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佛陀小传

Buddha

A Very Short Introduction

Michael Carrithers 著
高山杉 译

外语教学与研究出版社
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佛陀生为王子，长在富贵，原可继承王位，享受荣华，然他却抛妻弃子，舍弃尊位。究竟何事让他离世弃俗，自苦身心？他又如何参破痛苦的谜题，获得最终的解脱？其佛法又缘何能历经风雨，千年不息？这本《佛陀小传》抛开神话和传说，依据古印度原始佛经，如实地记述了佛陀一生的思想行迹及其与所处时代的经济、政治、思想诸因素之间的相互关系，向读者展现出一个本真的佛陀和佛化世界。

一本佛传在手，一份超脱入心。

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译者序

《佛陀小传》是一位颇有哲学素养的西方学者撰写的关于释迦牟尼佛的学术传记。我国佛学家吕澂说过："释迦之传记不仅南北所传有异，同一所传之中或则为单纯素朴之记事，或则为绚烂庄丽之美文，又或广或略，而实录与譬说相杂则诸说无别；欲取捨所有材料以得的确史实，实非今日所能也。"[1]由此可见，撰写一本佛陀传是如何之难。本书的撰写，依据的是南传巴利文三藏，择取了其中"单纯素朴之记事"，略述了佛陀一生的思想和行迹。作者在撰写中尤重于佛家哲学的疏通和整理，并阐明了当时社会、经济、政治、思想诸因素与佛陀之间的互相影响。本书是否达到吕澂所说"取捨所有材料以得的确史实"的目标，实在难以评说，但是，至少就一个西方学人以哲学眼光审视佛陀来说，我认为还是值得一读的。

作者迈克尔·卡里瑟斯（Michael Carrithers）是英国人，达勒姆大学（University of Durham）人类学教授，曾在斯里兰卡研究南传上座部佛教多年，著有《吉祥楞迦岛的阿兰若僧》（*The Forest Monks of Sri Lanka: An Anthropological and Historical Study*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983）、《我们为什么有文化——阐释人类学和社会多样性》（*Why Humans Have Cultures:*

[1] 吕澂（编译）《印度佛教史略》，台北市：广文书局有限公司，1971 年 9 月重印本，第 14 页。

Explaining Anthropology and Social Diversity. Oxford University Press,1992)[1]等专著。《佛陀小传》最早由牛津大学出版社作为“已逝大师丛书”（Past Masters）的一种出版（*The Buddha*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983），此后又只字未动，与同一丛书里的另外三本（分别讲述耶稣、穆罕默德和孔子的生平事迹）合订出版（*Founders of Faith*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1986）。再后来，《佛陀小传》被收进“学术小引丛书”（Very Short Introductions），除增加六张图片外，文字几乎没有变动。

本书是根据“学术小引丛书”版的《佛陀小传》翻译的。此前，已经有过两种汉译本：一是麦克尔·凯里泽：《佛陀——至善的觉悟者》，孟祥森译，“文化丛书”第 76 种，台北市：时报文化出版企业有限公司，1988 年 4 月 1 日第 1 版；二是迈克尔·卡瑞提斯：《佛陀》，孙晶译，“外国著名思想家译丛”第 1 函第 3 种，北京：中国社会科学出版社，1992 年 8 月第 1 版。台湾版本只印了 1,500 册，流通有限。也许正因为如此，大陆本翻译出版时，好像完全不知道台湾已有汉译，也就未能取来参考。原书学术性很强，文字简奥，翻译起来不是很容易。我在翻译时参考了上述两个译本，受到一定的启发。同时，我发现这两个译本在原文理解上有不少问题，而且大多是按照原文直译，没有还原到传统汉译佛典和新译南传佛典的用语上来。因此，我在翻译时尽自己所能做了一些改进，尽量使用传统汉译佛典和新译南传佛典的术语和译文。但因学术水平、文字功力和翻译经验有限，译文中错误和不完善的地方恐怕还有不少。另外，原著没有任何注释，译文中的脚注都是我在翻译过程中添加的。做这些注释时引用了一些权威学者的著作，以及近年

[1]《我们为什么有文化——阐释人类学和社会多样性》，陈丰译，辽宁教育出版社，牛津大学出版社，1998 年。

台湾出版的一批关于南传佛教的著作和译作，并参阅了一些大陆上常见的佛教和宗教辞书，诸如丁福保编译的《佛学大辞典》、任继愈主编的《宗教词典》、《中国大百科全书·宗教卷》等等。希望这些注释能对读者阅读本书和了解佛陀有所帮助。

关于书名和书中所引佛典也需要解释一下。我之所以在书名和译文中使用“佛陀”，而没有使用大家都很熟悉的“释迦牟尼”，是因为“释迦牟尼”是北传佛教常用的对佛陀的称谓，而南传佛教中使用最多的称谓则是“佛陀”。本书完全按照南传佛教的资料撰写，甚至一次都没有提到“释迦牟尼”这个名字。本书所引佛典，主要是巴利文的《长部经典》、《中部经典》、《增支部经典》和《相应部经典》。它们略等于汉译佛典里的“四《阿含》”，也就是《长阿含经》、《中阿含经》、《增一阿含经》和《杂阿含经》。民国时期出版《普慧大藏经》时，曾经从日本刊行的《南传大藏经》（巴利文三藏的日文译本）中重译出一部分《长部经典》、《中部经典》、《增支部经典》和《相应部经典》，台湾后来还有重印本。我在翻译本书时，有选择地使用了这些译文。但由于这些译文使用的是文言，我按照编辑的要求对有些不好理解的文句作了白话翻译。

大约八年前，我曾撺掇老友李鹏从北京国家图书馆借出并复印了帝俄科学院院士、汉学名家王西礼的《佛教论》，帝俄科学院院士、印度学家鄂登堡的《释尊小传》和《西域考古记》，还有莫斯科科学出版社的《鄂登堡纪念文集》。我们当时商定，他先把《释尊小传》从俄文翻译成中文，再由我做文字整理。这些年过去了，译事未能完成，部分译稿也不知所之。现在，译完《佛陀小传》，附记此事，以纪念我们的友谊，并感谢老友付出的辛劳。

在本书的翻译过程中，责任编辑高耿松先生付出很多心血。他认真校阅，为译稿纠正不少文字和内容上的错误。在此，我

谨表示衷心的感谢。

最后，我想申明，这个译本肯定还会有很多错误和不足，而责任均在译者。我真诚欢迎读者朋友批评指正，以便再版时进一步加工修改。

译者谨识

2008 年 5 月 18 日

Preface

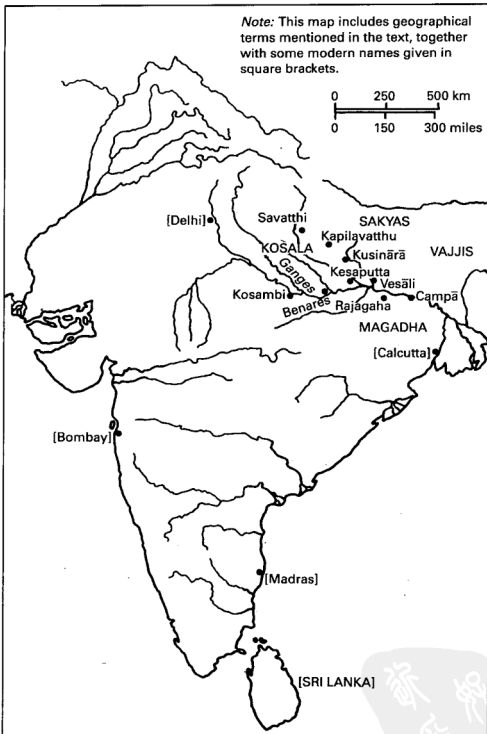
Until the last century the Buddha was probably the most influential thinker in human history. His teaching prospered throughout the subcontinent of India for more than 1500 years, and in that time it changed and diversified at least as much as Christianity did in its first 1500 years in Europe. By the thirteenth century AD, when the power of Buddhism was broken in its original home, it had long since spread to the Himalayas, East Asia, Central Asia, and Sri Lanka, and it was making its way into South-East Asia. Buddhism's history in those regions was as complicated as it had already been in India.

I have not attempted to explain such a vast matter in this short book. I have only recounted the life of the Buddha and described the genesis and significance of his teaching. I have tried, however, to phrase this account so the reader will be able to see why Buddhism moved so easily across continents and survived so well through the centuries.

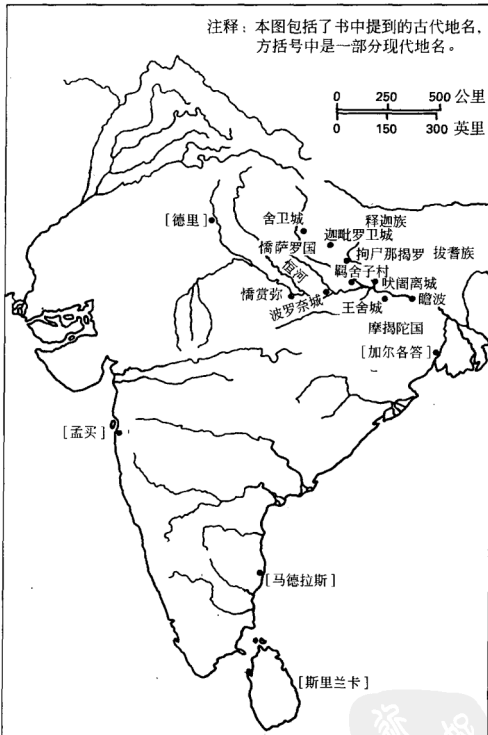
前言

直到上个世纪为止，佛陀也许算是人类历史上最有影响的思想家。在整个印度次大陆，佛法盛行了1,500多年。在此期间，其变化流衍之广大，丝毫不逊于基督教在欧洲传布1,500年间所发生的变化。到公元13世纪时，佛教在印度本土虽然已经失其势力，但却早已远播东亚、中亚和斯里兰卡，并正在向东南亚传布。这几国的佛教史，其复杂程度也不亚于在印度本土的情况。

在这本小书里，我不打算阐释这样庞大的问题。我只略叙了佛陀生平，描述了佛法的起源和意义。可是，我尝试着通过自己的讲述，希望可以使读者诸君明白，为什么佛教可以如此容易地在诸大陆上传布，并且历经数世纪风雨，还能如此兴盛地延续下来。



Map 1. Northern India and Nepal.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地图 1：北印度和尼泊尔

目录

Chapter 1
Introduction

Among the ruins of Anuradhapura, the ancient capital of Sri Lanka, there rests alone on a pedestal above the grass a seated image of the Buddha in stone, slightly larger than life. The statue is conventional, probably more than a thousand years old, of a type found throughout Buddhist Asia. The legs are folded in meditation, the hands laid one upon the other in the lap. Buddhists hold that it was in this posture, seated beneath a tree more than 2500 years ago, that the Buddha was awakened, attaining decisive knowledge of the human condition and the unshakeable certainty that he was released from its suffering.

In its excellence, however, the Anuradhapura image is far from conventional. The back and head are disciplined and upright; but the arms are relaxed and the face reposes in tranquillity. The figure seems intelligent and serene, wed perfectly to the unmoving granite. Standing before it an elderly English socialist told me that in the whole mess of human history *this* at least – the statue and all it stands for – was something of which we could be proud. He said that he had no use for religion, but that he felt he had unknowingly been a follower of the Buddha all along.

An intensely private reflection, its disclosure prompted perhaps by the power of the figure: but what is remarkable is that it should be found in

so many others. Here, for example, is the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, by no means a Buddhist, writing in a similar vein:

> what have I learnt from the masters I have listened to, the philosophers I have read, the societies I have investigated, and that very science in which the West takes such pride? Simply a fragmentary lesson or two which, if laid end to end, would add up to the meditations of the Sage at the foot of his tree.

This testifies to the fascination the Buddha still holds for us. Is it justified? What does an Oriental seer, born in the middle of the first millennium before Christ among historical circumstances and a culture so different from our own, have to offer such very modern thinkers? This is the first question I have tried to answer.

And I have tried to answer it by writing a biography of the Buddha. That this is a reasonable strategy is by no means obvious, for history is full of figures whose significance lies very little in their personal lives and very much in their teachings alone. But the Buddha is peculiar in this regard, for his teaching and his life are intimately and inextricably mingled.

A brief biography

Let me illustrate this from traditional accounts of the Buddha's life, which have exerted tremendous influence over Buddhists and are now widely available in European languages. The Buddha was born the son of a king, and so grew up with wealth, pleasure, and the prospect of power, all goods commonly desired by human beings. As he reached manhood, however, he was confronted with a sick man, an old man, and a corpse. He had lived a sheltered life, and these affected him profoundly, for he realized that no wealth or power could prevent him too from experiencing illness, old age, and death. He also saw a wandering ascetic, bent on escaping these sufferings. Reflecting on what he had seen, he reached the first great turning-point of his life:

against the wishes of his family he renounced home, wife, child, and position to become a homeless wanderer, seeking release from this apparently inevitable pain.

For some years he practised the trance-like meditation, and later the strenuous self-mortification, which were then current among such wanderers, but he found these ineffective. So he sat down to reflect quietly, with neither psychic nor physical rigours, on the common human plight. This led to the second great change in his life, for out of this reflection in tranquillity arose at last awakening and release. He had 'done what was to be done', he had solved the enigma of suffering. Deriving his philosophy from his experience he then taught for forty-five years, and his teaching touched most problems in the conduct of human life. He founded an order of monks who were to free themselves by following his example, and they spread his teaching abroad in the world. He eventually died of mortal causes, like others, but unlike others he was 'utterly extinguished' (*parinibbuto*), for he would never be reborn to suffer again.

There are good reasons to doubt even this very compressed account, but at least the outline of the life must be true: birth, maturity, renunciation, search, awakening and liberation, teaching, death. This biography, with the two marked transformations, the renunciation and the awakening, gave the Buddha and his followers the dramatic plot with which to illustrate their belief and the psychological and philosophical model on which to found their thought. Dramatically the action centres on spiritual changes achieved by heroic personal application, while philosophically it centres on discoveries made within the Buddha's own mind and body.

Hence he said, 'it is within this fathom-long carcass, with its mind and its notions, that I declare there is the world, the origin of the world, the cessation of the world, and the path leading to the cessation of the world' (S I 62). Within these bounds what he suffered was suffered in

common with all mortal beings. For all mortals, in his words, 'birth is suffering, ageing is suffering, sickness is suffering.' In his view these inescapable and pressing facts were discoverable by anyone through introspection into their own experience. Similarly the means of release were available to everyone. The meditation methods which he developed, for example, are based on such simple and available phenomena as one's own breathing. The morality he espoused was founded in clear and practical principles derived from his own life. The Buddha's laboratory was himself, and he generalized his findings to cover all human beings.

So the second question is, how did the Buddha change and develop? For it is this development which is, in one way or another, the subject of his philosophy. It is a question which has been of central concern to Buddhists, and it is one which the Buddha himself frequently answered. Sometimes he answered it directly by recounting part of his life. Elsewhere he answered it indirectly by stating that if one did X, then the following deleterious consequences would ensue, but if one did Y, then the consequences would be wholesome and conducive to liberation. Behind this lay the assumption that the Buddha knew this because he had witnessed the alternatives. He required of himself, as of his monks, adherence to one rule of evidence: 'that which you affirm [must be] that which you have realized, seen, known for yourself' (M I 265).

It does not follow from the autobiographical nature of the Buddha's philosophy, however, that an account of the Buddha alone would be adequate to explain it. For despite his taste for solitude he was part of his society and its history. He lived amid great and decisive social and intellectual changes, changes whose fruits he inherited and to whose further course he contributed substantially. His thought was revolutionary, but it was a revolution which had already been in the making for a long time. The image I have in mind is that of a wave of change which built up slowly, over centuries, touching every aspect of the lives of the ancient Indians. The Buddha was elevated to the crest of

this wave, and he enjoyed a wide view across human affairs. The problem is to assess how much of his vision he owed to his elevation, to his position in history and to the work of his predecessors and contemporaries, and how much to the keenness of his own sight.

The sources

What evidence do we possess to recount the life and circumstances of a man who lived 2500 years ago? For the life of the Buddha we rely almost entirely on the Buddhist scriptures, preserved in many oriental languages, which have at least the advantage of being very extensive. Those portions which are oldest and which most narrowly concern the Buddha, the *Basket of Discourses* (*Suttapiṭaka*) and the *Basket of the Disciplinary Code* (*Vinayapiṭaka*), take up several library shelves in their various versions. Most of these, furthermore, are represented as being utterances of the Buddha, each spoken on a particular occasion in a particular place. The intention of the Buddha's followers was evidently to preserve the actual words of their teacher in their historical setting.

How well did they achieve this intention? Let us look first at the formation of the Buddhist canon. The canonical discourses take various forms: sometimes they are dialogues into which the Buddha entered with followers of other teachings; sometimes they are answers to specific questions brought to him by his own monks; sometimes they are lessons directed to his monks; and occasionally they are sermons addressed to the laymen who did not leave their homes but were content to support those who did.

