determined to carry out his plan, and in August 1924 the construction of the Buddhist House was far enough advanced that Dr. Dahlke and a few of his disciples were able to move in. It was his intention that the House should be a monument, a visible expression, of the Teaching; and new plans constantly issued from his fertile brain, for expanding the first lay-out. Besides the House proper, containing the living quarters and a library, a Meeting Hall was built close-by, and separate rooms and cells for accommodating guests who wished to stay there for some time, for quiet contemplation and for receiving instruction in the Buddhist teachings.

The Buddhist House was conceived as a place devoted to inner purification, as far as this could be achieved in a life of compromise between the life of a Buddhist monk and Western conditions. It could not well be a monastery since both the material and spiritual requirements were lacking. Therefore it was to be a mid-way solution between a monastery and a layman's habitation, The Five Precepts were to be the basic rules of conduct for the residents, and their further endeavours for inner purification was to bestow a characteristic atmosphere to the House. The difficulty of doing this under Western conditions can be appreciated only by those who have tried it. In a world where the lusts of life and a brutal struggle for existence were dominant, the courageous attempt of Dr. Dahlke and the small band of his followers was like the struggle of a small boat against the mountainous waves of a stormy sea.

It is, therefore, not surprising that Dr. Dahlke's strength was entirely consumed by his last few years' work in connection with the Buddhist House, Dr. Dahlke had mentioned several times to his friends how weak his heart was; and in fact, without the high degree of inner composure which he owed to Buddhism, he could never have worked as long as he did. For about a year, a severe cold had troubled him, over which he was unable to get control. It was only his constant thought on the Dhamma and his plans connected therewith, which enabled him to withstand for some time the relapses that occurred after a grave crisis in his illness. Also another project, that of founding a House of Retreat on the North Sea island of Sylt, and literary plans, occupied him constantly. But death prevented the realization of these plans. Early in 1928, Dr. Paul Dahlke passed away from the scene of his labours.

Until now hardly an attempt has been made to give an adequate appreciation of Dr. Dahlke's unique personality and of the significant place he held in the mental life of the West and in the forceful and penetrative presentation of the Buddha's Teaching. May the time come soon when his great work is fully understood and utilized for the benefit of humanity.

Dr. Paul Dahlke

by J. F. McKechnie (Bhikkhu Sīlācāra)

In Dr. Paul Dahlke, the Buddhist cause in Europe possessed one of the most efficient and able pens, backed by what was certainly the most able and efficient brain that had so far appeared in Europe to champion and propagate the ideas contained in the Buddha-dhamma. And now that pen is still, that brain has ceased from its endless activity in exploring every promising line of Buddhist thought, and seeking to probe it to the bottom. Dr. Dahlke was a great man, and like all great men, he did not advertise himself. The great do not need to do so. What they are, they are, and all men with eyes to see can see what they are. It is only the would-be great, and the essentially little, who need to call attention to themselves. So Dr. Dahlke never in any way strove to make men look at him. He just went on his way ceaselessly working in his own way for the propagation of the ideas in which he believed, and the result was a body of writing which will long remain as one of the most lucid, and at the same time (most unusually) the most profound exposition, of Buddhism that European Buddhism has thus far obtained.

For Dr. Dahlke was not content just to take what was given him in the Buddhist Scriptures and swallow it whole. He sought to digest it, and incorporate it into his own mental life, as a part of that life: and to do this, turned everything over and over in his mind until he had seen all the implications, full and complete, of every statement in Buddhist books which he deemed worthy of attention. Nay, not only that! When he had seen the truth of any of those statements, he then proceeded to put them into effective embodiment in his own life. As an acute thinker, he early realized the limitations of mere intellectualism. He saw that the intellect is only a limb of life, not life itself; and that an idea is not fully rounded and complete until it is expressed in life, in living; that up till then it is more or less of a toy, an interesting plaything, but not yet brought into real, complete earnest being. It was into full being that he sought to bring his ideas of the Dhamma by giving them actual expression in his life; and it was to this end that he founded, after much difficulty overcome, his "Buddhist House."

He felt that if the Buddha produced the effect he had upon human history through the effect The Buddha produced upon the history of Asia, it was not only because he spoke the words he spoke, but because he lived the life He led; and with all reverence Dr. Dahlke felt that the Buddha's European followers who are His followers in more than name, had to do the same—albeit at a great distance behind the Master's great example—in also making their lives a living presentment of the Dhamma, as the only possible effective way of making Buddhist ideas impress themselves upon their fellow-continentals. In short, he felt that we must not only talk "Buddhism," but be Buddhists, be embodiments, to the very best of our ability, of the ideas we believe in, and spare no pains towards making ourselves more and more complete embodiments of these ideas.

When, if ever, the history of Buddhist life in Europe comes to be written, among the names that will stand highest will be that of Paul Dahlke.

Dr. Paul Dahlke and his Buddhist House

Anāgārika Dharmapāla

Dr. Paul Dahlke of Berlin is well known all over the world as a thinker of great originality and as author of *Buddhist Essays*, which was translated into English by Bhikkhu Silācāra. The Sinhala Buddhists have every reason to be proud of the achievements of Dr. Dahlke of Germany, for it was in Ceylon that he learned Pali under such well-known scholars as the Thera Sumaḍgala and Pandit Wāgiswara. For more than twenty years he has been reading and translating Pali texts, and in Europe there is no more spiritually-minded Pali scholar than Dr. Dahlke. He has travelled all over Ceylon, visited the ancient Vihāras, and has been to historic Buddhist places in India and Burma.

It is the personality of Dr. Dahlke that attracts people to him. In his daily life he is a living example to his disciples, strictly observing the Five Precepts, and still attending to his professional duties. It will be hard to find a better Buddhist than Dr. Dahlke. He is a strict vegetarian and takes no alcohol. His literary labours have won him fame in Germany.

His disciples stay with him in the Buddhist House, which he has erected on an elevated and picturesque site near the Kaiser Park in Frohnau, not far from Berlin. The Buddhist House stands on a hillock, calling on the people "to come and see." The architectural features of the building are a surprisingly successful mixture of Sinhalese, Japanese, Chinese and Asokan. The stone pillars of the gate at the entrance are a miniature reproduction of the *Sāñchī torana* of the Asoka period; the portico is of stone with engravings of pictures as found in the great Ruvanweli Dagoba in Ceylon's sacred city of Anuradhapura. The stepping stone with its rows of royal animals and flowers and a fully opened lotus at the centre, is a replica of the moon stones found in the Viharas at Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa. The lecture hall is in shape similar to a Chinese temple, and at the far end of the hall is an engraving in marble of a Buddha image, and on either side of it is a marble tablet giving stanzas from the Dhammapada and Sutta-Nipāta with a German translation. At a little distance from the hall is an isolated brick hut, with a wall all round, intended for students who wish to devote themselves to jhāna contemplation. This is like the *padhāna-ghara* (meditation hut), mentioned in later Pali texts, for the use of Bhikkhus who devote themselves to meditation. There is nothing to disturb the mind of the spiritual student. The grounds are about six acres in extent, and undulating. The atmosphere is exhilarating and the breeze that comes from the pine woods is invigorating. Frescoes of the Sāñchī Stupa and replicas of various sacred figures from Ceylon and Japan are to be seen on the walls of the first and second storeys of the House. All the expenses of building the House were met by Dr. Dahlke himself.

Every evening Dr. Dahlke gives Dhamma instruction to his pupils. They read selected verses or passages from the Pali texts, and Dr. Dahlke explains them from the Theravada standpoint. The German pupils practise the *Ānāpānasati Bhāvanā* (Mindfulness on in-and out-breathing), sitting in the *padmādsana* (lotus posture) as required by the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (the Discourse on the Foundations of Mindfulness). There is a special guest room on the second floor provided with every convenience.

—Adapted from "The Mahā" BMW (1925)

Essays and Poems

by Dr. Paul Dahlke

Preserve Your Human State!

Very few men are clearly aware of the great boon they possess in the fact that they are born as men, born in a state endowed with thinking and consciousness. Most will say: "Well! How else should it be? I have been born from my parents, and they again from their parents, and so on. Thus I am a man; I belong to the human race."

But that is an idea which, though not factually incorrect, is yet essentially defective and to that extent erroneous. To be sure, man springs from his parents. To be sure, his children spring from him. To be sure, the stream of life where once it manifests itself as a human being, seems to flow on for ever as a human being. But this is an illusion. The life-stream of a species, apparently for ever restricted to itself, whether it be the human species or any kind of animal species, comprises only what manifests itself in sense experience. According to external experience, men stem only from men; according to external experience, men procreate only men. And exactly the same holds true for all species of animals and plants. But, as we said, this applies only to what presents itself to the senses in ordinary experience. And all this is only the expression, the manifestation of forces which may be emerging from unknown depths.

Let us, for example, take as comparison a rainbow. As a rainbow, it is always the same in colour and shape. But this applies only to what is manifest to the sense: in normal experience. In actual truth, it is made up of single particles of water which are in a state of perpetual change, and flow in from all sides.

Similarly, the Buddha teaches this: What manifests itself through the senses in ordinary experience as the human race, as the animal kingdom—these are not rigid, unchangeable and unalterable facts—they are only processes, phases of development within the field of life's possibilities. Man does not give rise to man in the sense in which it is taught by science. For here, as everywhere, science labours under the disability of an inner contradiction, in as much as one school within the ranks of science teaches the constancy and unchangeability of species, while the other, grouped around Darwin's name, teaches the gradual evolution of species. Hence the dictum, "Man gives rise to man," is no longer entirely correct, since in the course of some billions of years, from some kind of lower animal or other, man at last arose, and thus a change of species occurred.

All this, however, is by the way. Once more it may be stated: Man does not give rise to man. A man is only the means, the tool for helping a certain Karma, an individual force, a living destiny that is fit for human birth to appear in the human race to make its break-through humanity. The real question is, "Whence springs this Karma, this individual force, this dependent process?" It may, likewise, have come from a human source, but may as well have arisen from a life-potential below or above the human level. It is certainly an incontestable fact of experience: a human can only give rise to a human. Man can only be born of man, because his natural possibilities do not permit him anything else. But it should be considered well that the part he plays herein is not an active one, but passive. He is nothing but an instrument and tool for the karmic forces (called by the Buddha *viññāṇa*, Consciousness), which want to become actuality in him, seeking to enter into existence and manifestation through him. Parents are not the real begetters and progenitors; they have only the role of a midwife, aiding in the process of

birth. They are the biological stage upon which the newly arisen being plays its part. As we have said, these new forces may well have had a human origin; and we may assume that this will be so in by far the majority of the cases of human birth. Human Kamma most frequently adapts itself to human generative material; but it is not an iron law that this should be so; it may also spring from a source below or above the human state.

In Buddhism, five distinct Domains of Beings (or Realms of animate Existence, *sattavacara*) are known, and thereby five possibilities of rebirth: three below the human state, and one above. The three below are the realm of spirits or ghosts (the sporting ground of spiritualism), the animal kingdom, and the world of the hells where only experiences of pain and misery occur, while among animals or ghosts, now and then, *also* pleasurable experiences may occur. The one realm of life above the human one, is *Sagga-loka*, the lofty worlds of the gods which are, again, divided into the lower ones (of the Sense-sphere), and the higher, the Brahma-worlds.

The non-Buddhist may say that these are vain fancies of the mind. But I say: They are not. For understanding it, one must consider what this action (Kamma) that conditions our rebirth, essentially is. The Buddha himself says: "It is *cetanā* that I call Kamma." That is to say: it is directed thought (or as we say today: intentional thinking) that is called Kamma. It is thinking that decides. From thinking issue words and deeds. Thinking takes the lead. Thinking is a blessing and a curse. It is the quality of our thinking, noble or base, that decides the type of rebirth—Noble thinking, noble rebirth or Low thinking, low rebirth! The right to rebirth as a human must ever and, again be earned anew by thought and action worthy of a human being.

Just as the bird high up in the air must continually keep moving its wings in order to maintain itself at that height; similarly must man constantly practise high thinking and humane action, in order to maintain himself in his high position as a man; in order to make sure of another rebirth as man and not to slip back into lower domains of life. Such a task is difficult to carry out in the frenzy and unrest of our times, in this world of brutality and avid search for pleasure. The Buddha exhorts again and again to observe three things that are indispensable for a true human being that deserves this name: guarding the sense-doors, moderation in eating, and moderation in sleeping (wakefulness). In the *Samyuttanikāya* it is said:

"Endowed with three things, a monk lives happily already in this life, with his insight directed towards the eradication of passion. What three? He guards his sense doors, he observes moderation in eating and trains himself in wakefulness.

"And how, O monks, does a monk keep guard over his sense doors? Seeing a form with the eye, hearing a sound with the ear, smelling an odour with the nose, tasting a flavour with the tongue, feeling a touch with the body, cognizing a mind-object with the mind, he does not seize on its general appearance nor on its details. That which might, if he dwells unrestrained as to the eye-faculty (ear-faculty, etc.), give occasion for covetous, sad, evil and unwholesome thoughts to invade him, that he sets himself to restrain. He trains himself in the avoidance of all that, he guards his senses, he practises this restraint.

"Just as if on level ground, at the crossing of four roads, a well-built vehicle stands all ready with driving-whip complete, and a skilled driver who is a well-practised horse-trainer, should mount it, and seizing the reins with the left hand and the whip with the right, should go this way and that, back and forth, wherever he wished; even so does the monk train himself in guarding the six sense doors, he practises the restraint, control and calming of them.

"This, O monks, is called the guarding of the sense doors.

"And how, O monks, does a monk observe moderation in eating? Wisely reflecting does the monk partake of his food, neither for lust, nor for enjoyment, nor for ostentation,

nor for comeliness; but only as far as it serves for the continuance and maintenance of the body, for protecting it from harm, so as to be able to lead the holy life, (thinking): "Thus I shall put a stop to old feelings and shall not arouse new feelings; and I shall be healthy and blameless and live in comfort."

"Just as a man puts salve on a wound for effecting a speedier cure, or as a man greases the axle of his cart for effecting an easier conveyance of the load, similarly does a monk take food, wisely reflective: neither for lust, nor enjoyment, nor for ostentation, nor for comeliness; but only as far as it serves for the continuance and maintenance of the body ... Thus, O monks, does a monk observe moderation in eating.

"And how does a monk practise wakefulness? "Walking up and down during day-time, the monk purifies his mind from things that hinder. Also during the first watch of the night, walking up and down, he purifies his mind from things that hinder. In the middle watch of the night, after the manner of the lion he lies down on his right side, one foot placed on the other, mindful and fully aware, thinking of the time of arising. In the last watch of the night, after he has risen, he again, while walking up and down, purifies his mind from things that hinder. Thus does a monk practise wakefulness.

"Endowed with these three things, lives a monk happily already in this life, with his insight directed towards the eradication of passion."

Now you will ask me: "Who can do all that? In the mornings when I wake up, it will be high time to get up. I have to dress in a hurry, eat my breakfast in a hurry, squeeze myself into an over-crowded tram car or subway train to get to my place of work. There I shall rush about hither and thither all day long, and shall hardly have time to eat my midday buns. Coming home in the evening, rather starved, I shall try, at my belated night meal, to make up for the food that I could not eat during the day. Soon after, I shall exhausted fall into sleep, in order to start next day on the same dizzy round—except if some special attraction draws me at night to the cinema, the theatre or a lecture. Leading such a life, how can I cope with those demands you mentioned?"

Quite so. Leading such a life, one cannot cope with such demands. Hence, all depends lastly upon our making up our minds, early and deliberately, and as far as it is in our power, so to shape our lives that we shall not get into such a treadmill, but shall preserve for ourselves some breathing space and some leisure.

True, not all will be able to make this possible; but still, a considerable number of people can do it, and perhaps more than one might think, if only there is the will and determination. There are men to whom the way to a life of self-collectedness is inexorably closed by a bad Kamma. For them it means to hurry and worry from morning to night, if they wish to keep themselves alive. But there are also those, and they are not few either, who can easily find time and opportunity for self-collectedness if only they have the will.

I may say that the ruling idea in the founding of our "Buddhist House" at Frohnau, was to provide a possibility for a life of self-collectedness, or at least to improve the conditions for leading such a life.

—From *Die Brockensammlung*, 1929.

Buddhism and Pseudo-Buddhism

The fact that everywhere in the universe forces are at work that cannot be comprehended, provides a constant incentive to faith. Because one does not comprehend force (energy), one

assumes that it is incomprehensible in itself, and hence that it is itself unconditioned, and absolute.

Now the trend in modern man clearly moves away from faith towards understanding. Where formerly men were ready and willing to believe, to-day they wish to understand. But the preliminary condition is that they understand force, the dynamic nature of life. As long as they are unable to understand, only two choices remain open for them: indifference or the will to believe.

Buddhism, in its essential nature, is based upon the fundamental intuitive insight of the Buddha Gotama, into the nature of force (energy). Basically, Buddhism is nothing but a doctrine dealing with force, that is to say, with the process of insight. Everything else in it is derived from that.

In brief, the Buddha's teaching about force (energy) is as follows:

Every living being is a purely flame-like process that keeps burning by virtue of a strictly individual force, peculiar to that being. In the terminology of Buddhism, this force is called *Kamma* (Sanskrit: *Karma*) which means nothing else but Wherever processes of conscious life exist, this individual kammic force by which a living being exists, manifests itself in a fivefold way: First, as the power to organize a material form peculiar to itself and to preserve it against the impact of the outer world; second, as the power to feel; third, as the power to perceive; fourth, as the power to sort out these perceptions, and to discriminate them; fifth, as the power to convert them into conceptions.

These five Aggregates (*khandha*), usually called: corporeality, feeling, perception, mental formations and consciousness, comprise the entire living being as far as it is action, that is a dynamic process. The salient point here is that the living being does not *have* all these physical and mental capacities as qualities or functions, but that it *consists of* them and is entirely comprised by that fivefold dynamism, exactly as it is with the flame. I do not *have* my fivefold action as the function of an identical ego, a doer or actor, but I am myself the action, the deed.