The monks were chiefly responsible for preserving this teaching, since it was largely directed to them. The Buddha and his monks were peripatetic for much of the year, but gathered together in separate monasteries for the four months of the rainy season retreat, during the North Indian monsoon. While wandering the Buddha and his monks spread the message abroad, but while in retreat they discussed and

rehearsed the teaching. Indeed, a few of the canonical discourses consist of discussions between monks. Throughout the canon are found slightly different versions of some doctrine or other, and this is no doubt partly attributable to elaborations at the hands of the monks, either during the Buddha's lifetime or after his death. But it also seems likely that the Buddha sometimes changed or improved his teachings, and that the dispersal of the monks allowed both earlier and later versions to be preserved among them, each in a different place.

It was after the Buddha's death that the real work of preservation began. The monks probably held a council shortly after that event, and almost certainly another was held a century later. At these councils they made an effort to establish or authenticate the then extant accounts of the life and teaching of the Buddha, and they were aware of systematic rules governing the acceptance or rejection of a discourse as authentic. Moreover the monks brought to the task of preservation a number of devices. They adopted from the culture around them or developed themselves methods of recitation and memorization. They gave many of the discourses a repetitious and formulaic shape, which facilitated such memorization. They used poetry, which was probably sung – though the Buddha may have already done this as well. And, most important, they divided the discourses into distinct but largely overlapping bodies of material, each of which became the responsibilities of certain monks to memorize and pass on. The scriptures were not written down until three or four hundred years after the death of the Buddha, but these oral and social methods ensured that his words were probably kept better than our print-bound culture would recognize.

This is not to say that the canonical materials are wholly faithful. Some of the Buddha's words were lost, others misunderstood. Some became formulae which were repeated in inappropriate contexts. Moreover the monks added a good deal themselves, and in particular the figure of the Buddha tended to be magnified. Indeed none of the languages in which

the canon now appears was the language of the Buddha himself, whatever it was, though one of them, Pali, is probably very close to it. From internal evidence it seems certain that these oldest texts had crystallized into roughly the shape in which we have them by the time of the second council or shortly thereafter. So at best we can hope to see the Buddha about as well as did his own disciples three generations after his death.

However, it took many Western scholars, working for more than a century, to conclude this much. For some time not too long after the second council the Buddhist order was riven by schisms, and as each group moved apart it preserved the old texts, but rearranged them. And indeed the principle throughout Buddhist history was that, whatever rearrangements occurred, nothing was discarded. But to the old material different schools added new material, and the now expanded canons of each group represented different emphases, and new doctrines, in one or other of the related North Indian languages of Pali, Sanskrit, or one of the Prakrits. These ancient developments took place within the Indian subcontinent, and of this period are preserved in an Indian language only the Pali canon in its entirety and some fragments in the other languages.

But much of the other material still exists in translation. For still later, slightly less than a thousand years after the death of the Buddha, Buddhism moved to China, including Tibet, and a great deal of the material which has now been lost from Indian languages was translated into Chinese and Tibetan and thereby preserved. In these translated canons, however, the old teachings were now quite surrounded, and in effect obscured, by teachings different from those espoused by the Buddha. The Buddhist world, as Western scholarship found it in the nineteenth century, presented practices and opinions at least as varied among themselves as those among Christian churches.

It at first seemed easy to accept that the Pali canon, preserved by the

Theravadins (School of the Elders) of Sri Lanka, Burma and Thailand, was the oldest and most genuine. This is what Theravadins themselves claimed. Since then, however, individual scholars have learned the Pali, Sanskrit, Tibetan, and Chinese which are required to check such claims, and quite ancient texts have come to light from Central Asian hoards. It now appears that, though the Pali texts are still the single most useful source on the Buddha, in many respects they can be corrected and improved by readings from the Central Asian finds or from Tibetan and Chinese. Certainly the Tibetan and Chinese sources are indispensable for establishing what the oldest sources are. In this book the translations and terms are from the Pali sources, but I have used the conclusions of scholars working in other languages to supplement them.

These texts have many virtues, but they are peculiarly weak on one account, the facts that would make up the Buddha's *Who's Who* entry. Most troublesome is the Buddha's chronology. The scriptures give us licence to accept that he lived to a ripe age, eighty years, and that he taught for forty-five years. But the actual dates are another matter. Sources preserved in Sri Lanka and corrected by Western scholars yield a date for the Buddha's death in 483 BC. Sources preserved in Chinese suggest 368 BC. The question is still being actively debated, and will probably go on being debated, for in either case the argument depends upon a long and tenuous chain of inference. The problem illustrates a trait characteristic of the ancient Indians altogether: that they were very little interested in chronology but much exercised over philosophy. Hence we are in the paradoxical situation of having a better idea of what the Buddha thought than of what century he lived in.

The social world of Buddha's India

This is not to say, however, that the sources are weak on history. The Buddha was a practical man who often spoke through concrete examples from the life around him, and this reveals a great deal about

his world. The monks' efforts to conserve the Buddha's words in a realistic setting have the same effect. We learn about what occupations people pursued, how people classified each other, what kinds of political arrangements there were, and what religious institutions were current. It is possible to construct quite a rich and complex picture of the Buddha's India, a picture that can be corroborated from the scriptures of the Buddhists' rivals, the Jains. Indeed it may be said that with the Buddha India first enters history, for in any narrative account it is only at the Buddha's time that detail becomes clear enough to write with confidence of particular kings and states, particular economic arrangements, particular religious teachers and their doctrines.

This relatively static picture can moreover be set in motion by comparison with other sources. For the period preceding the Buddha we have the Sanskrit texts of the Brahmanical tradition (what was later to become Hinduism proper), the *Brahmaṇas* and *Upanishads*. These possess little of the revealing detail of the Buddhist scriptures, since they are the technical literature of a sacrificial, and later an esoteric, cult; nor do they refer to a single period, having been composed over many centuries. But they do testify that the earlier society was quite different in kind from that of the age of the Buddha. These differences are moreover confirmed by the archaeological record. A few centuries before the Buddha there were no cities proper and no states, only a series of small warrior principalities. At the time of the Buddha there were both cities and states, and a century or two after his death North India was to support the Mauryan empire, the greatest state in the subcontinent until the British Raj. The Buddha lived amidst the rise of Indian civilization, just as Socrates lived amidst the rise of Western civilization in ancient Greece.

There also developed in ancient India new and enduring habits of thought, which are in some respects so similar to our own that we have difficulty recognizing them at all. Here the comparison with ancient Greece is especially helpful, for only by looking back to that period of

our own history do we find these habits actually being formed. We now take for granted a language and a way of thinking in which we can talk about human societies in general, or discuss what a universal morality might entail. We are acquainted with the notion that fundamental questions may be asked about ourselves, and that the answers might apply broadly to people in quite different situations. Moreover we easily suppose that such matters can be discussed according to impersonal criteria of truth available to anyone. In sum, we are familiar with thought which is general not particular; abstract not concrete; and argued rather than certified by supernatural sanction, illustrated by customary imagery or sanctioned by tradition.

But when we look to Socrates and his predecessors in Greece, and to the Buddha and his forebears in India, these habits seem fresh and newly acquired. This does not mean that the earlier Greeks or Indians were unable to consider their nature or their society. They certainly did so. But they did so in a way that constrained their reflections within the narrow viewpoint of their own group. They spoke best for themselves and to themselves, and only someone born within the society could fully participate in the fruits of their thought. For their thought was symbolic, in the specific sense that it evoked or expressed – rather than questioned or explained – the shared experience and values of a relatively small-scale community. So long as that experience was shared, and so long as that community did not embrace too many disparate elements, there was no reason, indeed no occasion, for questioning the values.

But with the rise of cities and the growth of a complex, cosmopolitan community, experience was no longer shared nor values unquestioned. The easy correspondence between traditional thought and life no longer held. There were substantial changes in the forms of common life, and with those changes arose the possibility that those forms could be reconsidered, discussed, and reasoned over; people could now philosophize about them. This is the import of Cicero's dictum about

Socrates, that he 'first called philosophy down from the skies, set it in the cities and even introduced it into homes, and compelled it to consider life and morals, good and evil'. Much the same could be said of the Buddha. Neither was much interested in God, gods, or the supernatural, but both were passionately concerned with the ends and the conduct of human life.

Chapter 2
Early life and renunciation

Later traditions embroidered a great deal on the Buddha's early life and appearance, but of this we can rely on little. The conventional images of him are perhaps true to his characteristic posture in meditation, but since such images were not made until centuries after his death they cannot be portraits. There are some grounds for believing that he was handsome according to the tastes of his time, for a relatively early source, the *Aggañña Sutta*, praises his beauty at the expense of the neighbouring king Pasenadi. As for his character apart from his philosophy, little can be said, for in our sources his character *is* his philosophy. We might justifiably assume, however, that he was passionately intense and rebellious in his youth, for no placid and obedient character could have set out to do what he did, still less achieve it.

We are on firmer ground with two facts. First, the Buddha was born among the Sakya people, probably at their capital, Kapilavatthu, now the town of Lumbini in the lowland Terai region of Nepal. Second, his family or clan name was Gotama (Sanskrit *Gautama*; he was not called Buddha, 'awakened', until after the awakening, but for convenience I will use the title throughout). These facts reveal nothing about his childhood or education, but they do place him in the wider Gangetic civilization of which he was a part, and they suggest something of the circumstances which he inherited.

The Sakyas were one of a number of peoples spread along the northern edge of the Ganges basin, at the periphery of the then developing North Indian civilization. When the Buddha was born these peoples were still more or less independent and had roughly similar systems of government. They were ruled by oligarchies or councils of elders, or some mixture of the two, and might therefore best be called tribal republics. Some of these might have elected a leader for a fixed term, but they did not have kings in the strict sense, and therefore the later tradition that the Buddha was a king's son must be dismissed. However the Sakyas considered themselves to have the effective rank of kings, nobles, and warriors in respect of the wider civilization, and indeed they probably did not recognize, as others did, the ceremonial precedence of Brahmans, priests of high rank. They considered themselves an élite, and it is difficult to resist the impression that the Buddha had the confidence of high birth in his dealings with the wider world.

There is evidence that the Sakyas struggled to remain aloof from that world, but they were already deeply embroiled in it. The Buddha's clan name, Gotama, was itself used elsewhere, and probably originally, by Brahmans. Indeed, the very scale against which the Sakyans claimed their high status really only made sense beyond their borders. Moreover they were already in effect tributaries to a king in the south, and were probably tied economically to southern commerce. The Sakyans, and the tribal republics as a whole, were more acted upon than acting. They were to contribute to Indian civilization only their great kinsman, the Buddha, and certain of their values preserved in his teaching.

The centres of change, and of power, lay in the central Ganges basin. A collection of small heroic warrior societies had spread along the river centuries earlier, and these societies developed into centralized monarchical states. There was a traditional list of sixteen of these 'great countries', but already in the Buddha's youth some had swallowed others and were on the way to further conquests. One, Kosala, conquered the Sakyas in the Buddha's lifetime. Another, Magadha,

already ruler of western Bengal and destined to be the nucleus of the Mauryan empire, was to engulf the Vajji confederacy of tribal republics after his death. The future lay with the kings, and not with the republics.

At the heart of these states appeared true urban centres where there had been none before. These swelling cities contained the kings' courts, and to the courts and cities were drawn the makings of an urban life: merchants and craftsmen with new skills, soldiers and labourers, conquered lords to render tribute, the displaced, the foreigners, the opportunists. There was a more complex division of labour and of status between people, and those of different languages and cultures were now thrown together to get along as best they could. The court and the city also drew the countryside into relation with this urban life, through force wielded by the king's soldiers and officials, through the subtler effect of long-distance commerce and through movements of population. The archaeological record shows no planning in these ancient Indian cities: they were chaotic, and that chaos perhaps best symbolizes both the difficulties and the creative possibilities of these newly complex societies. Above all the question was, how were the Indians to understand themselves among these unprecedented forms of common life?

The four estates

They began with one very old intellectual tool, a conception of the different estates in society. This was the property of the old heroic warrior societies, and is reminiscent of the medieval European division of society into those who pray, those who fight, and those who labour: Church, nobility, and peasants. In the Indian case there were four estates (Sanskrit *varṇa*). At the top were the Brahmans, priests of the sacrificial religion and intellectuals. Despite their rank, however, they did not wield power. That was left to the second estate, the Warriors (*khattiya*, Sanskrit *kṣatriya*), whose duty it was to fight, to rule and to pay for sacrifice. This is the rank claimed by the Sakyas, and into this

category fell kings and nobility. The third estate were the commoners, the producers, Husbandmen (Sanskrit *vaiśya*). And the fourth estate, were the Servants (Sanskrit *śudra*), those ineligible for the benefits of sacrificial religion and compelled to a life of servitude under the other three orders. This conception *prescribed* an orderly and hierarchical relationship between the estates, each having certain claims on the others and certain obligations towards them, and each owing respect to the ones above. It also more or less *described* society, for these were communities of rank in which a warrior élite, with their priests, ruled over commoners and the still lower populace of the conquered.

But, most important, this conception of estates was a deeply held and pervasive way of looking at the human world. It was not merely an ideology of different occupations or social ranks, for it also purported to describe the essential characteristics of the people in each estate. To call someone a Warrior, for example, was not just to designate him as a bearer of arms and a ruler, but also to say that he was rich, powerful, generous, heroic, and of noble birth. A Brahman was not just a priest by function, but also inherently endowed with wisdom, virtue, learning, personal purity, and purity of birth. And to call someone a Servant was not merely to refer to his job, but also to his poverty, weakness, vileness, and low birth. Everything significant that was to be known about a person was known through his estate, whether for religious, psychological, political, economic, or social purposes. A person's appearance, psychic and physical endowments, his very essence was determined by his estate. It was as if the estates were different species. In this conception there were no human beings, only Brahmans, Warriors, Husbandmen, and Servants; rather as in the theory of apartheid there are only Blacks, Whites, and Coloureds. In the texts of the older warrior societies, the *Brahmaṇas*, this order of estates is wholly taken for granted. It arose from the experience of the pre-urban Gangetic Indians and expressed the nature of their society. If it was unfair from our point of view, that unfairness was already built into their world in many ways.

However, the estates theory did not bear the same intimate and organic connection to the world centred upon the cities as it had to the earlier heroic world, and that for several reasons. First, it did not comprehend the new variety and complexity of occupation and position. In the older texts, for example, we read nothing of merchants; but in the Buddhist and Jain texts they are a very visible and active part of the scene. In the older texts there are only Warriors, but in the newer there are paid soldiers and salaried officials as well. These and other specializations were dependent upon the new states and the use of money, which arrived in North India only with the cities. These new categories of persons presented the estates theory with formidable difficulties. The theory envisaged a simple agrarian and pastoral world inhabited by four kinds of people. Where did these new figures fit in? What sort of persons were they?

But that was by no means the most pressing challenge offered by the new circumstances, for there was another which struck at the very heart of the estates. This is adumbrated in a Buddhist discourse (M II no.84) which makes two relevant points. First, it asserts that a criminal, whether Brahman or Servant, Warrior or Husbandman, would be sentenced by the king of a newly centralized state strictly according to the seriousness of his deed, not according to his estate. This was quite contrary to the old view, however, for there the punishment – envisaged as reparation or penance – was to be appropriate to the person, to the estate of the transgressor, not only to the crime. Were Brahmans and Warriors to be treated like common criminals? Were the estates not to be respected? And second, the discourse points out that, in the urbanizing world of the Buddha, it was quite possible for someone born of high estate, a Brahman or a Warrior, to be employed as a servant by someone of low estate, a Servant or a Husbandman. Such an eventuality was wholly inconceivable under the old order: Servants could only serve, Brahmans and Warriors only command.

In the discourse these observations are meant to reveal the real state of

the world, as opposed to the hollow pretensions of the Brahmans, the upholders of the estates theory. And it is plausible. If we compare the pre-Buddhist texts with another new literature which began to appear at about the Buddha's time, the *Dharmaśastra* (Science of Law; I refer to the earliest, the *Gautama Dharmaśastra*), we learn that kings were indeed taking new powers of judgement and punishment. In any case they could depose old élites, as in the tribal republics, and raise new ones. We also read in both Buddhist sources and the Law literature that new financial arrangements – credit and debt, interest, a market in land – had come into existence. This bore the possibility that a person of rank and wealth could lose everything through rapacious business practices, or that a person of low status could rise by the same means.

The difficulty for the estates theory was that it had described four ideal types of persons, and each type had been a harmonious blend of characteristics. A Warrior, for example, was a Warrior by birth, a Warrior by political power, and – since power was power over people and land, the only sources of wealth – a Warrior by wealth. But now this was too evidently contradicted by facts. There were Warriors by birth who had neither power nor wealth. There were wealthy men, merchants, who had neither birth nor power. And there were powerful men in the new states who were not Warriors by birth. A person in any of these positions could have found his actual plight at painful variance with the one attributed to him in the estates scheme. That old version of human nature and the human world simply did not express the new reality.

To this problem there were two responses. The first was that of the Brahmans, the theorists of the estates. In their Science of Law, a series of texts which appeared over many centuries after the Buddha, they gradually amended that theory. Their strategy, as in so much of Indian thought, was to keep the old but to build on new additions. They retained the hierarchical order of the estates simply by putting new occupations in old slots: merchants were placed with Husbandmen, while many craft specialities were put in the Servant estate. Regional

groups or tribes were distributed among the lower three estates. They also devised a theory to explain the appearance of hereditary local or occupational groups – now called castes – as the result of intermarriage between different estates. In this enterprise they were, in the long run, so successful that Indians today still understand the complex order of castes according to the simple estates scheme.