The ego-process as experienced by me in its five forms of activity, represents—in modern terminology—a particular value of potential energy which, in its friction with the external world, again and again passes over into the living energy of the volitional activities. These latter fully correspond to the new ignition moments of the flame. Just as the flame lives through its ignition moments which continually spring up anew, so does man live through the recurrent moments of his volitional activities or, in Buddhist terminology: he lives through his thirst for life (*taṇhā*). The Buddha said expressly: "It is Thirst (Craving) that creates man."

If one has thus comprehended the ego-process, i.e. oneself, then every possibility of foisting upon it a metaphysical substance has disappeared for ever. One understands the whole mechanism, Everything that is going on there can be summed up in the one statement: it acts, it burns. In this insight, the totality of experience is comprehended as an infinitely vast sum of individual processes. Each of them exists only by virtue of a strictly individualized force peculiar to itself alone, which manifests itself to the individual as consciousness and volition. These are the individual.

But men feel a need to look beyond this life and get an answer to the questions: "Whence? Whither?" According to whether the answer is derived from actuality or whether it overrides actuality and resorts to metaphysical concepts, one distinguishes between a religion of insight and a religion of faith.

For being able to extract the answer to the questions "Whence?" and "Whither?" from actuality itself, one must have understood force (energy) which is the salient feature of the

Buddha's intuitive insight. Briefly put, it consists in the teaching of rebirth according to deeds. Father and mother only furnish the material for a new living being. The force which unfolds the possibilities residing in that material springs from previous forms of existence and lays hold of material wherever, according to its specific affinity, it must lay hold.

In that way, every living being points back to a series of which there is no beginning. Force, whatever it be, can never and nowhere be created anew. Wherever it exists it can never have been non-existent. It only changes the material upon which it works. But this should be well understood: Force, within the constant change of its manifestations, does not persist as a "force" *per se*, i.e., an identical entity, but, in the volitional activities, it springs up again and again, from its own antecedent conditions and in strict accordance with them. It is not a "soul" or any transmigrating entity that connects like a solid strand, the several rebirths, but it is the volitional activity that bestows continuity upon that process.

It may be objected: "Is not also this doctrine of rebirth a matter of faith?" I reply: No. You may take it as a working hypothesis, and very soon you will notice that it is the one working hypothesis which, in face of the puzzling problems set by the life process, saves us from accepting "Faith" as a solution. Birth, then, becomes comprehensible. Instead of the two great incomprehensibilities, the Whence and the Whither, there is here only one great comprehension. For the rest, the Buddha's teaching of a force that makes for continuity of the respective life process, along with a constant change of the material, is nothing but the law of the conservation of energy as known to physics, but applied here to the domain of biology.

After these explanations we come now to our subject proper, the distinction between Buddhism and Pseudo-Buddhism. This distinction is now easy to define. True Buddhism exists wherever there is the understanding that in the world process there is nothing whatsoever of the nature of a metaphysical core; an unconditioned, eternal substance and Absolute. The great mystery of force that has provided the ever fresh incentive to the assumption of something transcendental, is solved. Thinking has comprehended itself as Force, and henceforth comprehends the entire world process as something that, in all its activities, is the manifestation of a beginningless conformity to law. Dhamma (Skr: *dharma*) means the Buddha's Teaching as well as law, thing, phenomenon., and process. Everything in the world is of a conditioned nature, partly in the passive sense (conditioned through external circumstances), and partly in the reflexive sense (conditioned by itself), Conditionally, in this double sense, is expressed in Pali by the term *saḍkhāra*. There is nothing whatsoever that is unconditioned, a "thing-in-itself."

On the other hand, it is characteristic of Pseudo-Buddhism that, while making use of Buddhist technical terms and ideas, it tries to save some sort of an unconditioned, metaphysical or universal principle.

These attempts generally start from the concepts of Nibbāna or Parinibbāna.

After one has understood oneself as a beginningless process of combustion,² "there remains as the one goal of life, the cessation of this beginningless burning-its extinction. Because man lives, and since time infinite has lived, by reason of the thirst for life (or Craving: *taṇhā*). That extinction will only take place when the thirst for life, or Craving, ceases through a penetrative insight into the true nature of life. This state of freedom from craving is Nibbāna, and the moment when the body of such an Arahāt, breaks up, is called Parinibbāna, "complete extinction." What happens is that an ego-process that, from time unfathomable, has lived by power of that thirst for life, has now through insight overcome it finally and, when dying, does no longer assume any new form but becomes extinguished for ever, without any trace. That is the meaning of Parinibbāna in the genuine teaching of the Buddha. But if one derived from it a

² In the sense of the Buddha's "Fire Sermon." (Ed.)

metaphysical principle, a something into which at death the perfect one enters for ever, a state of immutability, then we are dealing with Pseudo-Buddhism. In that case, illegitimate use is made of Buddhist terminology, for causing a break in the consistency of the Buddha's thought and for satisfying the yearning of the human mind for something abiding.

Another school of Pseudo-Buddhism makes of the Law (Dhamma or Dharma) a separate entity that directs the world process like a kind of cosmic power. What is erroneous in this idea, is evident from the "force doctrine" of the Buddha. The world process conveys the impression of a higher lawfulness because in each of its parts and functions it is the law itself. For the rest, the Buddha Himself has said: "Let my Law be a raft to you, for the purpose of escape, not for the purpose of retention."

I can understand a thing only as far as it is conditioned. I understand it wholly if I cognize it as wholly conditioned. Only if one comprehends the world process as through and through conditioned in its nature, as something that carries within itself the conditions of its existence, and extends no roots or feelers into a transcendental beyond, then only is a religion of reason possible. As long as one accepts an unconditioned substance, a religion of faith is present; whether one calls this unconditioned entity God or Parinibbāna or Dharma, does not make any difference. It is, therefore, quite understandable that this Pseudo-Buddhism finds it easy to go hand in hand with pantheistic, mystic or theosophical schools. If I here expressly emphasize that Buddhism has absolutely nothing to do with all this, I do not say so with an intention of belittling these schools. I do so only in order to single out Buddhism as that teaching of reason and understanding which stands out as wholly unique among the numerous faith doctrines.

Life has become completely comprehensible because it has completely comprehended itself. Actuality is cognised as what it is. As such a Teaching of Actuality, Buddhism lays claim to the consideration of modern man.

—From *Die Brockensammlung*, 1933

What We Need

When the living body lacks certain substances, it falls prey to illness manifesting itself in pathological symptoms. It is similar with the body of mankind when anything necessary for its health is lacking: it falls sick and this sickness shows its presence by pathological conditions. The pathological conditions under which the body of mankind suffers today, stand clearly out before all eyes: love of pleasure, love of gain, lying, dishonesty, violence, distrust, oppression of peoples, sexual immorality, lack of respect for elders, and many other social ills.

What is lacking in the body of mankind that so many symptoms of disease reveal themselves? We answer in one word: morality. What the world needs is morality. But from where can mankind get it?

Up to the time of the first world war one could still in a manner say that the fount from which the world's morality sprung was "godly fear," taking these words in their proper significance of "fear of God." But this already rather turbid and scanty spring of morality was as good as cut off by the first world war. The various religious denominations allowed themselves to get entangled with national interests and thereby compromised themselves too much to still dare to recommend themselves as sources of morality. Moreover, thinking men had already come to their own conclusions. They perceived that the religions which during the world war boasted, in tragi-comical fashion, of their God and his special assistance to their own nation, have all contributed not to the stability and improvement of moral standards, but to an undeniable deterioration of them. The leaders of nations during the first world war could not have

committed so many infamies if they had not been backed up by their religions. Religion provided them with the easy conscience required for doing wrong. Hence as the latest solution appeared the slogan: "Away from religion! The amalgamation of morality with religion is an evil! Complete separation of the two is what is needed!"

The outcome in practice of this view was the nonreligious school in which, in place of religion, purely moral instruction was given.

One must certainly take cognizance of the facts on the basis of which this result has been arrived at. Men would be better if the God-belief would not so often prove an assistance to being bad. But are the conclusions here drawn quite correct? Firstly: will purely moral instruction, without a religious background, be in a position to foster morality? And secondly: is it really religion that is to blame for this decline of morality?

To be able to answer this question, we must first ask: "What is morality?" And to this question I answer: Morality is selflessness, or at the very least, the deliberate, serious struggle against self-seeking. There is, after all, only one immorality out of which the thousand-fold forms of evil-doing flow, -and this is self-seeking. Man, however, does not have self-seeking as a mere quality which he can lay aside or slough off: but he is embodied self-seeking. Hence if he wages war against self-seeking, this means that he wages war against himself, against his very own being. For doing this, however, he must have a very strong motive, otherwise this combat against himself will become a mere sport, as it were, which will be pursued as long as it can be carried on without too much inconvenience; but will be thrown aside the moment the struggle for existence makes such a step necessary.

Morality is getting into this bad predicament where bare moral instruction is given in modern schools. It then becomes a mere sport, a matter of good taste, of personal decency, of common-sense: but the compelling force of necessity is wholly lacking. When the hour of trial arrives, when it is a question of "to be or not to be," then one breaks through all restraints, breaks one's pledged word, commits perjury, attacks others violently. It may happen on a large scale what is done in small matters: when, for instance, we wish to get at night into the last tramcar: if there is room enough for all, then, politely and considerately, we allow others to pass in before us. But if there are not enough seats for all, then everybody makes a wild rush to secure a seat and uses his elbows with utter disregard of others.

What is actual is what acts. If a morality is to be actual (that is genuine), it must act; that means, it must assist in the combat against self-seeking. This service bare moral instruction in schools can never perform. The "morality" which such instruction yields, is not genuine morality.

That is one of the defects of an abstract moral instruction in school. Another is that it underrates, nay, completely misunderstands the nature and meaning of religion.

There are many, many definitions of religion, and none of them entirely covers the meaning of that term. What, however, genuine religion is, of that there is one sure, distinguishing mark: tolerance. A religion that does not make men tolerant is not true religion. Tolerance, however, is nothing but tolerance in demonstration. Hence, religion, if it is to be actual and genuine, must produce selflessness.

Here we come face to face with that function of religion which for mankind as a social phenomenon is the most important of all. Man needs religion; for it is that irreplaceable value which produces morality out of itself. To push religion to one side and try to run morality by itself, means to begin to build a house by starting with the roof. Hence men ought not to begin by hunting religion out of the schools, but by introducing into them actual religion, genuine religion, which can demonstrate its actuality, its genuineness precisely by teaching how to wage

successful war against self-seeking. But, as said before, there must be a strong motive for morality; and it must be powerful enough to act with compelling force.

In the last analysis, man can only be compelled to what he compels himself. That is to say, he can only be compelled by his own thinking. The compulsion which the faith-religions exercise as begetters of morality proceeds from emotion; to be precise, from fear of God. Fear is an emotion. Emotions, however, are liable to radical change: they can turn into their very opposite; they can also entirely disappear. Hence, if the religions of faith no longer perform the function of instilling morality, the reason for this lies not in the mere fact that they are religions, but in the fact that they are religions based on emotion. The most intimate, the most important thing by far about a man is his thinking. If a religious structure is to have any soundness, any solidity, it must be erected upon a foundation of clear thinking. Man's indisputable and firm possession is only what he has laid hold of by his own thinking. If on the basis of any kind of thought-process he once has comprehended that he must be moral, such morality will never permit itself to be shaken. It well may happen that the man may be too weak to carry it out in its entirety; but it will never permit him to tell lies to himself.

Hence everything depends upon finding a religion which begets morality as a *necessity of thinking*; and that religion is Buddhism. Because from the insight into egolessness follows that a man does not *have* his words, thoughts and deeds as functions of an "I" or self, or any independent and separate agent; but that he is action itself, through and through nothing but action. But if he is action itself, the reward of good, that is, of selfless action; the punishment of evil, that is, of self-seeking action, does not need to be searched for and found somewhere else; for he himself precisely *becomes* his own action, as the blossom becomes the fruit, an "I" or self as a "doer" who "has" deeds just like any other "alienable property" of his, but in the core of his being remains unaffected by them,—such a thing there is not. There is nothing but this action, running its self-actuated course in the fivefold play of the physical and mental Aggregates (*khandha*) constituting the so-called personality. "*Suddha-dhamma pavattanti*," "Bare processes roll on." His good and evil actions may or may not, affect others; they will always affect himself, and, that, inescapably.

This idea, thought-out and lived accordingly; produces morality as a necessity of thinking, as a logical inevitability. I *must* be selfless. My thinking compels me to it. If I am not, I shall hurt myself. And if I cannot act as I ought, at least I shall carry with me the awareness that this is so; and this will be a seed of renewed efforts towards a good and selfless life.

To sum up: What mankind needs before everything else is actual morality. In order to arrive at this, however, there is need of right understanding, that is to say, of Buddhism. Only from this soil grows an *actual* morality, which is realistic and effective. And so, let it be each man's care to see to it that he actualises that understanding within himself, in tolerance, in readiness to renounce, in compassion; and that he helps in spreading it to the best of his ability by pointing it out to others and by gifts given in its service.

Homage to Him, the Teacher.

Is the Buddhist Selfish?

One of the objections, that is to say reproaches, most frequently met with, when presenting Buddhism, is this:

"The Buddhist criticizes the Christian for living a moral life only because of his hope of eternal life with God. To do good for this reason is selfishness. But the Buddhist himself acts just

as selfishly when he does what is right in order to secure a good rebirth. That is to say, he acts rightly not for the sake of the good, but for the sake of self."

At first sight, this objection seems justified; and for one who is only half-informed about Buddhism, it is sufficient to reject Buddhism altogether. But actually this objection is quite unjustified, and only shows a complete misunderstanding of the nature of Buddhism. Selfishness means, of course, what the word itself suggests: it is a craving, longing, planning and grasping in the service of self, in the service of self-preservation. Selfishness is necessarily bound up with the idea of self-preservation. But good action in the Buddhist sense, is not meant for preserving the self, but for getting free from self. The Buddhist is not concerned with a self that has to be purified and ennobled, but with a self that has to be worked off, worn away, got rid of. Selfishness is, here, not a property that man has, a sort of taint, a stain on the splendour of a shining "self," but from the point of view of Buddhist insight, man is selfishness itself. And to get rid of selfishness, does not mean in Buddhism that a self should get cured of selfishness and arrive at an "ego" pure and free from selfishness; but it means in the most serious and strictest sense: to rid oneself of one's self, to be free of self.

Doing good is an external symptom. Every symptom has aspects of different significance. It is quite a different thing whether one does good, as in the case of the Christian, in order to become a purified self (a blessed soul), or with the object of doing away with self as does the Buddhist. To speak of the latter attitude as selfishness has no sense.

Besides, if one has understood Buddhism correctly, one will understand that there is no room for an external purpose, for any "in order to." The Buddhist does not act rightly in order to gain something better, to recover himself in an everlasting form, but he discards self because he knows that "to be rid of self" is a definite possibility and hence it becomes a necessity. He knows that this "Rid of self" is the fulfilment of the innermost conditions of man's existence, the fulfilment of his ultimate possibilities. Existence is such that it does not allow for the attainment of any (worldly) goal for the sake of which one feels that one exists. Existence is such that, if rightly understood, it tends towards "the ending," the ceasing of existence. Hence an "in order to" would be as much out of place here as in the case of a dying flame. The flame does not burn in order to go out; but it becomes extinct because this, too, is included in the condition of its existence. For a soul as assumed by the faith religions, being-in-existence is natural because it is a necessity; and to live so as to reach a higher level of life is a logical consequence. In the case of a flame, or in the case of life pictured as a flame, existence is not natural because it is not necessary. Here existence is something artificial and it is *maintained* artificially: and ceasing of existence is the ultimate and highest, the deepest and innermost fulfilment of the conditions of existence. The Buddhist does not give up "in order to" give up. By doing so he would, as it were, stumble over his own legs; he would forge for himself a new chain that is more subtle than any other. To give up for the sake of giving up, would mean non-willing for the sake of non-willing, whereby one would succumb to, "willing", worse than before. For "willing" is of such a nature that non-willing is also a form of willing. Willing has no opposite; either it is present or it is not.

The Buddhist does not practise non-willing because he does not wish to will (or to desire), but because he no longer can will (or desire). His way of thinking, his new attitude of mind, his new sense of reality make any willing (as a desire) impossible for him, whether in the form of willing or of non-willing.

Thereby it becomes likewise impossible for him to take up an optimistic or pessimistic attitude towards actuality. The Buddhist is neither an optimist nor a pessimist; he is an "actualist," a realist. That is to say, he himself is actuality, and by intuitively responding to it, that is to himself, he exhausts the ultimate possibility inherent in actuality, the possibility of

cessation; and this, not because he deliberately wills it, but because he has recognized it as the ultimate possibility.

What is true of the goal is also true of the way leading to it. If the Buddhist really is a Buddhist, he will act rightly not for the sake of a favourable rebirth—ever and again does the Buddha warn against this—but simply because his new insight compels him to act rightly; and the favourable rebirth follows as a natural consequence, just as blue sky will appear when the clouds disperse, or like the feeling of comfort after a satisfying meal. Just as one does not eat for the sake of having that comfortable feeling, but in complying to natural conditions of life, so also the right action of a Buddhist is not meant to bring about future comfort, but it is in pursuance of the natural conditions of existence, which, of course, demands a good measure of keen insight to be recognized as such.

Thus the right action of the Buddhist is of a nature that serves, not for the *affirmation of self*, but for the giving up of self. For the Buddhist who does not rely on belief but on experience, and for whom in his experience all possibility of belief in an eternal soul has disappeared, there is neither truth in *itself*, nor goodness in *itself*, as absolutes. *Truth is*, for him, nothing but the ceasing of ignorance, and *goodness is* nothing but the relinquishing of evil. And that relinquishment of evil is nothing but the relinquishment of self, bit by bit, thread by thread, until finally all is unravelled, crumbling away, extinguished.

If one has once understood thus the right action of a Buddhist and his motive for it, there is no further room, no possibility, for selfishness.