But our interest lies with the other response. This was formed, quite in opposition to the Brahmans, by the ascetics and philosophical wanderers whose ranks the Buddha was to join. Their answer is found in both Buddhist and Jain sources, and it is so fundamental to the ascetics' point of view that it must have been already present, in rough form at least, when the Buddha arrived on the scene.

The Buddha expressed this common view in an especially clear form in dialogue with a Brahman (D I no. 4). In the dialogue he asks the Brahman the leading question, 'what makes a true Brahman?' This in effect amounts to asking, 'what makes the best, the supreme species of humankind?', for according to the estates scheme the Brahman is just that. In reply the Brahman claims that he and his fellows hold their elevated position by virtue of a number of qualities which they enjoy simultaneously. They are at once of highest birth, of greatest learning, the most beautiful, the wisest, and the most virtuous.

This is perfectly orthodox: the Brahman believes himself to be an harmonious bundle of praiseworthy qualities. But then the Buddha dissects this claim by enquiring into its details. Could one fairly claim to be a Brahman without pure descent through seven generations on both sides? Well, apparently so. Could one claim to be a Brahman without mastery of Brahmanical learning? Yes. Could one claim to be a Brahman without physical beauty? Most assuredly. But could one claim Brahman status without wisdom and without virtue? No, replied the Brahman, for these were the very grounds on which Brahmans stood, the foundation of their claim to spiritual leadership and high rank.

Wisdom and virtue. One doubts that a Brahman could really have been forced to make these damning admissions, but the very fact that an argument of this form could be made points to a substantial change in intellectual climate. For now not only was the Brahmanical view challenged, but also those two qualities, wisdom and virtue, had become detached from traditional Brahmanical interpretations of them. Virtue: now there was some general view of what might constitute good behaviour quite apart from what might be appropriate to a particular estate. For the Buddha's point is that virtue is something anyone can have: it is not ascribed by birth, but achieved by application. And likewise wisdom is to be achieved and cannot just be ascribed. So the true Brahman is simply the person, born of whatever parentage, who has both wisdom and virtue.

The argument is directed against Brahman pretensions and favours the ascetics' claims to possess wisdom and virtue. But the implication is far greater, for it implies that there is some basic human nature, capable of wisdom and virtue, quite apart from one's estate or position. At a stroke the bewildering variety of different ranks and different fates was set in the background, while in the foreground was set one simple common endowment. In principle any human being can become wise and good. This assumption was made, in one way or another, by many of the Buddha's contemporaries. They spoke, not merely to this or that condition, to this or that estate, but to the human condition as such. It was a revolutionary step, for until it was taken the Indians had no way of speaking of human life beyond the narrow local conception of estates, bound to the older order of Indian society. They now had the opportunity to speak to a very much wider world, and it was an opportunity that the Buddha exploited more than any of his fellows.

Renouncing the world

This may seem momentous to us, but in fact it was but a small part of a much greater project which the Buddha inherited from the wanderers

when he renounced the world. Their concern was not so much human society as its horizons: birth and death, and the vast spiritual cosmos which lay behind the fleeting appearances of this life. They looked upon the society of the Ganges basin as though from afar, and disdained it. They were indeed homeless wanderers (*paribbajakas*), spiritual strivers (*samaṇas*), renouncers of the world and all its fruits. But they were also perhaps India's only true cosmopolitans, citizens of the whole, not just of part.

Their cosmopolitanism is shown by the fact that the young Buddha-to-be knew enough of them in his provincial home to decide to join them. The earliest sources on his renunciation are bare and simple, but they attest well enough to the perspective of the renouncers. He was just 'a youth, with coal-black hair, in the early stages of life' (M I 163) when he left the world. This casts doubt on the existence of the wife and child later traditions awarded him, but it does illustrate that to leave the world was a whole life's vocation.

There was also a specific motive for renunciation: 'it occurred to me that life in the home is cramped and dirty, while the life gone forth into homelessness is wide open; it is difficult to live a spiritual life completely perfect and pure in all its parts while cabinned inside' (M I 241). From this we can infer some of the adventurous high-mindedness associated with the wanderer's life in the Buddha's time. They sought an ideal of perfection elevated beyond the squalid exigencies and mean quarrels of ordinary experience. They were bent not on their own pleasure, but on a lofty enterprise which sometimes brought them honour but also struggle and difficulty. To be a renouncer was a young man's, indeed a romantic's, aspiration, and from this point of view the Buddha was but one of many youths who left home, attracted by the challenge of the wandering life.

But the counterpart to this enthusiasm was a sombre and deeply serious view of such a life's task. First, the refined ideals of virtue and wisdom

laid upon these wanderers a burden of perfection which perhaps few could achieve in detail. And second, they left ordinary life not just because of its irritations, but also because of its dangers. In the bare account of his reflections before renunciation the Buddha's first great change of heart is described thus:

> Why, since I am myself subject to birth, ageing, disease, death, sorrow, and defilement, do I seek after what is also subject to these things? Suppose, being myself subject to these things, seeing danger in them, I were to seek the unborn, unageing, undiseased, deathless, sorrowless, undefiled supreme surcease of bondage, the extinction of all these troubles?

This account is filtered through the Buddha's later thought, but what we can see through the filter is the starkness of the alternatives. The unexamined and uncontrolled life of the home leads only to sorrow and despair, endlessly repeated. Only the renouncer's life offers hope, the hope of looking down upon a morass of desire and suffering from an eminence of knowledge and dispassion. Western writers have often counted this view as unrelieved pessimism, but they have missed the optimism, the prospect of attaining 'the deathless'. The renouncers' attitude was compounded of dark bitterness and bright hope.

What rendered this attitude compelling was a larger theory which lay behind it, explaining and justifying the renouncers' rejection of the world. In this view the ordinary activity of the householder was contrasted with the extraordinary inactivity of the renouncer. For the householder must commit acts or deeds (Sanskrit *karman*) in pursuit of his worldly ends such as sexual pleasure, procreation, the acquisition of goods, and power over others. Such deeds do not include inconsequential ones such as, say, brushing your teeth, but only those which are consequential or fruitful, which substantially affect your own or someone else's condition. Moreover these deeds have spiritual

consequences beyond the purely visible ones, for they are charged with the power to create another body and life for the hapless householder, causing him to be reborn. (If this seems peculiar it should be remembered that it is no less rational than the belief that our deeds consign us to heaven or hell, or that they call down on us supernatural retribution.) And in being reborn he is condemned to suffer and desire in another life just as he does in this one. The suffering of one life, therefore, is but a sample of the endless suffering one will inevitably experience as one dies and is reborn again and again in the 'running on and on', *saṃsāra*, of life in the world, of desire and sorrow.

In contrast the renouncer lives in celibacy, poverty, harmlessness, and desirelessness, which amount not so much to good activity as to inactivity, for he simply does not commit acts which are charged with the awful power to cause him to be reborn. Thereby the successful renouncer escapes the cycle of rebirth completely. True, the householder may achieve a better rebirth (in heaven or as a Brahman) by good deeds, or a worse one (in hell or as an animal) by bad deeds. The householder can control his fate to this extent. But this is as nothing beside the fact that, in whatever birth, even the most exalted, suffering, death, and rebirth are inevitable. Only by renouncing the world entirely, by giving up all flawed activity, can one escape from this awesome mechanism into the 'unborn, unageing, undiseased, and deathless'.

This law of causation is impersonal, not administered by a god, and universal, for it applies to all sentient beings, animal, human, or supernatural, who are reborn in accordance with their acts. Certainly it must have been the development of this view, and not just a criticism of the estate theory, which led the renouncers to discover human nature. For the Buddhist discourse which remarks that anyone can become a servant, or that anyone is punished by a king according to his deeds, also appeals to this universal law of causation. Everyone, the discourse says, whether Brahman or Servant, must experience the consequences of his

deeds in another life, but anyone, Brahman or Servant, may become a renouncer to escape rebirth entirely. These are the fundamental refutations of the estate theory: the social criticism was incidental. What the renouncers saw was the plight of all sentient beings, among whom the human condition was but a special case.

As a novice the Buddha must have found this clearer in outline than in its details. But in any case both the theory of moral causation and the project of escaping it were already established, though on the scale of centuries it was relatively new. In the older pre-Buddhist texts there are only a few hints of it. In later pre-Buddhist texts, the *Upanishads*, it had taken shape. And by the Buddha's time reincarnation was commonly accepted and the renouncers had become in effect a fifth estate, a notably important part of the life of society. There are many unanswered, and unanswerable, questions about how the renouncers and their world-view developed, but in any case their practices and their theory must have developed together. Only a body of men whose practices were moving away from ordinary life could have come to adopt such a distant and sombre view, and only such a grand, general, and all-embracing theory could have justified such a hard life or inspired people throughout the Ganges basin to respect and support the renouncers as mendicants.

The renouncers were made by their world, but they also made it, as teachers, preachers, and exemplars. Their theory of reincarnation has frequently been treated as an irrational religious view, perhaps even a very old one which was already present when the warrior societies conquered North India. There may be some truth in this, but it ignores the power of the theory to explain a complex world, as it ignores the theory's relative sophistication. Whether one were favourably endowed by birth or not, whether one were rising in the king's court or had lost one's ancestral lands, whether one were successful in business or were defeated by the king's armies, the theory could explain it. Success, beauty, and power in this world are the result of

good acts in a previous life. The humble goodness of the poor now will garner its just reward in the next life, while prosperous wrongdoing will be punished. Moreover, not only events within life, but its ultimate ends – birth, old age, and death – were set within a much larger scheme within which they could be remedied. It is not at all surprising that the theory was accepted so widely, in one form or another, throughout Indian civilization, and even by Brahmans. In its use of abstract moral categories of good and evil to apply to all acts, in its positing of a natural law of cause and effect, and in its impersonality it was the product of generations or centuries of intellectual effort. It would continue to be refined and developed by the Buddha and his contemporaries.

Three movements

In the earlier Brahmanical texts the discussion and debate which led to these developments is relatively muted or even silent; but in the Buddhist and Jain texts which reveal the Buddha's immediate environment a multitude of contending voices speak, as though in a tumultuous market-place of philosophical opinions and ascetic practices. There were indeed public debating halls where ascetics of all stamps gathered to dispute. The public lecture or sermon, directed to disciples but also to potential lay supporters, was a common institution. Certain practices were shared – begging, wandering, celibacy, self-restraint – but upon this basic fabric were embroidered a welter of different opinions and philosophies and a fantastic variety of inventive self-torments.

There was an element of self-display in this. Some ate like dogs, others adopted the posture of a chicken, many went naked. More important, much of the self-display was intellectual: the Buddha was later to inveigh against those who were 'clever, subtle, experienced in controversy, hairsplitters who writhe like worms in argument'. But the very terms of abuse put in the mouths of such 'hairsplitters'

demonstrate a heightened quality of debate and the spread of those habits of mind which would allow people to decide between one argument and another: 'you conclude with your assumptions, you assume your conclusions'; 'work to clarify your views'; 'disentangle yourself if you can'. There were different schools of sceptics, philosophers doubtful of the possibility of effective knowledge in this or that matter, and their existence was perhaps the surest sign of the heat and sophistication of the intellectual climate. There were materialists who wholly denied the existence of that unseen spiritual cosmos of transmigration. There were predestinarians who believed in transmigration but who felt that every sentient being must pass through every possible fate before release was possible.

Most relevant to the Buddha, however, are three movements, the first of which can be traced through the Brahmanical texts. In the oldest sacrificial literature the sacrifice had been directed to the person of the sacrificer, in his bodily parts and faculties, in order to imbue him with magical power for the this-worldly ends of success, fertility, and long life. This evolved towards a concern with the other world, life after death, and simultaneously towards a more inward conception of the sacrificer's person, now his Self. And in the *Upanishads*, composed perhaps not long before the time of the Buddha, it is the Self, the inner essence, which is the subject of transmigration, travelling from birth to birth.

The second movement was that of yoga, which in the relevant aspects was so similar to the Upanishadic movement that we may fairly speak of a spectrum of yogic/Upanishadic doctrines. Through the Buddhist scriptures which attack these yogic/Upanishadic views we glimpse a wealth of speculation and many finely differentiated teachings proposing various views of the Self: some said that it was material, some that it was fine-material or made of mind only, while yet others held that each individual has several increasingly refined Selves. With each view

went a slightly different construction of the spiritual cosmos and a panoply of meditation techniques aimed at attaining this Self so that one could sink into it, beyond the pain and confusion of the world and of transmigration.

The third movement is one which we associate today most closely with Jainism. The founder of Jainism was Mahavira, a contemporary of the Buddha; but there is ample evidence that his teaching was largely given in doctrines already in existence, and these doctrines enjoyed a wide influence. This school held a particularly strong version of the transmigration theory, to the effect that to hurt any living being, each of which has a soul, is to injure one's own soul by making defilement adhere to it, as dirt to a cloth. In order to cleanse oneself of defilement already acquired one was to undertake voluntary self-mortification such as fasting; and to avoid further defilement one was to avoid any injury to living beings, great or small: this is the doctrine of harmlessness or non-violence, *ahiṃsa*. Jain self-mortification blended on one extreme with the self-restraint generally expected of all renouncers, and on the other with self-torments of a quite spectacular kind. And similarly harmlessness or non-violence was a common part of the renouncer's morality, practised perhaps most enthusiastically by Jains and proto-Jains but found among others as well.

The Buddha's relation to these movements was complex. In the first place he took some of their offerings and rejected others. He built upon the yogic/Upanishadic concern with introspection and he developed their meditative techniques, but he rejected the yogis' doctrines of the Self. He adapted the teaching of harmlessness to his own purposes, but he discarded self-mortification. However, it was never just a matter of borrowing what he found plausible or of being passively influenced by his predecessors and contemporaries, for what he did accept he transformed, and what he rejected he rejected for reasons which were original and creative. The Buddha found himself in a vigorous, competitive world which importuned him on all sides with predatory

demands for total intellectual allegiance and total acceptance of one way of life or another. The relative simplicity and the cool, magisterial tone of the Buddha's teaching disguise the intensity of his struggle to find his own voice among so many others.

Chapter 3
To the awakening

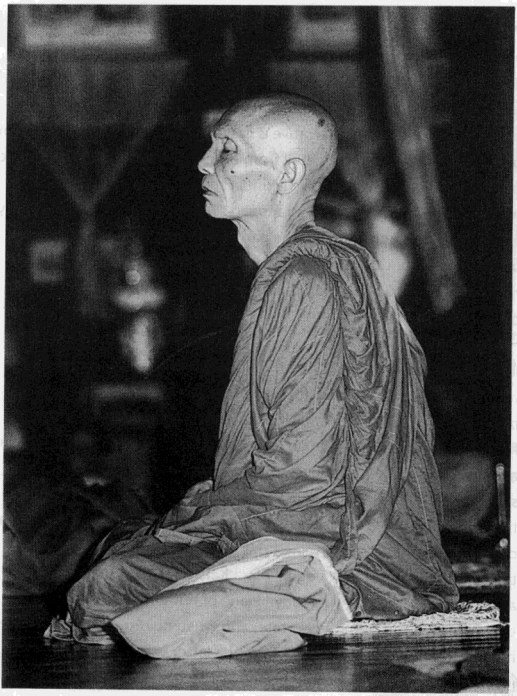
When the Buddha left home he walked south towards the centres of population strung out along the central Ganges basin, and until his death he continued to wander throughout an area roughly 250 miles long and 150 miles wide, from Kosambi in the west to Campā in the east. There does exist a late and unreliable chronology of much of this period, but more to the point is the pattern of the Buddha's wandering life. He evidently spent time in the depths of the forest, and even sheltered in a cowshed. He had contact with both kings and prostitutes, merchants and Brahmans. His role as a peripatetic mendicant allowed him a freedom to see every way of life and every corner of his civilization. He enjoyed a licence allowed to those, the religious beggars, who belonged to no particular part of society, free to move everywhere because in principle they threatened no one. Perhaps only a merchant or a pedlar – those other figures so characteristic of the Buddha's civilization – would have seen so much of that world, would have had such a cosmopolitan experience.

But though the Buddha witnessed his world comprehensively, he was not of it. He was set apart by the high-minded personal morality of the renouncers: 'as a lotus flower is born in water, grows in water, and rises out of water to stand above it unsoiled, so I, born in the world raised in the world, having overcome the world, live unsoiled by the world' (A II 38–9). He sometimes shared a roof with other wanderers, and stayed

frequently for long periods of time in forested parks near the great cities – Rajagaha, Savatthi, Benares, Vesali, Kosambi – which were reserved for wanderers or, later, for the growing Buddhist order.

What we know of this formative period of the Buddha's life, of his encounters with the other wanderers, is contained in a brief, bare account which, shorn of its repetitions and untrustworthy detail, would occupy but a page or two in translation: no very promising source for biography. However, this narrative is cast in terms which themselves can be glossed in considerable detail from other, doctrinal discourses of the Buddha, and once the narrative is unpacked in this way it becomes a more fruitful source than it first appears. To the keen sceptical scholarly eye there is no single detail of the narrative that could pass unquestioned; but the story as a whole is so well connected with the rest of the Buddha's teaching that it must bear a substantial burden of truth.

In that narrative (M I 163–6) the Buddha's first contacts among the renouncers are represented as having been with two teachers of yogic meditation, Āḷāra Kālāma and Uddaka Rāmaputta. The Buddha went first to Āḷāra Kālāma, and 'in no long time' mastered his teaching 'as far as lip reciting and repetition went'. Realizing that this doctrine – itself significantly left undescribed in the narrative – was founded in the teacher's meditative experience, the Buddha asked him, 'To what extent do you declare you have attained this doctrine, witnessing it directly through meditative knowledge?' Āḷāra Kālāma replied that he had attained it as far as the Meditative Plane of nothingness. The Buddha then achieved this meditative state, and when he returned to describe his accomplishment to Āḷāra Kālāma, the latter was so pleased that he invited the Buddha to become his fellow teacher and leader. But the Buddha reflected that 'this teaching does not lead to dispassion, to the fading of desire, to cessation, to peace, to direct knowledge in meditation, to awakening, to release; it leads only to the Meditative Plane of nothingness'. He therefore left Āḷāra Kālāma and went to



1. A Thai monk meditating in the posture conducive to concentration and mental alertness as taught by the Buddha from his own experience.

Uddaka Rāmaputta, where the same course of events took place, the only difference being that Uddaka Rāmaputta's teaching was found to lead not to awakening, but only to the Meditative Plane of neither perception nor non-perception, so the Buddha left him as well.

This was in some ways the most important chapter of the Buddha's search, and clearly any understanding of its significance must turn on the Meditative Planes. What were they? And why did the Buddha reject them?

Meditation

The fundamental practice used to attain such states is roughly similar in all Indian meditative systems, whether the Buddhist or the yogic/Upanishadic. One begins by sitting cross-legged with a straight back in some quiet place. The straightness of the back and the folded legs foster a degree of wakefulness which could not be obtained in a more comfortable position, such as lying down. One then concentrates on some object, in some versions at first a physical object but eventually in almost every case a mental image, a single sensation, or perhaps a silently repeated sound. In an Upanishadic version one might perhaps have concentrated on the Self dwelling in the heart, 'smaller than a mustard seed and golden' (C III 14). Or in a Buddhist version one might concentrate upon a colour such as blue; or in both a Buddhist and a yogic meditation on one's own breath. The counterpart to this concentration on one object is the strenuous exclusion from the attention of other sensations and indeed of merely adventitious thoughts. One is thereby absorbed in the object of meditation – and indeed some measure of this absorption is experienced by anyone who concentrates on some task.

But because the object is held unchanging before the mind's eye for long periods of time, quite extraordinary effects are achieved. Psychologists who have investigated such effects confirm not only that

measurable physical changes accompany such meditation, but also that – quite apart from beliefs about what should happen – there are psychological changes such as a heightened awareness of the object of meditation, feelings of comfort and pleasure, and detachment from the surroundings and from one's own preoccupations. (These states are now much better known in the West than they were a generation ago.)

On the scale of meditative accomplishments these are relatively modest effects. There are others as well, such as the appearance of peculiar sensations or a light; and even entire complex visions may be witnessed. These further effects may, in some systems, become objects of meditation themselves and may represent the whole purpose of the discipline.

Since all meditative experiences are so radically subjective it seems difficult to find a language in which to couch an objective or value-free account of them. But there are nevertheless circumstantial accounts of a series of meditative states found in Buddhist texts, states which correspond roughly to those described in some yogic texts; and this Buddhist scheme has the advantage from our point of view of offering relatively unadorned descriptions of attitudes and experiences in meditation, descriptions which could as easily describe meditation in one system as in another. Indeed this Buddhist scheme is so untainted by dogma that it has been adopted by Western psychologists attempting to describe the phenomenon of meditation in general.

This scheme is that of the four Absorptions (*jhāna*), a graduated series of increasingly deep meditative states. In the first Absorption the meditator becomes oblivious to everything around him, though still capable of both casual and concerted thought, and his attention dwells unbrokenly on the object of meditation. In this state he enjoys both bodily comfort and the more refined mental pleasure attendant on such

relaxed concentration. The meditator in this frame of mind is untroubled by unachieved desires, or by anger, or by torpor, or by doubt and restlessness.

In the second and third Absorptions the meditator gradually leaves off thinking entirely, becoming more and more absorbed in the object of meditation alone, and with this increased concentration and simplification he also transcends his feelings of comfort and intellectual pleasure. He is bent upon the object of meditation alone. And finally, in the fourth Absorption, the meditator is aware only of the object, and of an abiding sense of firm equanimity, beyond feelings of pain or pleasure. Indeed from his point of view he might be said to have increasingly *become* the object of meditation, in that he is aware of little else save the bare fact of his firm concentration or 'one-pointedness'. These four Absorptions were eventually to play a special part in the system of training elaborated by the Buddha, representing specific useful skills in the manipulation of one's own experience.

Beyond the Absorptions, however, there were further meditative accomplishments, the Meditative Planes (*āyatana*). These are described in the Buddhist literature in a relatively abstract and colourless way, but it is very likely that in the yogic systems where they originated they were actually held to be, in some sense, places or spheres, locations in the unseen spiritual cosmos. To reach them was perhaps even conceived as a sort of astral travel. There are hints of such regions in the spiritual cosmography of the *Upanishads* and yogic texts, and the Buddhist descriptions of other yogic systems suggest this as well. Indeed in later Buddhist cosmography these were spiritual planes inhabited by gods. Even the abstract early Buddhist account of them cannot disguise that they are not, like the Absorptions, a general description of meditation appropriate to any number of specific meditation theories, objectives, and techniques. They are rather bound to some specific view of the topography of the unseen world. And this is not surprising, for once

having resolutely set aside the world of everyday experience such a meditator was likely to supply himself with a map of the territory he had now entered.

In the Buddhist scheme of the Meditative Planes these states are achieved by leaving off 'perceptions of variety', a phrase which, though not entirely clear, seems to mean that the particular qualities perceived in the object of meditation are transcended, so that the meditator remains conscious though no longer with a detailed and defined object of consciousness. And we can see this in the first such state, the 'Meditative Plane of undelimited space'. Here the meditator is conscious of extension, though with no perception of a limitation or a quality in that extension. It is in effect infinite. In the second Meditative Plane, that of 'undelimited consciousness', the meditator is aware of consciousness alone, though with no awareness of a delimiting object of consciousness. In the third Meditative Plane the meditator is barely aware that 'there is nothing' – an awareness, according to more detailed later Buddhist texts, rather like that of coming into a room and finding no one there: it is not an awareness of *who* is not there, but just an awareness of absence. This is the Meditative Plane of nothingness. It can only be transcended in the Meditative Plane of neither perception nor non-perception, in which consciousness is so refined, or suppressed, that the meditator can only just retrieve from such a state an awareness of its existence.

I suspect that such deep trances may account for some of the more spectacular feats of yogic athleticism attested in India today. Breathing is almost wholly suppressed, the heart rate markedly slowed, and other physiological signs yet further altered. Of course this modern Western physiological description was not how the yogis viewed the matter, nor can they have seen it with quite the colourless abstraction of the Buddhist description. In their eyes such experience, being after all the consummation of their efforts, was located in some more highly coloured spiritual landscape. It may have been something like that

found in the *Upanishads*, where there is considerable concern with the Self as found in deep sleep, which might have been thought to be equivalent to such profound meditation. Or it may have been like the 'meditation without qualities' found in some early yogic texts of the Indian epic, the *Mahabharata*. But in any case the achievement of such states must be regarded as a testimony to human self-discipline and self-transcendence.

The Buddha's rejection of meditation

Yet the Buddha rejected such states; or, to be more accurate, he rejected the yogic teachers' assertions that they represented the culmination of the spiritual life. Why? A first approximation to an answer can be found in the *Sallekha Sutta* (M I 40–6), the Discourse on Complete Expunging. There the Buddha outlines the meditative states, both the Absorptions and the Meditative Planes, and he refers to all these as 'tranquil abidings' and as 'comfortable abidings in the here and now'. But these are distinguished from 'complete expunging', i.e. total release from the sufferings of birth and death, which is achieved by following the elaborated path that the Buddha promulgated after his awakening. From this point of view the meditative states are finally inadequate for two reasons. First, they are *merely* temporary states, *only* abidings in the here and now. This criticism is echoed more clearly elsewhere (M III 243–5), where the Buddha notes that, though the skilled meditator can remain for a very long period of time in a meditative state, that state is nevertheless impermanent, liable eventually to dissolve. And again (M III 236–7), a meditator who believes himself to have achieved final and decisive relief through such states is in fact doing something quite different: he is in fact scurrying back and forth pointlessly between 'distress' (ordinary consciousness) and 'the physical comfort of solitude', or at best between 'the fleshless pleasure [of meditation]' and 'the [mere] feeling of neither pleasure nor pain'. So in other words, though these meditative accomplishments offer temporary, even quite long-

standing, release, they do not offer a decisive and permanent end to suffering. One must finally emerge only to find that one is still unchanged.

Second, as is implicit in the Discourse on Complete Expunging, such meditative skills are, when compared to the rounded fullness of the Buddha's post-awakening system of training, one-dimensional and narrow, leaving untouched both intellectual and moral development. We can see how this might be so from an analogy with mountain climbing: though the abilities and mental traits developed in such an enterprise might be conducive to some wider development of character in the climber, they do not necessarily do so. Courage and endurance can be used to quite immoral and destructive ends. So though the Buddha had mastered the meditative skills, they did not in themselves release him from ordinary waking life.

It is important, however, to gain a balanced view of what the Buddha was rejecting. On the one hand, he rejected the yogic teachers' claims that their particular accomplishments led to final release. But on the other hand, he implicitly accepted that meditation is, in some ways, the spiritual tool *par excellence*. The Absorptions in particular appear throughout his discourses as accomplishments of great usefulness. A meditator thus skilled would have great powers of concentration; for him there would 'remain an equanimity, cleansed and purified, soft, malleable, and resplendent' (M III 243), like the gold melted and purified by a goldsmith before it is fashioned into an ornament. This concentrated equanimity – of course by no means the sole property of Buddhist meditators – could then be used to attain the final goal of specifically Buddhist awakening and release.

His final view of the Meditative Planes is more difficult to pin down. On the one hand they are sometimes mentioned, in passages sprinkled through the canon, as achievements very near to final release. One could indeed take them a step further to 'complete

cessation of what is perceived or felt' by a little more of the same kind of effort. But broadly speaking the canon makes it clear that this 'complete cessation' is not yet final liberation, for beyond that is still required an intellectual and emotional change, the acquisition of a Buddhist wisdom. The Buddha was evidently willing to accept many paths to release, even ones very near those of his yogic teachers; but the final goal still had to be achieved by a quite different step, a change in quality of thought and feeling, not in quantity of meditative effort.

The value of direct experience

The usefulness of the narrative of the Buddha's encounter with the yogis does not end there, however, for it also points to the positive and creative direction the Buddha was to take. This is implicit in the terms in which the yogis are criticized: for it is not their theories which the Buddha here finds wanting – though theories such as they must have held are attacked in many places in his discourses – but their practice. They fall short because, whatever view of the spiritual cosmos clothed their meditative techniques, it was the techniques themselves which were inadequate. On the one hand this signals that the Buddha was to move towards creating his own special forms of meditation, forms beside which methods such as the Absorptions were to take a subsidiary place. On the other hand it betokens the formation of an abiding attitude which must have marked the man as it deeply marked his teaching, an attitude which might be called a stubbornly disciplined pragmatism. Whatever teachings or practices the well-stocked market-place of ancient Indian thought offered him, they had to be shown to be useful in his own experience for him to accept them.

We can understand the significance of this attitude by looking at the Buddha's milieu. Centuries later, India recognized certain authorities or criteria of valid knowledge, by which spiritual truth could be tested, and these criteria were already implicitly present at the Buddha's time. One

such criterion was simply whether a teaching appeared in the Brahmanical scriptures, including the *Upanishads*; and we can see that the Buddha was not inclined to accept this, in his view, pretentious and foreign tradition. A second authority the Buddha showed no sign of accepting was the testimony of august inspired teachers of the past on the basis of their supernormal experience. For the Buddha was self-confident, even rebellious, sure that if the problem of suffering were to be solved it had to be of such a nature that he could solve it; and in any case these teachers were not separated from him by centuries in which their knowledge could have gained an unassailable superhuman authority, but were present to him in the flesh and insistent that he could himself experience their knowledge and the liberating fruit of that knowledge. A third authority, that of sheer reasoning or inference, was hardly amenable to him, perhaps because of his already formed commitment to meditation. So he depended wholly upon a fourth criterion, that of direct personal knowledge, direct personal experience, 'direct witnessing in the here and now'. As the Buddha expresses it this criterion seems such ordinary common sense that we can hardly say he invented it, but he was unique and original in insisting on its rigorous and exclusive application.

The consequences of this attitude appear throughout the Buddha's mature teaching. 'Know not by hearsay, nor by tradition . . . nor by indulgence in speculation . . . nor because you honour [the word of] an ascetic; but know for yourselves' (A I 189). The Buddha's monks were not to speculate about the future or the past, or about such recondite questions as the beginning or end of the world. They were to limit their concern and efforts to one thing, the arising and cessation of suffering within 'this fathom-long carcass'. There are many possible kinds of knowledge, asserted the Buddha, but only those touching this immediate experience were of relevance to his disciples in their search for liberation.

In the Buddha's own search this attitude of circumscribed

pragmatism was however not merely a matter of clinging blindly to meditative practices alone. It also led him to reject outright the sort of theories which must have accompanied his yogic teachers' practices. This is not surprising, for, after all, meditative practices must be carried out in the light of some theory of their purpose, of the human constitution and its spiritual environment, and if the techniques fail then doubt must be cast on the theories themselves. We do not of course know just what his teachers' theories were, but we may be fairly certain that they fell within the range of yogic/Upanishadic thought. Moreover, it is clear from those discourses in which the Buddha assails such theories that they shared, from his point of view, certain common characteristics. They were all theories of the Self (Sanskrit *ātman*), though the term used for that indwelling personal principle might have differed from system to system.

Knowledge of the self

At issue was the peculiarly yogic conception of knowledge. For the knowledge of the Self promulgated in such systems was radically different from other sorts of knowledge. From the yogic point of view the knower (the self) is identical with the known (the Self), and these in turn are identical with the knower's frame of mind.

To get the measure of this let us begin with a contrasting example of ordinary knowledge, that of a skilled goldsmith. (Such examples were frequently used by the Buddha himself, since they already have stamped on them his peculiarly pragmatic turn of mind.) In this case there can be no doubt that the knower, the goldsmith, is inherently different from what he knows. As a craftsman and as a knowing subject he is clearly to be distinguished from his knowledge of the gold, of its properties and uses, and of the skills by which gold may be manipulated. Though we might admit that he would not be much of a goldsmith without the knowledge, we would never in the ordinary course of things be tempted

to say that he was identical with his knowledge. The man is one thing, the knowledge another.

Nor would we be tempted to say that a goldsmith's frame of mind was identical with the goldsmith himself. A goldsmith might be angry and upset, or tranquil and alert, and he would still be a goldsmith. Nor, again, would we confuse his frame of mind with his knowledge. Whether angry or tranquil he would still have the knowledge of goldsmithing. In the case of the goldsmith the knower, the known, and the frame of mind are clearly separate things even if associated in one goldsmith.

But the introspective yogic knowledge of the Self is quite another matter. For, in the first place, in this yogic knowledge the knower is the same as the known: the Self with a capital 'S', that which is to be known, is the same as the knowing self with a small 's': indeed the Upanishadic texts which proclaim this do not differentiate between the two senses of 'self'. To 'know' oneself in this yogic sense is also to 'attain' or 'become' one's Self. The power of the Upanishadic vision lies precisely here, in that the witness, the subject of knowledge, reaches a condition in which it witnesses only itself. It is a vision of radical simplification, of the perfect self-identity of the Self. 'There is in it [the Self] no diversity' (B IV 4 19). To realize this Self the yogi has only to turn inward upon himself.

This radical simplification has other consequences as well. Since there is no duality of perceived and perceiver, there are also no perceivable or analysable qualities in the Self (B IV 4 13). If, for example, what is to be realized in meditation is the Self as (meditative) Bliss – one Upanishadic formulation – then the Self is, from the point of view of the meditator, identical with Bliss. The Bliss cannot be separated out, distinguished, from the Self. Or again, if the Self to be realized is the 'Self without qualities' (perhaps in what Buddhists would call a Meditative Plane), then there is no frame of mind 'without qualities'

separate from the Self; for in the Self there is 'no diversity'. One can see the plausibility of this from the yogi's point of view, for in accomplished states of meditation he may feel precisely this sense of *becoming* an object of meditation, of total simplification of his experience.

Moreover, such an experience of radical simplification also implies the immutability of the Self: for, since the Self is so perfectly unified, it cannot be thought of as changing, as losing old qualities and taking on new ones. Indeed the 'Self without qualities' could never, by its very definition, be shown to change. And to say immutable is to say eternal. The Buddha's answer to this was that, precisely because such meditative states stop sometime, they cannot be eternal: but for a meditator bolstered by the conviction that what he sought was eternal, the very experience of stability and simplification in meditation would confirm the conviction of eternity. It would confirm as well the conviction that this eternal, immutable, radically simple Self was beyond the world of cause and effect, uncreated, 'unborn' (B IV 4 20). It could not be analysed, broken down into constituent parts (B IV 4 13). It would for him be the all-embracing and undifferentiated 'ground of the universe' (*Brahman*).