—From *Die Brockensammlung*, 1932.

Buddhist Propaganda

A very great difference can be noticed between the propagation of Buddhism and that of Christianity; and from this difference again a conclusion can be drawn as to the basic difference between these two religions.

Buddhism, like Christianity, is a world-religion. Like Judaism, neither of them is restricted to a limited area of our world; nor, unlike Hinduism, are they restricted to a limited cultural zone; instead, both claim to have a message for the whole world, for all humanity. But the means used by these two religions for spreading their message, are as different as their essential nature.

When, years ago, I was at Point Pedro, the northernmost place of the island of Ceylon, the tree was shown to me—as far as I can recollect, it was giant fig-tree under which Francis Xavier, the Jesuit apostle, had preached his first sermon. Ill and exhausted by a long and trying sea voyage, he nevertheless did not delay to preach his gospel, no sooner he had set foot on the island.

It is well known that Buddhist Ceylon did not much care for Christianity, and Francis Xavier did not preach there with any great success. But here we are not so much concerned with the question of success as with the path that is pursued. Xavier's first step on land is symptomatic for the way of offering the Christian gospel and for its teaching of salvation. Thus does a man act whose heart is full of the gift that he has to impart to others, and who, therefore, makes use of every possible opportunity to share this gift. Whether there is a demand or desire for it, is a matter of indifference. Irrespective of that it is offered, not to say forced upon, others. In the very nature of every faith-religion there is a craving for making converts. To propagate means here trying to proselytise and thus to increase the numbers of believers. The basic nature of Buddhism precludes this sort of propaganda. Attempts at conversion have as little sense in

Buddhism as if one would try converting someone to the correct solution of a mathematical problem. The person concerned must himself make the calculations for finding the mistakes hidden in the problem set to him; then he himself will know when he has come to a correct solution. If he does not act like that, then all attempts at his conversion will be useless, even if the correct solution is presented to him ready-made.

There are many who call themselves Buddhists. They talk about Buddhism and may even talk quite correctly about it. But they themselves have not accomplished the task laid before them. And thus they resemble a man who has come across the right solution only by good luck.

What then is the way by which Buddhism can be propagated. It is a way that is in conformity with a teaching of actuality. It is not enough that one talks about it and spreads its praises abroad. It must become a personal experience and must be actualized, out into practice, in life. In the Suttas, the Discourses of the Buddha, we are told about a certain venerable monk, Punna by name, who wanted to carry the Buddha's message to others. But we must not think that he did it by preaching at street corners. He quietly, earnestly, resolutely *lived* the teaching; and so, slowly but irresistibly, he drew to himself those who felt attracted by the Word of the Buddha.

For it must be recognized that not all and every one will be attracted by the Buddha's teaching. The Buddha Himself, in the Saccaka Sutta, gives the following three similes.

"Suppose a piece of wood is lying in the water, soaked through with water. Do you think that, by rubbing it, anyone could produce fire out of it?—Certainly not.—Again, there is another piece of wood, lying on dry ground, but it is wet itself, soaked through with moisture. Do you think it possible to kindle fire with it?—Certainly not.—And finally, there is a piece of wood that is dry itself and lies on dry ground. Do you think that out of it, fire may be kindled?—Certainly." It is similar with men's receptivity for the Teaching, with their "inflammability" by the Teaching. There is a man who is similar to the wet wood immersed in water; he lives in unfavourable circumstances and is himself unfavourably disposed. To him the Buddha speaks in vain. Or there is a man who is like the wet wood lying on dry ground: he is in favourable circumstances, but himself is unfavourably disposed. And finally, there is a man who is similar to the dry wood lying on dry ground: he lives in favourable circumstances and is himself favourably disposed. When such a one hears the teaching of renunciation, of relinquishment and cessation, his understanding is set aflame, his mind's vibration is in harmony with the teaching; he is elated, gladdened and he knows well: "There is an escape from this Saṃsāra, for ever! Indeed, there is!" For him his whole attitude towards life takes shape in a great threefold chord: lust after the world, in the beginning; suffering, in the middle; and escape from all this, in the end!

Of course, if one is to be gripped by the Word of the Buddha, it must be there. And for being there, a Buddha, an Enlightened One, must have arisen in the present aeon (*kalpa*), must have blossomed in this era, like the rarest of flowers. But not in every aeon does a Buddha blossom forth. There are many eras without Buddhas, without Enlightened Ones. These are the dark world periods, while our present era in which we have the good fortune to live, is illumined by the Buddha-light. Our world period is a fortunate one, a *Bhadda-kappa*, because in its immeasurably long intervals of time; Buddhas have arisen no less than three times before the Enlightened One of our own age.

People speak so much of the misery of our present days. Certainly, there is misery enough. But all this weighs but little against the advantage our age enjoys in being shone upon by the Teaching.

May everyone see clearly what an advantage this is! May everyone, in the measure of his strength, try to make the best use of it, lest he lose precious time which can never be brought back again. "*Of all gifts, the best is the gift of the Dhamma.*"

—From *Die Brockensammlung*, 1929

Saving Knowledge

Men may be divided according to their attitude towards life: there are those who look upon this life here as a given, positive value in itself; and there are others who look, upon it, not as a positive, but as a provisional value, and therefore as something from which one must and can become free. In other words, men divide into those who feel they belong to life and long for it and those who feel themselves alien to it and long to be out of it.

Bearing in mind this fundamental division, let us try to arrive at some clear idea as to the nature of religion. Religion must be something that embraces both aforementioned attitudes towards life. That a person who is not concerned with any idea of salvation, may, at the very outset, be excluded from all religion and religious feeling is in conflict with historical facts. The whole of China would then have to be placed outside of religion; for the Chinese mind, in its original modes of thought is not concerned with ideas of salvation. For the Chinese mind, world and life are something to which man finally and for ever belongs. The world is a well-ordered system where the inner relations correspond to the outer. It is a cosmos, a genuinely human world, a world for men, a world that carries its meaning (the TAO) within itself, a world that has meaning because it is "meaning" in itself.

The idea of a God existing outside this human world, through whom alone it acquires sense and significance, is here excluded. But on that account one is not entitled to deny the term "religion" to Chinese thought. The only thing we can deduce from that fact, is that religion is by no means identical with belief in a god: and people will do well to keep this firmly in mind.

Religion in its purest sense is the question as to the meaning of life. It thus stands quite apart from a *Weltanschauung*, that is a theory of the universe, which is only concerned with data of life and an orderly arrangement of these data. And if to the question about life's meaning, the Chinese mind gives the answer: "Life is just itself, it is meaning-in-itself", while the faith-religions say that "Life receives meaning only from some metaphysical entity, from a Beyond; in other words, from God," then both teachings, despite their internal differences, agree in that they are answers to the question about the meaning of life, and hence, both of them are religions.

Thus do these two views of life compare with each other, that of the Chinese mind and that of the religions of faith. And the former is obviously a unique phenomenon in the mental life of mankind, endowed with all the allurements of the singular, before which all others, especially we Europeans, stand perplexed, asking the question: "But how is it possible to get along without God?" Well, this is possible, because one can be religious even though one has no belief in any god. Belief in a god is not necessarily religion. It is only one of the forms under which the religious question, the religious problem, that is, the question as to the meaning of life, is answered.

Hereby we are immediately faced with the second question: "Which answer now is better; that of the Chinese mind, or that of the others?" For being better or worse there is only one standard, and that is, the content of actuality. And in this regard, both answers are inadequate because both are prejudiced.

To answer the question as to the meaning of life, which means, to furnish an actual or realistic religion, this one can only do when one knows what life is. The question as to the what of life takes precedence of all religion, and decides not only as to the justification of the idea of deliverance, but also as to the form in which this idea of deliverance is experienced.

So long as one is not clear as to the what of life, assertion stands against assertion: he who affirms and enjoys life stands opposed to the sufferer in life, the optimist against the pessimist, Nietzsche against Schopenhauer. To one, eternity is "deepest, deepest bliss," as Nietzsche sings in his hymn; to the other it is the deepest torment. The one feels himself called and chosen to eternal life as to a feast; the other feels himself condemned to it as to a martyrdom; and both squander their arguments in vain. For, so long as one does not know what life is, and in consequence judges according to the facts accessible to him, the one has just as much right in what he says as the other, and can also prove his right with equal impressiveness.

And so: What is life? To this question the Buddha answers: Life is a process of grasping which runs its course in the five Grasping-Groups. In the forty-fourth Discourse of the Majjhima Nikāya, to the question. "What has the Exalted One taught that personality is?", the following reply is given: "The Exalted One has taught that personality is the five Grasping-Groups, namely, the Grasping-Group of corporality, the Grasping-Group of Sensation, the Grasping-Group of Perception, the Grasping-Group of Concept, the Grasping-Group of Consciousness." Thus, we have here a grasping which is so fashioned that what we commonly call mental conception belongs to it: we have grasping as nutriment, and thinking, consciousness, as a form of eating.

Correspondingly it is said in the Canon, for example, in the Saṃyutta Nikāya: "There are four kinds of nutriment: first, material nutriment, gross or fine; second, sense-contact; third, volitional thought; fourth, consciousness."