The Self, in short, is an eternal, seamless whole, self-identical, beyond phenomenal appearances and unanalysable, yet to be achieved and known through yogic meditation. This yogic vision was a powerful and persuasive one, perhaps precisely because it cut through all the diversity and potential confusion of ordinary experience and offered at a stroke a decisively simple view of the ultimate reality. Any one feature of the vision – the experience of deep meditation, the question of what lies beyond the painful world of appearances, or the nature of Self-knowledge – leads inexorably towards each of its other features. It is no wonder that, despite the Buddha's best efforts, its career continued and expanded in Hindu India.

But, on the other hand, once one bit of it begins to unravel, the rest

follows swiftly. We can reconstruct how the Buddha's pragmatic reasoning about meditation led him to reject the Self theories through a discourse in which the Buddha replies to the questions of the ascetic Poṭṭhapāda (D I 185 ff.). If – to pick up the thread at the experience of deep meditation – the meditator is able to witness the Self directly and thereby attain knowledge of it, it could be asked, and was asked by Poṭṭhapāda, whether the frame of mind of deep meditation arises first, and only afterwards the knowledge of the Self appropriate to that frame of mind, or whether the knowledge of the Self comes first, and then the frame of mind, or whether they are simultaneous. That is, could Poṭṭhapāda expect to reach some meditative state and then cast about for the Self, or would the attainment of the state automatically entail the attainment of the Self?

To this the Buddha quite plausibly answered that a particular consciousness or frame of mind arises first, and then the knowledge which accompanies that consciousness. This is the Buddha's meditative pragmatism speaking. For the skilled meditator, having trained to achieve that consciousness, 'knows that it is from such-and-such conditions that such a consciousness has arisen in me'. The meditator's practical skill is in manipulating the causes and conditions in himself which give rise to progressively more refined states of consciousness. It is upon that achievement, and upon the practical knowledge of introspective psychology that goes with it, that his eventual knowledge of the Self rests.

One can see how even the yogic teachers might have given away this much, for after all there is a good deal of training and skill, and of practical advice to go with it, in any meditative system. But once this is admitted the whole yogic system begins to crumble. For from this radically practical point of view the meditative state, caused and conditioned by the yogi's training, cannot be equivalent to an uncaused, unborn, unanalysable Self: the state itself is quite analysable and clearly caused by something.

In the discourse the Buddha continues to spin out the implications of this pragmatism. Poṭṭhapāda asks another question: 'is the consciousness or frame of mind the same as the Self, or are the Self and the consciousness different?' To this the Buddha posed the counter-question, 'but what is the Self you profess to believe in?' The sense of this question lies in the fact that, though the basic form of Self-theories was the same from the Buddha's point of view, there were evidently many variants in the theory. Different theories might place their version of the Self in rather different spiritual landscapes, or one theory might contain a teaching of several increasingly refined Selves leading up to the ultimate one. So Poṭṭhapāda first offered this: 'I profess a material Self, having a specific form, made of the four elements and nourished by solid food.' The Buddha then replied that 'if there were such a material Self, then the frame of mind and the Self would be different; . . . for even granting such a Self, still some frames of mind would come into being, and others would pass away'. When Poṭṭhapāda then changed tack, and proposed first a Self made not of material, but of mind-stuff, and then one of consciousness alone, the Buddha reiterated his argument; the Self so constituted must be one thing, the frame of mind or state of consciousness quite another. And the reason for this is quite clear: by a yogic definition the Self, whether it is material, immaterial, or made of consciousness, must be eternal, unchanging, and independent of the causes and conditions of this world. But it is a fact of meditative experience that states of consciousness come and go, for reasons that the meditator himself can understand and, to some limited extent, control. So whatever might be eternal, it is not the states of consciousness, and they must therefore be different from the eternal Self.

The Buddha was aided in this judgement by the use of a word which he took into his vocabulary and made his own. The root meaning of the word (*saṃkhata*) is something like 'prepared' or 'composed'. It covers a rather wider field than 'prepared', however, and in fact it has two meanings which are relevant here: it means 'willed' or 'intended' and it

also means 'caused' or 'conditioned'. Meditative states are *saṃkhata*. They are attained by the will or intention of the meditator, and this also means that they are caused and conditioned. They are attributable to certain preceding causes and dependent on certain contemporaneous conditions being fulfilled. As such they are not at all 'unborn', nor are they independent of circumstances.

One might speculate that this is as far as he took his investigation of meditation and the Self at the time of his encounter with the yoga teachers, but in his mature teaching the Buddha unravels their theory of the Self a great deal further; so far, in fact, that he was to reject it entirely and propose in its place the characteristic Buddhist doctrine of non-self, *anatta*, the absence of an eternal, independent Self, whether in ordinary consciousness, in meditative states, or anywhere else. This teaching was well integrated with his other thought on both ethics and psychology. In his mature view this eternal Self could not be witnessed at all, and those who believe in it are likened to a man who says that he is in love with the most beautiful woman in the land, but is unable to specify her name, her family, or her appearance (D I 193).

This eternal Self is, in other words, a product of speculation, of falsely understood meditative experience, or of hearsay. The Buddha was willing to admit the existence of a self – and here the lower-case 's' is very appropriate – but that self was merely 'an agreed term, a common form of words, a worldly usage, a practical designation' (D I 202). One could reasonably say 'discipline yourself' or 'know yourself', but in so saying one would not be assuming the existence of an eternal entity. The Buddha drew an analogy with milk. Milk can become curds, then butter, and then ghee, but there would be no point in speaking of an abiding entity (milkness?) which would persist through these changes: milk is just milk, butter just butter. The British scholar T. W. Rhys Davids put it in these terms:

> when the change (in the composition of the personality) has reached a

certain point, it is convenient to change the designation, the name, by which the personality is known – just as in the products of the cow. But the abstract term is only a convenient *form of expression*. There never was any personality, *as a separate entity*, all the time.

So when we say, 'I feel as if I am a different person today', we are in fact alluding to an important truth about human nature. This is a difficult doctrine, and a courageous one, in that it led into waters uncharted by the meditators of the Buddha's time. One difficulty is that of purely intellectual understanding. When the Buddha went on to develop a new method of meditation it was aimed at analysing in detail the self (small 's') of the meditator. By this method one could see how this self was in fact 'composed', made up from previous causes and subsisting on contemporaneous conditions. The doctrine in detail is one of formidable complexity, but its basic principle is simple. Just as milk progressively changes, so the self which we experience changes continually for specifiable reasons.

The real difficulty is not, however, one of intellectual understanding, but of emotional plausibility. Anyone might ask with alarm: how can I, with my well-developed sense of myself, be expected to accept that I have no self? The intellectual answer is that one has a self, but no eternal Self. But it is the emotional answer which is important. Since anyone attempting to attain or witness an eternal unchanging Self was, in the Buddha's view, bound to failure, the doctrine of the Self was an invitation to further suffering: 'such [a doctrine of the eternal Self] is merely a sensation, a writhing in discomfort, of those venerable ascetics and Brahmans who neither know nor see, and who have fallen victim to desire [for such a Self]' (D I 40–1). So to give up such a doctrine was to give up a potent source of frustration. The emotional tone of the teaching of non-self was that of a calm and relieved detachment. It was a liberation which transcended the frustrated strivings of those who revolve around a Self 'like a dog tied to a post' (M II 232–3).

Release from bondage through self-mortification

But let us return for the moment to that point at which the Buddha realized that these yogic systems of meditation in their very nature led to mutable states of consciousness quite different from their avowed object, the eternal Self. From such a conclusion two further consequences might follow. One is that there is indeed no eternal Self, and that is the path the Buddha eventually took. The other is that the Self exists, but is not to be obtained by yogic methods. Another discipline, however, might lead to its achievement, and there was such a discipline at hand: the method of self-mortification and extreme asceticism which we know best through Jainism. On such a view the eternal principle in the individual, called the *jīva*, the 'life' or 'soul', is held in the world of suffering by the effects of transgressions committed in earlier lives, and these effects adhere to the soul like dirt. By avoiding further transgressions one obviates further bondage in the world of suffering, and by self-mortification and voluntary penances one burns away the effects of former transgressions from the soul, so that it rises to bliss and eternal freedom from pain. Here there is no necessity for meditation, nor for the application of introspective knowledge, though the theory probably did hold, as Jainism does, that knowledge, indeed omniscience, would miraculously result from the successful prosecution of such asceticism.

So after leaving Uddaka Rāmaputta, the yogic teacher, the Buddha turned to self-mortification, and the canonical discourses leave no doubt about the sincerity of his efforts in this direction. He stopped breathing completely, so that 'violent winds racked my head . . . and violent winds carved up my belly, as a skilled butcher . . . carves up an ox's belly with a sharp knife' (M I 244). Passing deities thought he was dead. Then he gave up eating more than a handful of food daily, so that 'my spine stood out like a corded rope, my ribs projected like the jutting rafters of an old roofless cowshed, and the light of my eyes sunk down in their sockets looked like the gleam of water sunk in a deep well' (M I

2. The Buddha as an ascetic, starving himself in an unsuccessful attempt to achieve release.

245). Passers-by thought him a black man, so much had his austerities affected his clear complexion. By the extremity of these exertions the Buddha came to the conclusion that 'in the past, present, or future, whatever ascetic or Brahman might experience such painful, racking, and piercing feelings, he will not exceed this' (M I 246).

But he also came to the conclusion that 'by these gruelling exertions I have by no means gone beyond the common human condition to an eminence of knowledge and vision appropriate to those who are truly (spiritually) noble'. Or, in other words, all he had to show for it was a prominent rib-cage. 'There must be another path to wisdom.'

The Middle Path

In the traditional narrative this conclusion brought the Buddha to the threshold of awakening. But it also brings us to substantial difficulties in the interpretation of the sources. For, on the one hand, the Buddha is represented in the narrative as having reached, in a relatively short time, the saving knowledge, the certainty that 'birth is exhausted, the ascetic's life has been consummated, what was to be done has been done' (M I 249). Indeed the awakening is meant to have taken place within one night. However, it is already clear that the Buddha's progress towards awakening was long and complex, a process in which he gradually transformed himself by various disciplines and worked out an acceptable view of himself and the world. This was recognized in later discourses: 'just as the ocean slopes gradually, falls away gradually, shelves gradually, with no sudden drop, so in this teaching the training, the practice, the path are gradual, with no sudden penetration of knowledge' (A IV 200–1).

How are we to resolve this contradiction? In the first place, we must accept that the purely biographical narratives are compressed accounts: they are stories, and they are stories which march at a smart pace. Their material was meant not only to be historical, but to be an inspiration to

later disciples, so they were fitted into a relatively manageable span. They had dramatic tension. Hence, even if we accept that the awakening, as a moment of certainty in the Buddha's mind that he was indeed on the right path, did take place on a single night, that certainty was long in the making and longer in the elaboration of its implications.

In the traditional account the Buddha, realizing the pointlessness of extreme asceticism, accepted a reasonable meal and sat down to find that other path. In effect, that is, he accepted a still relatively disciplined asceticism, but one which avoided extremes of sensual indulgence or of self-mortification. He was soon to designate this more measured asceticism the 'Middle Path'.

He also recollected a time when, as a child, he had sat under a rose-apple tree while his father had worked in the fields. He had on that occasion entered the first Absorption, 'accompanied with casual and applied thought, and with bodily happiness and the mental pleasure born of seclusion'. And he recognized that 'this might well be the way to awakening' (M I 246).

This account alludes only indirectly to the Buddha's original meditative accomplishments before the awakening. These accomplishments were composed, on the one hand, of his already established habit of meditative pragmatism, of his concentration upon what he could witness by, and within, himself; and on the other, of his now hardened inclination to analysis and criticism. For despite his rejection of the yogis' doctrine, he continued to cultivate the awareness of mental and physical states, an awareness which had arisen out of the yogis' psychic technology. If it was impossible to find an enduring entity, a Self with a capital 'S', through and behind these mutable experiences, it was possible at least to have an insight into the nature of these evanescent psychophysical processes themselves. Here were matters which could be directly witnessed and directly understood, and it was upon these processes that the Buddha turned the full weight of his concentration

and driving curiosity. For if he could not find a Self, he could at least find release.

What these efforts gave rise to was a distinguishable meditative skill, quite different from that practised by other yogis. For this concern with immediate experience required not only a power of concentration, but also a kind of mindfulness and self-possession through which the Buddha could in fact see what was going on in his mind and body. Indeed it was just these qualities, mindfulness and self-possession (*satisampajañña*), which were to be taught throughout the Buddha's mature discourses. They demanded the ability to witness here and now with full lucidity the inner and outer states of oneself (and, by extension, the analogous experiences of others). The single most important text for the training of his own disciples was to be the Great Discourse on the Foundations of Mindfulness (D II 290 ff.), and these foundations are the dispassionate, immediate, and clear perceptions of the meditator's own body, feelings, state of mind, and mental contents. Such alert perceptions presupposed to an extent the one-pointedness and equanimity of the Absorptions; but they required at the same time a bright awareness of the smallest perception. This emphasis on, and elaboration of, wakeful and energetic introspection constituted the Buddha's unique contribution to meditative technology. From the conclusions based on this introspection the awakening was to flow.

How can one treat objectively, and analyse, one's own immediate feelings and attitudes? Would not the effort to perceive passions dispassionately, for example, destroy the object of study itself? The answer to these questions lies in the course of training to which the Buddha had already subjected himself, albeit unsystematically, in his search. In the pursuit of both meditative accomplishments and asceticism the Buddha had repeatedly disciplined himself to ignore those sensations and impulses which ordinarily issue in action or reaction, and which would thereby have deflected him from his

purpose. He had ignored the calls of hunger and thirst which accompanied his fast, as he ignored those pains of the body and distractions of the mind which accompany long and arduous meditation. The effect of such long discipline – as meditators today attest – is not only to achieve a reproducible tranquillity, but also to break long-standing, automatic, and unconscious habits. One would ordinarily break a fast to eat, but the ascetic does not. One would ordinarily shift from a physical position which grows increasingly uncomfortable, but the meditator does not. To get the measure of this meditation, try this experiment: sit in the most comfortable possible position in a comfortable chair, and try to hold that position without moving for an hour. The Buddhist prediction is that within minutes you will wish to scratch the nose, twitch the finger, shift the leg. What if one could watch these urges arise and pass away with no movement at all?

But this is not to say that impulses to respond to such calls disappear, for they do not, or at least not permanently. In the meditator such impulses simply do not issue in a reaction. He is tranquil, his mind is malleable (*kammañña*). He can temporarily ignore such impulses completely if he chooses, as in an Absorption, but his long-term relationship to such impulses is also changed, for he can now respond to such impulses in a reasoned rather than an automatic way.

Moreover, just because such sensations and impulses do not disappear, he can choose to exercise mindfulness, securely founded in his now habitual equanimity, to observe and analyse them. Whereas the ordinary unskilled person can with clarity contemplate painful or pleasurable sensations, and the accompanying impulses and emotions, only in the tranquillity of memory, safely removed from their effects by time, the meditator learns to do so immediately, as they actually occur. It must be the case that, because of his long training, the meditating ascetic perceives his pains, pleasures, and urges as being less poignant and pressing, but this does not change their fundamental nature. And in

any case the meditator may still use memory, and the observation of other people, to confirm that what he observes of his relatively controlled emotions must also be true of less controlled emotions.

This new form of meditation was to be called insight (*vipassanā*) meditation. It was the Buddha's experimental method, his way of gathering information, and upon this information about his presently occurring states of body and mind his analysis of the human condition was to be erected.

Chapter 4
The awakening

In Buddhist countries the awakening is thought to have occurred on a single night of the full moon of the lunar month Vesakha, April–May, as the Buddha sat beneath a huge Bodhi tree (*ficus religiosus*). With the awakening (*sambodhi*) the Buddha attained, first, a knowledge of the nature of the human condition that would lead to salvation and, second, the certainty that he himself had attained liberation from the sorrows of that condition. The early scriptures attribute many doctrines, and certainly the most important ones, to the night of the awakening itself, so that the awakening is made to bear the weight of the whole of the Buddha's mature teaching. Even if this is not literally true, the knowledge and certainty of that night must lie at the base of the mature teaching.

The awakening grew out of a creative tension between two governing convictions. One was that the answer was to be sought in painstaking attention to the minutiae of experience as witnessed in insight meditation (though the articulated method of that meditation may not yet have been fully formed). But if this consideration alone had informed the Buddha, he might have become only a minor contributor to yogic thought. The other conviction, however, was that of the truth of transmigration, and the Buddha's conception of this gave his teaching a scope and a purchasing power in human life which transcended the narrow yogic concerns. The Buddha's originality

stemmed from his close analysis of individual experience, but his importance stemmed from his acceptance of this common Indian belief in rebirth.

In the Buddha's case this belief came down to a deep moral seriousness. In other teachings the doctrine of transmigration went with an elaborate view of the spiritual cosmos within which transmigration occurs. One moves up and down, becoming now an animal, now a god, now the denizen of some hell, and again a Warrior or Brahman, a slave or a king (Buddhism itself was later to be prolific in the production of such views). But for the Buddha the specific details of transmigration were never so important as the principle underlying it: human action has moral consequences, consequences which are inescapable, returning upon one whether in this life or another. There *is* a fundamental moral order. One cannot steal, lie, commit adultery, or 'go along the banks of the Ganges striking, slaying, mutilating and commanding others to mutilate, oppressing and commanding others to oppress' (D I 52), without reaping the consequences. There *is* an impersonal moral causation to which all are subjected. Misdeeds lead to misery in this life or in later lives. The Buddha's teaching was devoted to the apparently selfish purpose of self-liberation, being directed to sentient beings in so far as they are capable of misery and final liberation from misery. But the teaching also touched sentient beings as moral agents, as agents capable of affecting the welfare not only of themselves but of others as well. Some of his teachings seem to treat only personal liberation, others morality, but for the Buddha the two matters were always intimately and necessarily connected.

The Four Noble Truths

The teaching most closely connected with the awakening chiefly concerns personal misery and personal liberation. This is the doctrine of the Four Noble Truths (*cattāri ariyasaccāni*), which cover under their spacious umbrella the central tenets of Buddhism. These are phrased

after the pattern of a medical diagnosis: this is the disease, these are the causes of the disease, this is the judgement of whether it is curable, this is the method of treatment. The disease is 'suffering' (*dukkha*) – a condition which covers all that is meant in English by 'suffering' but more as well, and this wider sphere of meaning must be borne in mind. The first Noble Truth is that there does indeed exist the disease, suffering, and this is the Truth of Suffering. The second Noble Truth is that there are discernible causes of suffering: this is the Noble Truth of the Arising of Suffering, which contains an account of those causes. The third Noble Truth is that there is in fact a cure for suffering, and this is the Truth of the Cessation of Suffering. The fourth Noble Truth is that of the cure for suffering, the Truth of the Path Leading to the Cessation of Suffering.

Let us take the first Truth, that of the existence of suffering, in a form in which the Buddha is traditionally thought to have explained it shortly after the awakening. That description begins thus: 'What is the Noble Truth of Suffering? Birth is suffering, ageing is suffering, sorrow and lamentation, pain, grief, and despair are suffering' (S V 421). Here there is no problem in translating *dukkha* as 'suffering'. This is suffering viewed as we might commonly view it, on a large time-scale, a concomitant of any human life as a whole: in so far as we are born, we are bound to suffer in being born, in sickness, in growing old, in the loss of loved ones, and in death. This long-term view considers that the continuous process of birth and death could not be anything but a magnification in one life after another of the sorrow which falls to any one human life. All our experience, even that of common happiness, is bracketed by pain and sorrow. Since in the long run we are all dead, the problem of suffering is a pressing one, demanding a solution.

At this level the Truth of Suffering resembles other views, common among renouncers, that worldly life is a morass of pain. But what saves it from conventional pessimism is its connection with a more carefully worked-out view of human fate. This view is progressively revealed as

the description of the Truth of Suffering continues: 'association with what is disliked is suffering, dissociation from what is desired is suffering, not to get what one wants is suffering'. This is suffering on a more intimate time-scale, as it might appear within a year, a day, or even an hour, and is closer to the Buddha's characteristic concern with what is immediately observable. It is also a more general description of suffering, not only as it accompanies the crises of life, but as it appears in everyday situations, situations which might not occasion lamentation but rather an acute consciousness of failure, or of frustration, or of unfulfilled yearning: the missed opportunity, the baffled effort, the irksome routine, the petty irritation of life with others. Here *dukkha* might be translated not as 'suffering', but as something less grand but more pervasive: discomfort, dissatisfaction, or discontent. This is illustrated in the canon by tales of, for example, the insecurity of office-seekers, the anxieties of husbandmen, the irritations and frustrations of household life. This teaching brings suffering within the ambit of daily experience, for it points to the inescapably changing nature of life, which engulfs all the things we believe to be secure and stable.

But such a viewpoint was also shared with others at the Buddha's time, so for a doctrine which is quite uniquely Buddhist, we shall have to turn to the end of this description of the first Truth: 'in sum, all the aspects of experience in the mind and body . . . are suffering'. This is the definition of suffering which leads to the heart of what is original in the Buddha's teaching, and to that part of his view of suffering which is thoroughly argued in the canonical sources as a dispassionate description of the human plight. Here suffering is seen as being woven most finely into the texture of human experience; here experience is considered on the smallest time-scale, from second to second, under a microscope, under the clinical eye of the introspecting meditator. Under this microscope *dukkha* falls within another range of meanings, such as imperfection, impermanence, evanescence, inadequacy, insubstantiality, incompleteness, uncontrollability. The great crises which occasion lamentation, and the small desperations which occasion discontent, are

but especially visible examples of the fundamental imperfection-cum-impermanence – suffering – which is inherent in all experience. In so far as it is dynamic, changing, uncontrollable, and not finally satisfactory, experience is itself precisely suffering.

To see how this works let us take the case of feeling (*vedanā*) as a paradigm. Feeling is one of the objects of immediate introspection recommended in insight meditation, and it is also one of the 'aspects of experience in the mind and body'. Feeling may be physical or mental, and it may be adjudged pleasant, unpleasant, or neither pleasant nor unpleasant, i.e. neutral. So, as he contemplates his presently occurring experience, the insight meditator is to discern, as each actually arises, that this feeling is pleasant, or that feeling unpleasant, or another feeling quite neutral. For example, the pains in one's knees as one tries to sit cross-legged in meditation are unpleasant; the exhilaration of actually managing to sit for a long period and gain some concentration is pleasant; and many feelings in between, such as that of the process of calm breathing, are neutral. Or again, the blowing of a car horn just outside the room in which one is meditating might occasion unpleasant feelings, the song of a nightingale might occasion pleasant ones, or the sound of rain might occasion neither. Though some of the feelings which thus arise and clamour for attention may last for a while – such as the pains in the knees – or may come back again and again, it does not require deep meditative insight to see why the Buddha came to regard feelings as impermanent. They are soon chased away by other feelings, and even in the great meditative attainments cannot be made to abide. The question which underlay the Buddha's quest was, 'in what may I place lasting reliance?' On this diagnosis, certainly not in feeling, for even pleasant feelings are 'suffering by virtue of change'; that is, though pleasant at the moment, they bear within them the seed of insecurity, of their own imminent destruction. The introspectively discovered Truth of Suffering is one of ceaseless movement, of a dynamic process which is suffering by virtue of being uncontrollable, ever-changing, and therefore inadequate and unsatisfying.

Furthermore, this inadequacy rules throughout the experience of both the mind and body of the individual. The Buddha proposed several different analytic descriptions of the mind and body, each fitted to a different context; but generally these descriptions are of a process, not a stable entity. The individual is seen by the Buddha more as, say, a burning fire or a swiftly moving stream than as a solid vessel for holding experience or an unmoving slate upon which perceptions are written. Our own language tends to obscure this, for we tend to think of a relatively stable body and mind which receive a dynamic and changing experience, and we therefore tend to think that mind and body can be described apart from experience. But the Buddha's language was one in which both experience and the mind–body complex were described together, as part of a single process. Here, for example, is such a description:

> In dependence upon the eye and upon visible objects visual consciousness arises. The union of these three [i.e. the eye, objects, and visual consciousness] constitutes contact. Dependent upon this contact feeling is constituted. One perceives what is thus felt; what one perceives one considers; and what one considers one develops all sorts of notions about. (M I 111–12)

In this view, objects of experience, the organs of experience such as the eye, and the consequent consciousness of experience, 'the mind', are indissolubly linked. None of the three is conceivable without the other: they lean upon each other as one sheaf of reeds leans upon another, to use a canonical simile.

Furthermore, those features of experience which might be said to lie within the 'mind' itself, such as perception, feeling and consciousness, are themselves 'conjoined, not disjoined, and it is impossible to separate them in order to specify their individual characteristics' (M I 293). So right from the objects of perception, through the physical organs of perception, to feeling, consciousness, thought, and volition, there is

one dynamic, interdependent, ever-changing complex, which might be called an 'individual' or a 'self', but which has nothing lasting in it.

The five aggregates

Indeed the very term which I have translated as 'all aspects of experience in the mind and body' is one of the analytic descriptions of this process, a description in which the impersonal, dynamic and interdependent nature of the process is already implicit. This term is the 'five aggregates' (*pañcakkhanda*). The first 'aggregate' is materiality, which includes physical objects, the body, and sense organs. The other four 'aggregates' are feeling, perceptions, impulses, and consciousness. Within these 'aggregates', this process, are included all that pertains to an individual and his experience. Feeling is but one face of this process, a face available to insight meditation. The mutability and inadequacy of feeling are characteristic of the whole process: 'all aspects of experience in the mind and body are suffering'. Or, as the Buddha said elsewhere, 'as the aggregates arise, decay, and die, O monk, so from moment to moment you are born, decay, and die' (P I 78).

This seems a gloomy doctrine, and a common instinct is to question it. Surely there must be some happiness in the world? However, the Buddha's teaching does not deny that there are satisfactions in experience: the exercise of insight assumes that the meditator sees such happiness clearly. Pain is to be seen as pain, pleasure as pleasure. What is denied is that such happiness will be secure and lasting.

But this does not fully answer the doubt, for the real grounds of it lie elsewhere, in a radical difference between the experience of the questioner and that of the Buddha. The doctrine of suffering presupposes a vulnerability to disease, death, natural calamity, and human oppression that characterized the Buddha's world, as it does much of the world today. It is in these terms that the doctrine is illustrated in the canon. But for many in the societies of the West this

vulnerability is suppressed or rendered inconspicuous – by prosperity, by medical advances, and by those peculiar institutions surrounding death which render it invisible. Without that sense of vulnerability there might be little reason to connect suffering as unsatisfactoriness on the small scale, with death, disease, and lasting failure on the grand scale: one could just put up with the discomforts (as indeed Buddhist monks learn to do). However, for those whose experience includes vulnerability – a vulnerability that might be psychological or social as well as material – the connection can have a compelling cogency.

The cause of suffering

Though the announcement of the Four Noble Truths is in fact brief and bare, there is a good deal of dramatic tension in it. For if suffering is such a pervasive and unending process, what could be its cause? How could one break into the cycle to see what makes it revolve? And from this point of view the discovery of the second Noble Truth (that there are discernible causes of suffering), the Truth of the Arising of Suffering, is the centre-piece of the awakening. Some Buddhists celebrate this as a dramatic moment in which the Buddha saw the 'house-builder', the cause of this flawed and unsatisfactory existence. He is said on that occasion to have uttered this verse:

> Seeking but not finding the house-builder
> I travelled through life after life
> How painful is repeated birth!
> House-builder, you have now been seen
> You will not build the house again
> (*Dhammapada* 153–4)

We can already see the directions in which the Buddha would look for this cause. One direction is given by the Buddha's pragmatic turn of mind. He tended to think of causes not in a purely abstract way, but rather by using analogies from practical activity. The meditator, for

example, is likened to a goldsmith, or to a fletcher straightening the mind like an arrow. In one passage (M I 240–3), concerning the Buddha's search before the awakening, he speaks of his efforts on the analogy of a man trying to start a fire: just as a man could not start a fire by rubbing a dry stick upon a wet one lying in water, or by rubbing it upon a wet stick lying on dry land, but only by rubbing a dry stick on another dry stick on dry land, so a meditator must be *bodily* withdrawn from sensual pleasures (a stick out of water), and also *mentally* withdrawn from such pleasures (a *dry* stick out of water). This way of thinking has a good deal of subtlety in it, for it recognizes that there are subsidiary, enabling causes and conditions, such as the dryness of the stick and so forth. But it places the chief cause with the agent, the meditator, the man making the fire. The chief cause is conceived as being *agent-like*, like a person bringing about a result. This is certainly the sense of describing the cause of suffering metaphorically as the 'house-builder'. The pieces of that 'house' had to be lying to hand, but there also had to be a 'builder', a *purposive* and *active* principle. Hence, in seeking the cause of suffering, the Buddha was seeking something active and purposive, which was to that extent like an agent, a person.

Moreover, this principle had to be agent-like in other ways as well. First, just as the meditator can, to an extent, control himself in order to perfect his meditative skill, so this principle had to respond to corrective action. Like a person or agent, it had to be corrigible: it had to be possible to deal with the 'house-builder' as one deals with oneself, for otherwise there would be no possibility of liberation. Second, just because the activities of this principle had moral consequences, upon others and upon oneself in the process of rebirth, it had to be like a *moral agent*, a person whose acts are good or evil. These considerations may seem so abstract as to be inconsistent with the Buddha's pragmatism, but they point to the practical obstacle he had to overcome. The simplest explanation of all this might be just that the purposive, active principle is an agent, a Self or 'person' or soul. But the Buddha had good reason for rejecting this idea. Indeed in his insight

meditation he had found only an *impersonal* process, that of suffering. He had to break through to find a principle which was in many ways like an agent or person, but which was finally impersonal, not an agent or person at all.

This is what he discovered:

> And this, O monks, is the Truth of the Arising of Suffering. It is just thirst or craving [*taṇhā*] which gives rise to repeated existence, which is bound up with impassioned appetite, and which seeks fresh pleasure now here and now there, namely, thirst for sensual pleasures, thirst for existence, thirst for non-existence. (S V 421)

So thirst or craving is that which drives the whole mass of suffering experience forward. The word *taṇhā* bears the literal sense of 'thirst', and it is this meaning that lends the term its vividness. Its technical sense, however, is 'craving' or 'desire'. In this sense it is insatiable craving, 'which seeks fresh pleasure now here and now there', not only in this life but in the lives beyond, and because of this it 'gives rise to repeated existence'. Moreover, in so far as craving is 'bound up with impassioned appetite', the metaphor of fire was never far from the Buddha's mind, and indeed in a discourse traditionally placed very early in his career, the Fire Sermon (S IV 19), each facet of experience is described as 'aflame with desire'.

This way of thinking is in many ways poetical rather than soberly technical, and a good deal of the Buddha's effort around and after the awakening must have been devoted to drawing out the implications of this pregnant idea. Certainly craving could be shown to be purposive: to crave is to crave something, to be thirsty is to be thirsty *for* something. 'Where does this craving come into being and settle itself? Wherever there is what seems lovable and gratifying, there it comes into being and settles' (D II 308). In most descriptions of craving there is a tendency to emphasize this positive desire, 'desire for sensual pleasure'.

This was the puritanism of the renouncers speaking. Indeed, the idea of desire was common among the renouncers: it was the great obstacle to achieving the Self or purifying the soul. But in elevating it to an autonomous principle the Buddha expanded its definition. For him craving also included aversion, and that is probably the sense of 'thirst for non-existence'. One craves not only what is attractive but also relief or escape from what is unpleasant or undesirable. And we crave a great deal. We crave all sensual pleasures – sexual, gustatory, olfactory, tactile, or whatever. We yearn keenly to escape pain. We crave wealth, power, position. We even lust sensually after our own bodies, or in rebirth a new body. There is even a 'thirst for views', the urge to be right, to be in the know, to have an answer for every question.

Craving may be spoken of comprehensively as 'thirst for existence'. This is, to be sure, the 'thirst which gives rise to repeated existence', but perhaps a better way to think of it is as *the desire for becoming other than what present experience gives*. Under many guises it is a ceaseless striving for some new state, some new being, some new experience, at the same time as being a striving for satiety and permanence, and it is a striving always frustrated. 'The world [in the sense of all common individuals in the world], whose nature is to become other, is committed to becoming, has exposed itself to becoming; it relishes only becoming, yet what it relishes brings fear, and what it fears is pain' (U III 10, Ñānamoli's reading). Rebirth may be rebirth from moment to moment of experience, or it may be rebirth in another life, but in either case it is the consequence of this lust *to be something else*.

This is the purposive activity of craving on a large scale, as it embraces all sentient life. But this grand vision is to be justified, as ever in the Buddha's teaching, by reference to the fine grain of experience. In this perspective craving was in fact already written into the five 'aggregates', that comprehensive description of mental and physical experience, as impulses (*samkhara*). Let us return to the example of the pains in the knees one feels when trying to sit for long periods in insight

meditation. Just because one feels these as unpleasant, one also feels an urge to change position, an impulse to seek comfort and relief by moving. This impulse is, in effect, just the active, purposive aspect of the unpleasant feeling: it arises with the unpleasant feeling, is indeed inseparable from it. In ordinary circumstances one would simply shift position automatically, without reflecting or perhaps even without being conscious of it. The same might be said for pleasant feelings: while meditating one might feel sleepy and dreamy, and one is moved automatically to follow and indulge such feelings. Or one feels hungry and thinks of having a little snack before continuing. Without the attempt at meditation many such impulses would hardly be noticed, so instantly do they follow one another. In this microscopic view, experience is revealed as having a foundation of ceaseless activity, of short-lived purposive impulses. The Buddha indeed thought of this activity as *making* experience. 'What is called "mentality" and "mind" and "consciousness" arises and ceases, in one way and another, through day and night; just as a monkey ranging through a forest seizes a branch and, letting go, seizes another' (S II 95).