With this insight, Buddhism becomes the "Middle Teaching," the *Majjhima-paṭipadā*, which stands between and above the two extremes of all mental life, Faith and Science. Faith believes in life as something in its essence metaphysical, purely spiritual. Science seeks to make out that life is something essentially physical, purely corporeal. But both here fall into contradiction with themselves, that is to say, with the fact that there are concepts present. For if life by its essential nature is something purely spiritual, that is, a self-existent spiritual something, how then could we ever arrive at concepts of it? A purely spiritual thing could only be absolutely itself; and could never be present as such, that is to say, at, conceptual relation.

On the other hand: If life is a purely corporeal thing, how could, the concepts ever issue forth from it? And yet the concepts are there, once for all, and in the facts "Faith and Science" themselves they experience the impossibility of their own existence; that is to say, they stand in contradiction to the fact of their own existence, inasmuch as Faith believes in something concepts can never reach; while Science seeks to prove something which can never reach the concepts. Faith oversteps actuality; it transcendental-ises. Science "under-steps" actuality: it "immanent-ises." And both, despite their apparent opposition, agree with each other in this, that neither is in unison with actuality, an agreement that points to a deeper, common root.

Between and above both, stands Buddhism as the Middle Path, the *Majjhima-paṭipadā*, in as much as it teaches that life is neither a purely corporeal, physical thing; but a conceptual thing, a mental conceiving, taken in that actual sense in which it comprises in itself grasping and conceiving, mental as well as physical grasping; "grasping" taken here in the strictest, most actual sense, inasmuch as this insight that it is so, the knowledge of myself as a conceptual process, is not something outside this process, self-existent and cognizing, but is itself a conceptual process. In other words, the knowledge of the fact that I am a purely conceptual

process implies no act of cognition, directed towards myself, from the standpoint of a self-existent ego (*atta*). But what occurs here is just another instance of processes rolling on, a continued growth of conceiving and conceptualizing; there is no confrontation with myself, but an ever-repeated remembrance within myself, I am writing this down here and express it in these short sentences, not because I think that my readers will now understand it at once without difficulty. I myself have spent long years in patient and persistent thought in order to arrive at this insight; and I place it before my readers only for stirring and rousing them to equally patient reflection.

In my essential nature I am neither something metaphysical (pure spirituality) as Faith tries to make out, nor something physical (pure corporeality) as Science would have us believe. In my essential nature I am certainly "mentality", but not self-existent mentality, Mind-in-itself, that is something metaphysical. Rather I am a mental *process*, a conceptual *process*, that is, something which, just because it is a process, requires the corporeal for its existence. Hence I am, in my essential nature *a-metaphysical* or, as the Buddha puts it, *an-atta* (not self), which is the Pali word exactly corresponding to our word *a-metaphysical*.

Also the nature of the mutual relationship that obtains here between the corporeal and the mental, was stated by the Buddha, namely in the formula of the mutual conditionality of Mind-and-Matter and Consciousness (*viññāṇa-paccaya nāma-rūpa*, and the, reverse), which can here be mentioned only in passing.

Hence, I am a process of grasping, a process of conceiving, a conceptual process; and the knowledge that this is so, is likewise a form of conceiving. But whence does this conceptual and conceiving process spring? What is the line of descent of the ego?

In the act-of-faith I am (as *atta*, "soul") a self-existent entity, eternal, absolutely beginningless, absolutely endless; condemned to eternal existence. In the attempted act-of- experience of Science, I am a biological phenomenon that descends from other biological phenomena, from "my parents." These again descend from their parents, and so forth; in an endless series that leaves the question as to a first beginning completely unanswered, by showing it ahead and along, again and again.

Here too, the Buddha-word shows itself as a Middle Path between, and above, both, Faith and Science: As a conceiving and conceptual process, as a nutritional process, I am a self-sustaining process, and hence not a mere reaction of other life-processes, not a mere offshoot of my parents. Force (energy) exists, but it is not a force in an absolute force, absolutely beginningless and endless, but it is a process, just this process of conceiving; so therefore, it is something which, for being present at all, must always and only spring from its own antecedent conditions. And the starting-point where it springs up is ignorance about itself. Thus, in place of the absolute beginninglessness of Faith and the relative beginninglessness of Science, we get at a reflexive beginninglessness, that is the beginninglessness of reference to itself, as, in the Buddha's teaching.

The role which Ignorance (*avijjā*) plays as an ever new starting-point of the conceiving-process-called "I," is given in the twelve-linked series of the simultaneously Dependent Origination (*paṭicca samuppāda*). In the understanding of that formula; the ego can experience itself as, a process in the strictest sense, that is to say, as being capable of arising and hence also of stopping—in short, as a beginningless process so constituted that it includes the possibility of stopping. The ego, i.e. "life as experiencing itself," is a possibility of stopping, a "ceasability."

Here, we have pronounced the key-word to which all life hearkens and to which all life is subject: the possibility of stopping. What am I? What is life? A possibility of stopping! Herewith we have arrived at our subject proper; and at the same time, at the answer to it.

Saving knowledge is the knowledge that it is possible to be "saved," that is freed from ever-recurring suffering. Here "salvation" has no longer the meaning, of a divine act of grace, nor the meaning of annihilation in the mechanical, materialistic sense of Science. Salvation is here the completion of a task which is possible, and therefore necessary to carry out. With the recognized possibility of stopping is also given the actualisation of this possibility of stopping,-stopping as the final goal, giving up as the final task.

The Saṃsāra, this ever-changing world of ever new births, of ever new acts of becoming "world" again, is precisely so constituted that Nibbāna, Deliverance, Salvation, does not lie in any Beyond that can be reached only by a transcendental leap out of the world; but Saṃsāra bears Nibbāna within itself as its final fulfilment; a fulfilment that takes place in a process of radical detachment experienced in a progressive inner awareness (*Verbewusstung*) this process of detachment starts with Right Understanding as its first link, and ends with Right Concentration as the eighth link. Where Saṃsāra, this world of ours, has been comprehended as that ever repeated conceiving which is life itself and creates life, there Nibbāna is no longer something that stands against the conceiving as its object, be it in the form of a scientific conceivability or as a religious inconceivability, but Nibbāna is then seen as the stopping of this conceiving. And salvation is then neither a salvation out of this transient existence into an eternal life, nor is it salvation as a final annihilation, but it is the stopping, the cessation, of that very conceiving which is life itself.

This stopping can be experienced. Salvation, or Deliverance, is a process that can be experienced: Nibbāna can be realized. This process of deliverance is not embedded in this existence nor is it external to it; it is neither immanent nor transcendent. It is the fading away, the stopping, the ceasing of this existence itself, it is the last experience: the experience of the cessation of experiencing. Consciousness is there; but it no longer springs up again in a new life-creating act of conceiving. Thus it resembles capital that no longer pays interest but is used up until it is exhausted; or it resembles the flame of a lamp that is not sustained by fresh oil and burns towards its extinction. It is "old Kamma" (*purāṇaṃ kammaṃ*), the outcome of past thinking, the result of past action; no longer a living flame. but the reaction from former burning, resembling a residual supply of heat that comes to an end because further sustenance is lacking.

Cool and serene rest the senses on their objects, no longer mingling with them, like drops of water on the lotus leaf. Only this one experience reverberates the experience of the cessation of experiencing, —an experience, the end of which can be anticipated, just as we can anticipate the end of a flame that does not receive fresh fuel. "In being freed, there is the knowledge of being freed." "Finally extinguished, with consciousness no longer finding a foothold,"—this is a standing expression in the Buddhist texts, for the Arahant, for him who is finally freed by the ultimate Saving Knowledge.

In the *Udāna* the Buddha says: "As the great ocean is permeated by one taste only, that of salt, so the Dhamma is permeated only by the taste of deliverance." In this longing after deliverance rings out the deepest chord of all existence; in that longing the highest opens.

The Chinese mind that feels secure in life and unperturbed, free from doubts and fanaticism, from religious coercion and intolerance, is certainly a surprising and arresting phenomenon. And the life of the Indo-Ariyan nations with the fervour of their ideas of salvation, with the fury of passions that were, and still are, kindled by those ideas, this is surely a terrible and even repugnant phenomenon: and yet, in that fury glow, unconsciously, truth, actuality and final fulfilment. And this final fulfilment is experienced in the Saving Knowledge, that is, in the Right Understanding bestowed by the Buddha, provided it finds expression in right resolve, and that again is put into practice by right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right

mindfulness and right concentration. Here, Saving Knowledge, first a mere hope, becomes actuality, realization, because it issues from insight into the What of Life, into the essence of actuality.

Buddhism cannot be proved, and it does not need to be believed. Therefore, the Teaching is called "Knowledge and Conduct" (*vijja-carana*). This entails a resolve, just as a resolve is required for taking bitter medicine. Resolve, requires confidence in the Buddha: and this confidence, again, requires the staggering suspicion that life may not be all it seems to be, but that it is something questionable, and is through and through vulnerable. It is true, and the Buddha himself had experienced it and given expression to it, that men of understanding are difficult to find. But, well for him who listens and catches a glimpse of what is here set forth.