This perception through insight meditation of an animating principle of existence ruled the Buddha's thought. It was the evidence which guided his understanding of the human condition. Because impulse is habitual and automatic, fundamentally unreflective and not a function of decision, there was no reason to think of it as the work of some person or Self, as other renouncers thought. It was just a propensity, an active disposition at the base of life which had the special and disastrous ability to reproduce itself endlessly. As a propensity he called it 'clinging' (*upādāna*). This propensity was in fact already written into the Noble Truth of Suffering, for the full form of that reads: 'all aspects of experience in the mind and body, *in which clinging inheres*, are suffering' (S V 421). The different terms – clinging, craving, impulse, thirst – each shed a different light on the activity behind and within sentient life. They all point to one thing, the impersonal active principle, the

discovery of which answered the Buddha's question, 'how did I come to be in this sorry plight?'

The Buddha did not consider, however, that craving acts alone – his idea of causes by no means required a single or a simple solution to the problem. While craving might be the chief motive cause in the painful process of rebirth, there was room for subsidiary, enabling causes, conditions without which it could not take hold. And among these there was one which had an especially important place: ignorance or delusion. The idea was current among the wanderers and yogis: they enjoyed a special knowledge of which others were ignorant. In the Buddha's usage, however, his knowledge was not so much an esoteric truth like the knowledge of the Self, but rather a penetrating understanding of *things as they are*. By comparison people are ordinarily not so much uninformed – as one might be uninformed of tax laws or of the Self – but positively deluded. They hold that the world contains lasting and secure satisfactions, whereas in fact it is riddled with suffering. They are mistaken, so craving has its way with them. The relationship between craving, ignorance, and suffering is rather like the relationship between heat, oxygen, and fire. Heat is the motive force, but without oxygen fire could not arise. 'Thirst for existence, O monks, has a specific condition; it is nourished by something, it does not go without support. And what is that nourishment? It is ignorance' (A V 116).

The moral significance of human craving

So far these teachings are amoral. They are the utterances of a detached specialist, a renouncer, addressing himself to others with the same concern for personal salvation. But the Buddha was also convinced that sentient beings are subjected to a law of moral causation, and he was deeply concerned with the evaluation of behaviour and its effects on others. So these amoral teachings are indissolubly linked in his thought with others that point to a radically moral significance in the human condition.

Let us begin with impulses. As I have so far described them impulses hardly have a moral significance, but they may be regarded from another point of view. They may be considered as intentions or choices, both of which are included in the key term *cetanā*. Sometimes 'choice' is the best translation, in so far as it is a mental movement which precedes action or speech. But intentions are also included, for the Buddha thought that unexpressed intentions could themselves have an effect, if not outwardly then inwardly in the mind. The Buddha held that in human affairs it is the mental choice or intention which is of ultimate significance: 'the world is led by mind' (S I 39). Hence, for example, in the legal system developed for the Buddhist order, only intentional actions are regarded as transgressions, and unintentional acts – such as those committed while asleep, or mad, or under duress – are not culpable.

This has great implications. It means that intentions are not negligible, that they have consequences. They do work, are in themselves actions. This is the sense of the term 'karma', whose primary meaning is just 'work' or 'deed', but in this Buddhist sense 'mental action'. (Karma does not refer to the *results* of action, as we now assume in ordinary usage in the West.) 'It is choice or intention that I call karma – mental work – for having chosen, a man acts by body, speech, and mind' (A III 415). Intentions make one's world; it is they that do the work whose consequences we must reap in suffering. They form the subsequent history of our psychic life as surely as wars or treaties, plagues or prosperity form the subsequent history of a nation.

To speak of impulses and urges is not necessarily to speak in moral terms, but choices and actions are the very stuff of moral discourse. One may make good or bad choices, one's actions may be good or evil. And in fact from the Buddha's point of view, *unconscious* impulses are really to be equated with *conscious* choices, the only difference being that impulses occur in ignorance of their nature as choices: they are choices made under the delusion that there is no better choice, no

better way of acting. In this light the relatively neutral term thirst (craving) may itself be considered as greed, something morally reprehensible, and frequently the Buddha spoke in just this way. Greed may be supported by sheer delusion about the nature of the world, but it is also immoral, a propensity to be condemned and, in oneself, to be improved upon. Moreover greed is always coupled in the discourses with hatred or aversion. Hence from a radically moral standpoint it is by choosing badly, by being greedy and hateful, that we bring upon ourselves the suffering we meet in birth after birth. The ill that we cause ourselves and the ill that we cause others are of a piece, stemming from the same roots. The Noble Truth of the Arising of Suffering could be rephrased thus: 'inflamed by greed, incensed by hate, confused by delusion, overcome by them, obsessed in mind, a man chooses for his own affliction, for others' affliction, for the affliction of both, and experiences pain and grief' (A III 55).

Or in other words the propensities of greed, hatred, and delusion which cause us to injure others through evil deeds are exactly the same propensities which cause us to suffer ourselves by being reborn in life after life. The moral cause in transmigration is equivalent to the cause of suffering. But this raises a fundamental question: how exactly does this cause work? For a doctrine of a Self or soul it is easy enough. The Self acts, causes consequences to itself, and is reborn again according to its deserts. The basic structure is in its own terms plausible, so the details are not so important. But what if there is no Self?

The answer (as it appears at D II no. 15) works backwards from the appearance of a new body and mind, a new psychophysical entity. How did this appear? It appeared through the descent of consciousness into a mother's womb. On the face of it this is primitive, going back to earlier Indian ideas of an homunculus descending into the womb; and it is speculative, going beyond the Buddha's belief of attending only to what he could witness himself. But later Buddhist commentators are clear that this descent is metaphorical, as we might say 'darkness descended

on him' if someone fell unconscious. Moreover this enlivening consciousness is not an independent entity, a disguised Self, but is composed of causes and conditions.

So what in turn were these preceding conditions? One was the act of physical generation, but more important was a previous impulse. Here impulse is to be understood as intention or mental action, bearing a moral quality and informing by that quality the nature of the new psychophysical entity. If the impulse was good, the new body and mind will be well endowed and fortunately placed, if not it will be poorly endowed and unfortunate.

And now comes the key question: what is this mysterious impulse? It is in fact nothing other than the final impulse, the dying thought, of the previous mind and body. It is nothing like a Self, but is merely a last energy which leaps the gap from life to life rather like – as a later Buddhist source puts it – a flame leaping from one candle wick to another. Nor is it free of preceding conditions, for it is the product of the dispositions formed by habitual mental actions conducted under the veil of ignorance and desire within the previous life. And thus one can trace the process back – to beginningless time, in fact.

In this account there is no underlying entity, but there is a stream of events which has its own history. This history is borne forward, not by a Self or soul, but by the complex interaction of the causes, conditions, and effects summarized under craving and suffering. To understand this interaction is to understand the nature and origins of the human condition. Many canonical accounts treat this as the substance of the awakening itself: the Buddha called it dependent co-origination (*paṭicca samuppāda*). It was dependent in that the causes and conditions necessarily interact with each other, as do fuel, heat, oxygen, and so forth in the production of fire. No one of them is finally independent, as a Self or soul might be. So dependent co-origination served two functions: it refuted the idea of an independent permanent soul, and it

described the origin of suffering. The doctrine attached to dependent co-origination includes everything I have discussed under the first two Noble Truths, though it is phrased somewhat differently. It usually (but not always) comprises twelve factors. These range from those describing the psychophysical entity, such as sense organs and feeling, to the descriptions of the sources of suffering, namely ignorance, craving, clinging, and impulses. And of course it includes suffering as well. Though we might speculate that, as a doctrine, dependent co-origination appeared after the Four Noble Truths, it was in fact already inherent in them, in the Buddha's understanding of craving and suffering, and of the interactions through which craving causes suffering.

The cure for suffering

The third Noble Truth, the Truth of the Cessation of Suffering, certifies that the disease of suffering is actually curable. Though there is no permanent moral person, the impersonal process is corrigible. One can achieve liberation. Within the Four Noble Truths this is a relatively colourless doctrine, fulfilling the form of the medical diagnosis. But it did speak to an important body of opinion held at the Buddha's time. This was represented especially by the Ājīvikas, who held that the process of rebirth is an automatic, mechanical one: every being must, whatever he does, be reborn in every possible condition, and every being is destined ultimately to attain salvation, so special effort is pointless. An Ājīvika might well have asked the Buddha whether his own doctrine of dependent co-origination did not in effect lead to just such a conclusion. Do not these causes and conditions, however complex, lead in the end to a mechanically predestined result, rather like an intricate clockwork wound up and set ticking? To this the Buddha's answer was that, though one's endowments and capacities are formed by circumstances in previous lives, one still has the ability, within the confines of this present life, to alter voluntarily one's behaviour. One can dispel ignorance by seeing the world as it is, as it is described in the Four

Noble Truths. And one can control craving by the measured renouncer's discipline promulgated by the Buddha.

The fourth Noble Truth is the Truth of the Path Leading to the Cessation of Suffering. This contains the prescription, the medicine. This is usually given as the Noble Eightfold Path, but already in canonical sources this list is conveniently broken down into three constituents: moral self-discipline or morality, meditation, and wisdom (*sīla*, *samādhi*, *paññā*). Morality consists of a pacific, truthful, upright, and thoroughly disciplined way of life, reasoned to cause harm neither to oneself nor to others. For the Buddha's monks this meant a life of mendicancy, of poverty but not of self-mortification, of celibacy and of gentle honesty. Though the Buddha and his renunciant disciples elaborated a monastic disciplinary code consistent with Buddhist principles, this was probably in essence not far different from the code with which the Buddha began, a code inspired by the moral ideals then current among the wanderers and renouncers.

The second part of the path is meditation. Part of meditation is allied with morality: the attempt to restrain one's senses from what is immoral and to create good, wholesome, and skilful frames of mind within which to work. The counterpart to this is the avoidance not only of bad actions but of bad frames of mind, which lead not to clarity but to delusion. Against this background the basic skill is concentration, coupled with equanimity, and this meditative control is then the basis of insight meditation. Insight meditation, however, is not practised only by sitting in quiet solitude. For it demands a general attitude of self-recollection, of clear consciousness, of awareness of one's surroundings, one's experiences, and one's actions and their consequences moment by moment, day by day. As it was taught to his pupils this meditative discipline is relatively systematized, but the Buddha fulfilled it unsystematically in the course of his search. These first two parts of the path could be thought of as a battery of skills rather like those of a painter: draftsmanship, the use of colour, the

depiction of perspective, and so forth. As these skills blend into a greater skill, that of painting itself, so all the individual exercises of morality and meditation blend into a single alert and calm way of life.

But the abilities of the painter must be wedded to a sensibility, a way of seeing the world. And analogously the third part of the path – wisdom – demands a radically new way of perceiving experience. One facet of this new perception is, quite simply, seeing the world as it is, and for the Buddha this meant seeing by means of the Four Noble Truths and dependent co-origination: in such-and-such a way is experience evanescent, devoid of abiding self, and painfully flawed. In such-and-such a way does craving reproduce this suffering again and again.

The other facet is a new attitude, a new habit of mind, which grows out of the equanimity of meditation. One can now stand aloof from experience. One can see the dangers in it and turn away. One can observe, yet not pursue, even fleeting pleasures and aspirations as they flicker before the mind's eye. Perhaps the most compact statement of this sensibility is found in the stock prescription that the monk should 'not cling to the here and now, not grasp after situations, relinquish easily'. Or again:

> [the monk] neither constructs in his mind, nor wills in order to produce, any state of mind or body, or the destruction of any such state. By not so willing anything in the world, he grasps after nothing; by not grasping, he is not anxious; he is therefore fully calmed within. (M III 244)

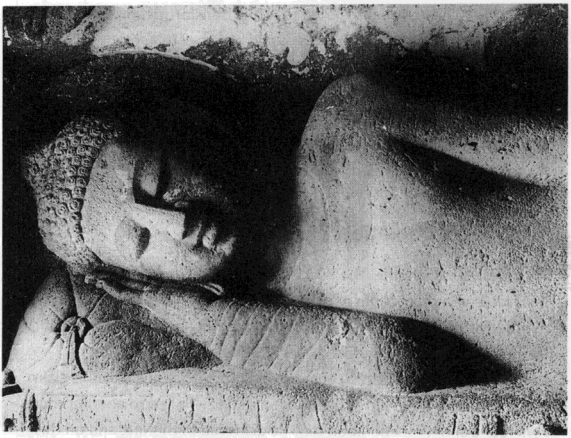
One should neither look forward to coming experiences, nor clutch at present ones, but let them all slip easily through one's fingers.

The Buddha took this to great lengths. In the Simile of the Raft (M I no. 22) he instances the case of a man who, faced by a flood, builds a raft from wood lying about and floats safely to the other side. The Buddha asks whether it would be rational for the man, having reached the other

side, to put the raft on his head and carry it with him. The answer is that it would assuredly not be rational. Just so, concludes the Buddha, it is irrational to cling even to the profitable states of mind created by morality and meditation, still less to unprofitable states of mind. (This presupposes, of course, that through habituation and training the profitable practices are now second nature to the monk.) The same applies to ideas: to indulge in speculations and theories about the past or future, eternity, the fate of the world, and so forth, is to lose oneself in 'a tangle of views, a thicket of views'. Instead one is to view the world simply, directly, with the perception achieved in insight meditation. This perception, like the artist's way of seeing, is highly cultivated, but it is nevertheless immediate and uncomplicated by reflection. One is to hover in a sensibility which the Buddha describes in one of his most poetic descriptions of liberation, where the flood refers to the painful stream of birth and death: 'if I stood still, I sank; if I struggled, I was carried away. Thus by neither standing still nor struggling, I crossed the flood' (S I 1).

This is Nirvana, the 'blowing out' of the passions and frustrations of existence. The Buddha asserted that to speculate about the frame of mind of one thus awakened and liberated is to invite confusion and madness. But despite this useful advice, such speculation played a great part in subsequent Buddhist history, as it must in our assessment of the claims of Buddhism to our assent. The accounts of awakening in the canon foster the impression that one is either awakened or not, liberated or not, and that the switch from one to the other is practically instantaneous and irreversible. However, one of the issues in the first great schism in Buddhism, a few generations after the Buddha's death, was whether a liberated person can, even temporarily, backslide from awakening. And by the same token later schools conducted debates over whether awakening was instantaneous or gradual.

What these difficulties point to is a problem inherent in the language used in the canon to describe such impalpable matters: for the purposes



3. In this profoundly tranquil sculpture, the Buddha has just passed on to final Nirvana. What happens to an enlightened person at death is one of the questions, like that of the beginning and end of the world, which the Buddha said cannot sensibly be answered. Nirvana is a state beyond human thought, beyond life and death and reincarnation.

of a narrative, the story of the Buddha's *awakening*, a sudden, dramatic, and decisive transformation is required. And this is plausible to the extent that the awakening was a matter of certainty, of the knowledge that 'what was to be done has been done'. The Buddha realized that he had fulfilled all the requirements for liberation and no longer had to struggle arduously forward. But the *liberation* is a different matter, for here we are speaking of a wholesale transformation in the human constitution. It seems implausible that this transformation, as it is described in the canonical sources, could be other than gradual, a slow mastering of the whole wide field of one's behaviour and thought. In this respect the awakening had to be further certified and shown to be practically effective in the course of subsequent experience. We may accept that the Buddha was awakened one moonlit night, but the liberation was an extended, indeed a life-long affair.

Theories of liberation

The question of whether the Buddha's notion of liberation is a believable or a practicable one must I think be answered in the affirmative. True, we cannot say anything useful about the claim that liberation puts an end to the rigours of death and rebirth. That is beyond our ability to argue cogently and bring evidence. But this claim is – as is so characteristic of the Buddha's style – linked to another more concrete claim, that liberation may be achieved in this life, and on this the Buddhist texts offer some grounds for discussion. It is not claimed that liberation puts an end to physical pain this side of the grave, for painfulness is admitted to be the nature of the body. (Someone accomplished in the Absorptions or Meditative Planes, however, might be able temporarily to anaesthetize himself by such meditation.) It is rather mental suffering, the extra and unnecessary anguish of existence, that is progressively dispelled by the Buddhist training. Moreover, the sources give us a relatively clear view of the effect of the training: the Buddha's monks 'do not repent the past nor brood over the future. They live in the present. Hence they are radiant' (S I 5).

The principle underlying the elaborate training is one directed precisely to this end of living radiantly in the present. The Buddha called the principle 'thorough reflection' (*yoniso manasikāra*), a considered and meticulous pragmatism about the consequences of each practice in the Middle Path. 'For him who reflects thoroughly, cares and troubles which have not yet arisen do not arise, and those already arisen disappear' (M I 7). What this means in effect is that any practice must be seen to conduce to present welfare as *well* as to long-term transformation. There is no doubt a tension here. On the one hand, the monk's life is strenuous, and he must undertake practices which are at first quite uncomfortable. But on the other hand, since the practices are not designed as self-mortification, their fruits are not deferred indefinitely, but are witnessed and adjudged useful within a manageable period. What was difficult becomes second nature, an occasion not for anguish but for cool, indeed intellectually pleasurable, reflection on the nature and demands of experience in the mind and body. Furthermore, the monk is bolstered in this by the evaluation, repeatedly stressed in the texts, that such a life is not merely escape, but a noble and heroic vocation; and this evaluation is in turn certified by his fellow monks and by the surrounding society which prizes such fortitude.