—From *Die Brockensammlung*, 1929

Right Understanding

Often when I read or hear highly emotional speeches, I wish to ask the speakers whether they know what they are excited about, and to tell them that they resemble those who worry about the numerator and take no notice about the denominator of a fraction. However big the numerator may be, the real value will depend on the denominator. You heap up life-values and your claims for life-values. but you take neither time nor trouble to consider what life is, intrinsically; in the service of which you make all your claims, and in the service of which you rave and rage, and set up and pull down. Would it not be more reasonable were you to look at the thing for which you reduce existence to a torment and the right of living to an intolerable duty?

A man reflects: Here is this "I," mentality-corporeality, marked off only vaguely from the outer world by a skin, consuming as material nutriment (food, drink, air). and as mental nutriment (feeling, perception, consciousness), this outer world, in many ways, and drawing in, and nourishing itself on, the world, and excreting. This process of consumption by the "I" is like a flame that is continuously feeding itself to burn on.

The man continues his reflections: In this eating and excreting, in this seizing and letting go, this coming and going, there is no place for what you before called the "I." There is not in this burning a thing-in-itself, something eternal, a soul, which is not burning. To believe in such an "I" or a soul is mere blind belief, error, or ignorance. The destruction of the "I"-delusion, the understanding of the "I" as a delusion, is the great deed of the Buddha that liberates humanity, and because of that deed he calls himself the Buddha, the Awakened One, the Enlightened One, the Teacher, and the Tathāgata, the Perfect One. However far one's thoughts may have strayed, that insight, that leap into actuality, is enough for reaching the goal at once. However confused a man may be in his dreams, once he awakes he is in actuality: and however far he may have wandered in error; with the destruction of ignorance he is in truth.

So before you eagerly cherish desires for yourself as though you might go on for ever; and before you eagerly cherish desire for wife and child, for friend and fellow countryman, as though these might go on for ever, look at least once at the thing for the sake of which you have become so eager, and for which you make demands, accumulate, heap up, rage and oppress it.

There is the "I" with a skin over it, full of unclean matter, subject to decay, disease, corruption, foulness, a thing that is devouring and expelling, attracting and repelling, becoming and vanishing. The only constant thing in it is its continuous grasping of food, drink, air, feeling, perception and consciousness.

Is there nothing besides this grasping in me? Might there not be something eternal, the lord of this play of the flame, a doer who does the deed, a speaker who utters the words, a thinker who thinks the thought? Should there be only a bare process at work?

Man, why do you question thus? Why do you uselessly lose time in doubt and uncertainty? Listen! A man wanted to go to a certain place and came to a sign-post on which was written: "To such and such place, one hour". Then the man began to doubt whether he could reach the place in one hour, and while thus doubting a good part of the hour passed away, and he thought, "Much time has gone by and I am not one step nearer the goal. This signpost must be wrong."

The Buddha is such a sign-post. He does not want you to argue but to follow him. Do not ask again, "Is it possible that I am nothing but a coming and a going, a grasping and a letting go, a movement due to the wind of the passion for life?" Do not lament that by such an outlook the most beautiful and highest ideals which you and humanity hold, are lost. Do not seek beauty! Seek actuality!

What is actuality?

Contemplate and experience your own self. Then you will know and experience actuality.

Here, in your own self, forms arise, manifest themselves, and pass away; here feelings, perceptions, mental formations and consciousness arise, manifest themselves, and pass away. As a flame burns, so burn these five aggregates because of an inner force. That force is craving. What is craving? Mere craving and nothing more. From where does it come? From the last Craving. And that craving? From the one before that. From where do all cravings come? From ignorance. From where does ignorance come? It is not possible to find a beginning of beings obstructed by ignorance. What is the source of the next craving? The present craving. How is craving nourished? With the attraction of forms, sounds, odours, flavours, contacts and concepts. What is the end of craving? Craving ends when ignorance ends, that is, the ignorance of the "I" as not-self, not-personality, not-soul, and as a working without a worker. How can ignorance cease? Through right instruction. When ignorance ceases, what ceases? The craving for forms, sounds, odours, flavours, contacts and concepts, ceases. When craving ceases what ceases? World-grasping ceases. And when world-grasping ceases what ceases? Violence and bloodshed cease; quarrels and intolerance cease; anguish, fear, the will to possess, they will not let go, all these bad things cease. Now all these things are external to me. What ceases in me? The flame of the "I," the craving to continue through ignorance ceases when ignorance ceases. When that ceases what happens? Just as a flame that does not get oil goes out, so the "I" flame that is not fed by ignorance goes out, too. The play of phenomena comes to an end when the formations (kamma) cease. Of what were phenomena the expression? Of craving which comes to end without remainder, with the ending of ignorance.

So, if I want to act without ignorance must I generally give up all bodily and mental nutriment? The fault is not in taking nutriment. All beings live because of nutriment, teaches the Buddha. There is no existence without food.

But all depends on the way you take food. You should take food without craving for it, without greed, continually ready to give it up. Truly, life becomes worth living when one no longer clings to it, as a ring becomes easy to wear when it does not chafe the finger. How free and happy all could live, were each person to find contentment in himself and were not to trouble others! A person will be contented within himself and will not trouble others if he knows what he wants for himself; and he will know what he wants for himself if he knows what he is. He will know what he is when he receives right instruction. That is the value of Right

Understanding. Tolerance, Peace, Happiness, and all blessings of mankind, have their roots in Right Understanding.

—From *Neu-Buddhistische Zeitschrift*, 1918/19

Dr. Dahlke's Last Lecture

This lecture, here slightly abridged, was to be given through the Berlin Radio; but illness prevented Dr. Dahlke from delivering it in person. It was read on his behalf on the 22nd February 1928, just one week before Dr. Dahlke's death.

Buddhism is the Teaching of the Buddhas, that is the Awakened Ones. There has been not only one but many Buddhas and only the last one of the countless series is the one whom we know as a historical personage.

The name of this last historical Buddha after whom a countless number of Buddhas will follow, is Gotama. He was born in Kapilavatthu in the extreme North of India and came of a royal family. At the age of 29, having married young and being then the father of a little son, he left his father's gorgeous palace and went forth into Homelessness (*Pabbajjā*). He became an ascetic (*samana*), a religious mendicant, and, with shorn head and beard, carrying his alms-bowl, he went begging his food from house to house.

There was nothing extraordinary in such a course of conduct in India of these days. People of all stations in life used to do the same. Holy men, alone or in company used to wander all over the country, and the populace, though not wealthy, considered it a sacred duty to support these mendicants and supply them with the necessities of life.

It was this life that the Ascetic Gotama followed. After many years of extreme self mortification, a new insight dawned upon him, which made him call himself the Buddha, the Awakened One. In order to understand this new insight he had won, it is necessary to cast a glance at the religious life in India at the time of the Buddha.

The self-contained world of the Indian continent was a land of religions *par excellence*. There is no religious or philosophical possibility that was not thought out here and, as different from the West, radically put into practice. Only one thing never materialized in India as long as it was purely Indian and not influenced by Islam: the formation of Churches.

In a certain sense and up to a degree, Churches are always a fixation and dogmatization of the religious spirit, making for rigidity. But in India, religion has always been a living experience, with the changes natural to every living experience. Thus India's entire religious life was a constant process of revision of the God-idea. For it should never be forgotten that Man comes first. First man, then his God! The God-idea has meaning only as a function in the mental life of humanity and has a value only in so far as it can help humanity on its road to perfection. To make of the God-idea a value in itself, compared with which man is reduced to nothing, is to misconceive the meaning of man and the universe. Hence true religion requires from time to time revisions of the God-idea, if its vitality is to be preserved so that it may serve the betterment of mankind.

At the time of the Buddha, India experienced the greatest revision of its God-idea it ever had. Belief in the glittering variety of the polytheistic heaven was "giving way to the idea of a single deity, the monotheistic belief in Brahma, the One, the Glorious and Blessed, before whom the different gods and goddesses who had hitherto satisfied Indian religious thought, would fade like stars before the sun.

Into this scene of a tremendous re-orientation entered the Buddha and shed the light of His genius upon these problems. What was of limited Indian relevance, became now a universal human concern. For the first time in history, a world religion, breaking through the confines of the Indian continent, entered its claim under a seemingly paradoxical motto; *Is the idea of God essential to a religion?*

Buddhism in its entirety may be regarded as an answer to that question, and the answer is: Man belongs to himself. The self is the lord of self. The power that created man is not God but man's own deeds. No God sits in judgement upon him but man judges himself through his actions and their outcome. His destiny does not depend upon the will of a God who separates the goats from the sheep; it depends on his own actions.

But Buddhism is not atheism in the ordinary sense of the word. As commonly used, the atheist is conceived as a man whose atheism is an excuse for licence: "Nobody above can see me, none can hear me, I shall do as I like." Buddhism does not fight against the God-idea nor deny it, but it digests that concept fully by virtue of its spirituality, and makes it mean what it really ought to mean: a correlate of humanity, and it is characteristic of this new type of humanity that the individual becomes responsible to himself for every moment of his life.

For the Buddhist there is no God that can absolve him from sin. There is nothing in Buddhism that corresponds to the priest in theistic religions who is the intermediary between God and man. For the Buddhist there are only his own actions and their results. It is the religion of inexorable, unmitigated self-responsibility; hence it is a religion for adults who know that in the realm of reality nothing can be had for nothing

Buddhism teaches that, as a basic experiential fact, man certainly owes his present existence to his parents: But the parents provide only the material for the new garb of life, the generative substances which in the act of lust, are, as it were, torn out of their bodies. In those expelled cellular bodies, there vibrate for awhile all potentialities and proclivities of life, and only wait for the force that will strike them like lightning and transform these potentialities into the actualities of a new life.

Thus from the mother's womb, there comes forth a new being whose bodily characteristics are more or less inherited from his parents and ancestors, and in so far as the scientific laws of heredity hold true. But in his directive or motivational faculties or, as the Buddhist will say, in his Kamma, the new being derives from his own previous existences. This vital kammic force from the past, released when the old form breaks up at death, has now entered this particular mother's womb because it had to enter here in accordance with its inherent merit, its character and moral quality. The new life-long "contract" between the Kamma of the dissolving past form of life and the generative material in the new womb, is a timeless process of direct instantaneous cognizance. All that is "mass" or "matter" in any sense, has to wander through the spatial universe in terms of time; and for science with its empirico-physical conception of the universe, space and time are linked inseparably. But Kamma, the vital force, strikes instantaneously, not earlier, not later," as the Buddhist texts say; and it strikes where it has to strike owing to kammic affinity. Here there is no physical process following physical laws, but a lawfulness that is independent of all spatial limitations and has the instantaneous impact of lawful occurrence, or what is called fate or destiny. The being that breaks up in death, is reborn where it can and must be reborn according to his deeds.

Buddhism, as a teaching of actuality, does not regard man as a creature of God nor of his parents, but as a creature of his own actions (Kamma). The creative act takes place at birth (or conception) which is always a rebirth. And herein the parents are not "creators", or procreators, but "birth-helpers" (a male and female midwife, as it were); they are instrumental in helping the

new being to be born. The new birth occurs in utilization of the parental generative material, but not through it. Here there is only one true generative force: man's own actions (Kamma). Good thoughts, words and deeds result in a favourable rebirth in a good environment; bad thoughts, words and deeds result in an unhappy rebirth in bad environment.

The Buddha teaches that there are four kinds of actions: light, that is, good actions with bright results; dark, that is bad actions with black results; actions that are half and half, that is partly good and partly bad with results that are a mixture of both; and lastly actions that are neither light nor dark and whose result will be the end of all actions.

The last type of action can issue only from Buddhist insight. While the doctrine of rebirth points to the practical side of Buddhism, the teaching about an "action that leads to the ending of all actions" indicates the profound philosophical aspect of the Dhamma which, in the present context, we can only mention, without elaborating it.

What is now the advantage of the doctrine of rebirth as compared to other religions and philosophies?

Every thinking man will admit that, in considering life, the fact that life exists is of less importance than the question how it exists and comes to be; and this again is dominated by the one question: Why do things happen as they do? The concept of causality governing the physical world becomes the idea of justice inherent in the destinies of living beings. Justice is the ultimate and deepest meaning of the world. Just as the world as far as it is physical, is based on causality, so, as far as it acts as destiny in living beings, it rests on justice.

Why are things as they are? Why do they happen in the way they do? Is everything for the best? Are things controlled by order and law, or are they ruled by caprice or blind chance? Why is it that the good suffer and the wicked flourish? Why is it that one is starving and the other lives in luxury? Why is one strong and healthy and the other drags along a sickly body? How is it that one has all the talents and a brilliant mind while the other is as stupid as can be?

Either one *thinks*, and then life poses a problem at every step and throws the question at us "Why is it like this?", or one gives up thinking altogether. But as thinking is natural to man, he demands answer to the problem "Justice or Caprice?"

Here Buddhism, shows its irreplaceable superiority as a realistic teaching of actuality.

As long as belief in a God and the fear of a God hold sway, that problem offers no intellectual, and hence, no practical difficulties. All that happens is in accordance with the inscrutable will of God, and who art thou, O man, to argue with Him? The cries of the poor and oppressed, the hunger of the starving multitude, the sufferings of the sick,-all that, in the eyes of God, is only one single chord in the harmony of the universe, and man, with all his prying questionings, can only submit and pray!

But when belief in God and fear of God disappear, that summary solution of the problem loses its support and becomes untenable. In fact, belief in God, as everything in the world, has its periods of growth and decline. After a high-tide of that belief in the Middle Ages, now a steady ebb of it, just as strong, has set in, and indications are that the low water mark has not yet been reached.

Hence the metaphysical solution of the problem is nowadays no longer adequate. Now, the State, called by Nietzsche "the latest idol," has taken matters in hand with that robust authoritarian arbitrariness that is typical of all institutions which consider only the material and this-worldly aspects of life. The State, itself a stark fact, asks for facts and wants to create facts. Thus, in the State's hands, also justice is to become a fact that can be controlled and corrected until it conforms to the concept of justice held by the respective type of State.

But in that kind of approach it is forgotten that justice is not a ready-made fact that can be bodily transferred into life, but it is a process, the very life process. Life as it is experienced in joy and grief, wealth and poverty, in its ups and downs, is justice itself. One must only understand it and go down to the roots from which all this primarily grows. The State wants to realize its notion of justice (which is nothing more than just a notion of it) in this single life, wishing to create hard and ready facts. But this is impossible because it means trying to stop the wheel of life rolling on since times without a beginning. He who tries to put a spoke into that Wheel, has always brought only misery either for himself or for others. Life is not exhausted during a single spell of existence. Its pendulum swings beyond itself, in both directions, and one has to go along with it if one wants to solve the problem of justice.

Here the Buddha Dhamma steps in as the irreplaceable light bearer. It shows that what happens and the way how it happens, is only the blossom and the fruit, and the roots of it are in former existences. Actions in thought, words and deeds are the womb from which I was born. I am the architect of my own destiny. It was in former lives that I fitted myself for this life; and it is in this life that I shall lay the foundation for the next.

Thus the Buddhist feels himself as a link in the chain of inescapable justice against which there is no protest and no rebellion. There is only this one law and nothing else: As you sow, so you will reap.

With the swing of life's pendulum extending beyond present into past and the future, an element of self-responsibility enters into the life of the individual that elevates Buddhism far above all other forms of religion and makes it a truly human religion, the religion of adult human beings who have actually grown up. Now the answer to the question, "Why are things as they are, and why do they happen in the way they do?" can no longer be that it is due to God's inscrutable will or due to social and economic imperfections that must be removed; but the answer now runs that it is because of my own actions in the past and those of others. Instead of the fear of God and fear of the ruling authority there is now *self-fear*, the fear of the self judgment and self-punishment through our own actions, As much as a religion of self-responsibility, Buddhism has a great mission to fulfil in the life of mankind that cannot be performed by any other religion or philosophy. Irreplaceable for the seeker after Truth, and entirely unique in its mental structure for the thinker, thus the Buddha Dhamma stands secure in the power of its inner Truth, waiting serenely for that recognition of its worth which other religions seek to obtain by eager propagation.

—From Die Brockensammlung, 1929

Poems

Renunciation

Renunciation is a torment,
So saith one.
I say, No!
Renunciation, if freely done,
Can be the highest happiness.
The renouncing not freely done,
That is torment indeed:
Beggar-like going about,
Seeing others carousing.
That is real agony,
That is the greatest woe
It is like death on the cross
And rightly called Gethsemane.
Ah, heart? Be no more a beggar,
Become at once a king!
Un-think all thy longings,
So wilt thou be from sorrow freed.
Once more only may I travel
This long pilgrimage alone:
With no other for companion,
Till my latest breath is done.
To the snow-peaks, heaven-high towering,
Dying, let me turn my eyes ;
Dying, still look to the Teacher,
And the Lore that never lies.

Transl. by J. F. McKechnie

The End

If I had wings I would fly beyond love,
High to that world from every impulse free;
Where naught approaches—not love nor hate,
Where the only deed is pure abandoning.
Then, become cool, I may look back serene;
None should know me again; alone I walk on,
Walk on calmly, till the Way itself ends,
With him who walks thereon, and all is done.

Transl. by Soma Thera³

³ From a letter by Soma Thera: "This poem is a sort of Buddhist reply to the Western mystic who wants to fly to his love. Dahlke's poem shows the translucency of the poet's mind walking to the End of Ill, with full awareness and single-eyed devotion. The verses of the unknown Western mystic to which the poem alludes, are called the "Song of the Bride," and have these opening lines:

"Had I the wings of Seraphim, Thus would I fly, high Upwards, into Eternity, Unto my Sweet Love."

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Englische Skizzen (1914)

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The Administrative Secretary
Buddhist Publication Society
P.O. Box 61
54 Sangharaja Mawatha
Kandy, Sri Lanka
E-mail: bps@bps.lk
Web site: <http://www.bps.lk>
Tel: 0094 81 223 7283
Fax: 0094 81 222 3679