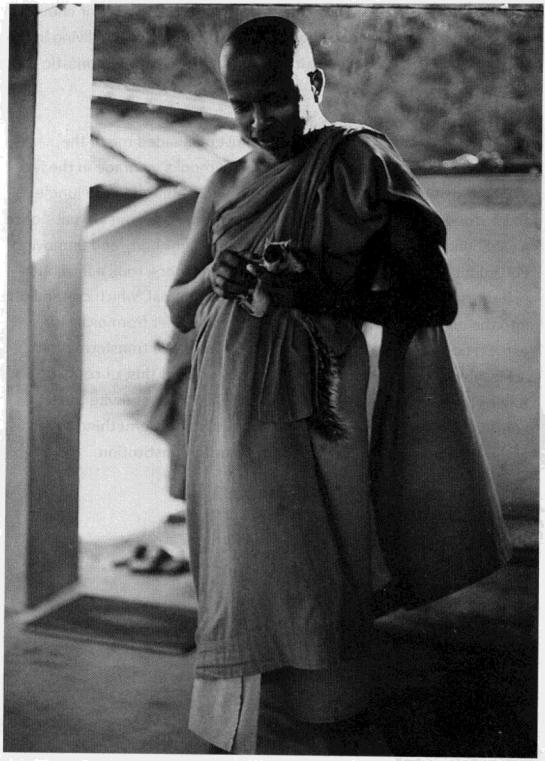
Moreover, the present mastery of one field of the training not only produces benefits in itself, but also is seen as leading forward naturally to further mastery. Thus, for example, the monk's mastery of moral discipline produces a lack of remorse, a freedom from regret and anxiety. Because one commits no injury to oneself or others, one's conscience is clear, and this leads of itself to a serenity upon which meditative accomplishments may then be founded. This progressive mastery is considered to lead to the very summit, an aloofness from all the accidents of experience.

From our point of view what is important about this process is its naturalness. One of the most intractable problems of a project such as the Buddha's is that desire is an enemy, but the final goal of liberation is

one that the monk desires, wills. How is it possible to give up that impassioned will towards liberation itself? On the Buddha's account one wills the present object of training – e.g. to attain moral discipline – and the consequences fall into place. Thus, for example, 'there is no need for one well disciplined, endowed with moral discipline, to will with the intention "let me do away with remorse". For this is the way of things, O monks, that moral discipline does away with remorse' (A V 2). As one wills, and then relaxes into, each stage of practice the next stage is prepared. The final stage is attained not by strenuous willing at all, but by the now habitual relaxation.

The Buddha held the human constitution to be such that it could be laid bare to fruitful investigation through insight meditation and decisively transformed through the Buddhist training. The internal coherence of this view is difficult to fault, but our ultimate assent must be founded in experience, in empirical evidence. I can offer only my experience from fieldwork with meditating forest monks in contemporary Sri Lanka. Many monks were evidently healthy and content, 'radiant' and 'without remorse', and this in itself impressed me. Yet to be fair this may have been only the fruit of a quiet life, since I simply was not with any of the monks for the long years necessary to have witnessed and understood some slow metamorphosis of character through the Buddhist discipline.

There were, however, three traits of the monks which did seem directly pursuant upon the Buddhist training. The first was an interested, indeed fascinated, absorption in what they called their 'work', which referred to the hour-by-hour, minute-by-minute prosecution of the daily round – study, careful eating, hygiene, meditation, exercise – which makes up the monk's life. In the reflective execution of these ordinary tasks they clearly found tremendous satisfaction. But, second, some did nevertheless also pour tremendous energy and years of their lives into long-term projects, such as the founding of forest hermitages. Yet they still remained without anxiety and relatively indifferent to the results of their efforts. They were both remarkably successful and remarkably



4. Forest monks in Sri Lanka live in harmony with the wild animals of the jungle. They understand that all beings (such as this giant squirrel) are subject to fear and neediness, and treat them with caring kindness. (This is the forest monk Kudumbigala Anandasiri, whose hard but rewarding life is described in the last chapter of Michael Carrithers' book *The Forest Monks of Sri Lanka*).

uninterested in success. These deep-seated attitudes were far enough from ordinary life and close enough to the Buddhist ideal of living in the present that I had no difficulty in attributing them to the monastic discipline.

It was the third trait, however, which most persuaded me of the discipline's effectiveness, and that was the monks' courage in the face of wild forest animals. On two occasions while on foot in the jungle there stood between me and a surprised and threatening animal – once a wild boar and once an elephant – only the slight body and unmoving equanimity of a monk. On both occasions the monk took a firm but unaggressive stance and spoke calmly to the animal, which crashed off into the underbrush. No behaviour could be further from ordinary expectations, and it attested vividly to the depth of transformation achievable through the Buddhist training. None of this, of course, proves the truth of the Buddha's teaching, but it does invite us to consider his philosophy seriously as one which has something to tell us about the nature and capacities of the human constitution.

Chapter 5
The mission and the death

In the very long run Buddhism was strikingly successful: it became a world religion which until recently reigned over the Far East and mainland South-East Asia, the most populous areas of the globe, and now it is making its way in the West. However, we need only look a little closer to see that this is not to be explained simply as the triumphant progress of the truth. In the Buddha's time and for many centuries afterwards in India his teaching competed with others on a more or less equal footing. It was not until the middle of the first millennium after Christ, ten to fifteen centuries after the Buddha, that its hegemony was firmly established in the rest of Asia, and shortly thereafter it was on its way to extinction in India itself. Buddhism's history is one of many different episodes, and in each episode different social, economic, and political factors – factors often quite extraneous to Buddhism – have played a part. So even if we agree that the Buddha's teaching was insightful and practicable, these virtues alone can hardly in themselves be regarded as the motive force in Buddhism's successes.

Nevertheless, Buddhism did have properties which, if they did not actively motivate Buddhism's expansion, did at least make that expansion possible. The evidence of these is found in Buddhism's relatively easy adaptation to other, native religious traditions in the areas it colonized. Buddhism coexisted with archaic Hinduism in India and Sri Lanka, Taoism and Confucianism in China, the Bon religion in

Tibet of China, and Shinto in Japan. Indeed Buddhism is presently adapting to Marxism in the East and to liberal humanism and libera Christianity in the West. In all these circumstances it has been possible for Buddhists to cleave to indigenous beliefs for certain worldly, religious, or civil purposes, while simultaneously holding Buddhist views about their own psychological nature and the ultimate ends of human action. Buddhism, in other words, has had little of the imperiousness which has characterized missionary religions. It is quintessentially tolerant, cosmopolitan, and portable, and hence it has been able to respond to opportunities created by circumstances quite beyond its control.

The foundations of this portability lie in three interconnected features of the Buddha's own teaching. First, it was explicitly directed to human beings by virtue of characteristics they held in common: the capacity for pleasure and suffering, the ability to affect their own and others' welfare. One could, of course, object that other Indian religions, and indeed other world religions, embodied similar attempts to speak to all humanity. But, second, in the Buddha's case this universalistic project was relatively good at actually being universalistic because it was abstract. We have seen this abstraction at work, for example, in the Buddha's description of the Absorptions, a description which is consistent with many systems of meditation and with different purposes in meditation. And in the same spirit the Buddha's conception of wisdom and virtue neither opposed nor condoned India's nascent caste system, but rather spoke of human action in abstract terms which were indifferent to the presence or absence of caste: it could exist within or without caste society. Third, this abstraction was always linked in the Buddha's teaching with a deliberately limited concern to apply it to the structure of individual human experience alone. There was a great deal about the world upon which he simply refused to pronounce. Hence, on the one hand, it has always been possible for people to agree in Buddhism while living in quite different cultures and holding quite different views about the world. And on the other hand it has been

possible for Buddhists themselves in the course of history to add to the Buddha's own teaching the most varied doctrines – doctrines which fitted in with local traditions and circumstances.

Buddhism and the laity

However, this leaves unanswered one fundamental and troublesome question. As I have so far described the Buddha's teaching it is really directed only to that handful who are willing and able to pursue the life of a monk with total devotion. Yet the acceptance of Buddhism by whole peoples meant that it was embraced by a laity who did not 'go forth from home into homelessness'. How did Buddhism develop from a teaching for the few into a teaching for the many? What did this élitist message have to offer people in the world? These questions were answered in the course of the Buddha's career after the awakening.

The most plausible accounts of the Buddha's life before and during the awakening are found in bare and simple narratives in which the Buddha seems to speak of his own experience. It is easy to accept that these have an ancestry, however distant, in edifying discourses the Buddha actually imparted to his monks. In contrast, the oldest legends of the Buddha's life after the awakening (I speak here and hereafter of the beginning of *Mahāvagga*) are in the third person, evidently took form some generations after the Buddha's death, and are full of mythical detail. They are therefore far from trustworthy. They do, however, convey at least some sense of how the Buddha's personal liberation was metamorphosed into a mission to the world at large.

The seed of the Buddha's mission is wrapped in an especially mythic guise in the legend. While the Buddha was still mulling over in solitude the consequences of his discoveries, he decided that it would be pointless and tiresome to announce them to a world sunk in ignorance. But a god intervened: as is characteristic in Buddhist legend, the god is merely a walk-on character who supports the central plot of human

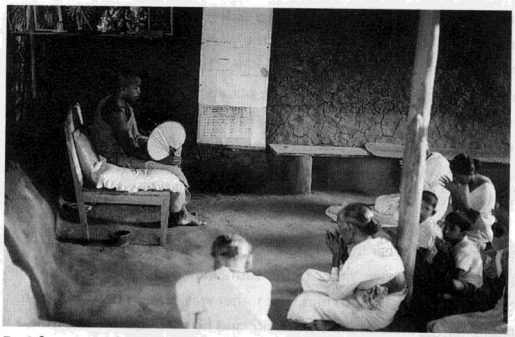
self-transformation. He pleaded to the Buddha on behalf of all those creatures who had 'only a little dust in their eyes', who would respond well and gratefully to the Buddha's message. To this plea the Buddha responded generously, undertaking to spread abroad his remedy for suffering, 'out of compassion for creatures'. And thus was born that resolve which Buddhists regard as bringing light to the world's darkness.

The truth of the matter is impossible to discern, but this legendary vignette is nevertheless revealing. In the first place, it points to a fundamental feature of the Buddha's mature teaching, that it embodied not only the governing value of liberation, but also the second governing value of compassion: concern for others. And indeed something like compassion was inherent in the Buddha's moral seriousness and in his propensity for describing the mind in moral terms, in terms of the effects of mental actions on others. Compassion for the Buddha was intimately intertwined with liberation as a human purpose and guiding sentiment. However, in the legend compassion has a significance narrower than it and its corollaries were to have in the elaborated teaching. Here compassion is a personal attribute of the Buddha and the sufficient motive for his decision to teach. Moreover it is a compassion directed to a specific end, the imparting of the Buddha's version of the renunciant life.

A good deal of this section of the legendary biography is concerned with the consequences of this compassion, the formation of an order of monks following the Buddha. The Buddha arose from solitude and wandered by stages to the city of Benares, where he stayed in the Deer Park at Isipatana. There he met five ascetics who had been with him before the awakening, but who had left in disgust when he gave up self-mortification. To them he addressed his first sermon, the Setting in Motion of the Wheel of the Teaching, which enunciated the Middle Path and the Four Noble Truths. This they accepted, they became his disciples, and from that time on many of his converts were drawn from

the body of wanderers and ascetics. This is historically plausible to the extent that many of the Buddha's discourses were addressed to such wanderers, who were at the time a fluid group, moving easily from one teacher to another. But what was now at stake was the foundation of a new and enduring institution, the Order (*sangha*) of monks following the Buddha, and indeed one senses that the general fluidity was now crystallizing everywhere into separate religious corporations with their own constitutions.

However, the Buddha was addressing an audience broader than just the religious virtuosi. The next convert was Yasa, a rich young layman, who awoke one morning suddenly filled with disgust at the sight of the courtesans with whom he had taken his pleasure now lying about him in drunken slumber. He wandered disconsolately to the Deer Park, and there he met the Buddha, who announced to him the Four Noble Truths. So Yasa left the world to join the Buddha and his small



5. A forest monk in Sri Lanka preaches to lay people. Like the spiritual wanderers of the Buddha's time, the Buddha's monks more than two millennia after him offer the 'Gift of the Teaching' to those around them.

band. Yasa was a merchant's son, and according to the legend four of Yasa's friends 'from the leading merchant families of Benares' then became disciples, and then a further fifty 'youths from the countryside'. These were the kernel of the new Order, and indeed it was they who spread the teaching abroad: for in the legend the Buddha now adjured them to 'go out and wander for the well-being and happiness of the many, out of compassion for the world . . .'. But they were no Protestant evangelists creating a church of laymen, for they were to 'propound the absolutely perfect and wholly pure life of celibate mendicancy'.

Certain elements of this ring true. There was an elective affinity between Buddhism and city merchants, who were among the founding members of the complex urbane society which the Buddha's teaching addressed. But his was also a universal message; and many besides merchants – perhaps the youths 'of the countryside' – must also have joined the Order. The emphasis on the celibate life seems especially plausible, for it expressed the *esprit de corps* of the Order, and it is consistent with the message of many of the discourses, that the only truly rational course is to renounce the world. However, even if this uncompromising purpose was the original brief of the Order, the missionary activity held within it the possibility of a profound involvement with the laity: for it was after all the laymen's food which sustained, and their cloth which protected the mendicant missionaries as they spread along the trade routes through India and later throughout Asia.

So laymen do appear in the legendary biography. Immediately after Yasa joined the Order, Yasa's father came looking for him and met the Buddha, who preached to him. The father was converted, 'he gained confidence' in the Buddha's teaching, and he thereupon 'went for refuge to the Buddha as long as breath lasts'. This 'going for refuge' today marks formally a layman's commitment to the Buddha, his Order, and his teaching, and it seems likely that it had a similar significance at

the time of the compilation of the legend and earlier. Yasa's father then invited the Buddha for a meal, and while at the father's home the Buddha converted Yasa's former wife and his mother as well, who also 'went for refuge' to the Buddha. These events at Yasa's father's home convey the substance of the relationship between Buddhist monks and laymen. The laymen offer food and physical support to the monks, while the monks offer the laymen wisdom and other spiritual goods. Anthropologists are fond of discovering institutions based on long-term gift exchange, in which two parties establish a relationship by giving gifts to each other and continue the relationship by the continued exchange of gifts, and this is such a case. On the laymen's part liberality, and especially generosity towards monks, is enjoined, whereas on the monk's side 'the gift of the Buddha's teaching is the best gift', as the canon repeatedly asserts. The gifts are different in kind, but they are given freely, and through them lasting ties are created. Upon this mutual exchange there was thus formed the Buddhist community as a whole, the 'fourfold assembly', which included monks, nuns (whom the Buddha later sanctioned), laymen and laywomen. It was this community as a whole that achieved Buddhism's lasting success.

So what the Buddha's teaching had to offer the laity was certain spiritual goods. Some of these goods were not offered by Buddhism alone, however. One was merit, an immaterial reward garnered by a layman simply by feeding a monk and listening to his sermon. Merit could be laid up to secure a better rebirth: the more merit in the spiritual account, so to speak, the better the rebirth. Hence, as there was a high spiritual purpose appropriate to the monk, namely liberation, so there was a lower one appropriate to the layman, better rebirth (and the hope that one would eventually be reborn in circumstances allowing one to become a monk and achieve liberation). This was a good reason for patronizing the Buddhist Order; but in fact it was also a reason for patronizing others such as the Jain order as well, for they held a similar conception of merit.

6. After preaching, the monk is offered food by the lay people. This relationship, in which the monk offers the 'Gift of the Teaching' and the lay people offer food and clothing, has supported the Buddhist order since its beginning in ancient India.

Another spiritual good offered to the laity was a high moral teaching, composed of injunctions against such acts as lying, killing, and stealing; against gaining one's livelihood in harmful ways; and against destructive attitudes of greed, hatred, and folly. The monk, with his strenuous discipline of self-control, represented the perfection of human virtue, but the basic principles of that perfection were adaptable to a lower level, to a morality fitting the compromised circumstances of a laity who had to make their living and bear their children in the world. The Buddha, however, held no monopoly of such teachings, whose novelty and popularity were linked with the relative newness and wide distribution of the now developing urbanized forms of social life. Now there were merchants who, through command of the impersonal instruments of money and trade, could wreak a new damage on others; now there were states and armies with new capabilities of harm; now there were offices to seek at others' expense. Moreover, life in the new cities required that groups who had no natural mutual interest or mutually inherited moral code had to devise ways of living together with at least a bare minimum of trust. Much of the adaptation to new forms of life must have occurred quite apart from the renouncers, but the renouncers gave form and voice to the change. They embodied the virtues of harmlessness and poverty (the Buddha's monks were not even to touch gold or silver). They sought no offices. And in their preaching they advocated virtues whose practice – whatever theory went with them – could render the new social world habitable.

The teachings of merit and lay morality explain the renouncers', and not merely the Buddha's, success. Indeed in ancient India Buddhism would probably seldom have seemed markedly more successful than other movements, and taken singly many of the Buddha's teachings to the laity could be found in other doctrines. However, the Buddha achieved a synthesis of the various elements which made the whole more than the sum of the parts. This synthesis is formed upon the Buddha's tendency to think in practical terms, on the analogy of craftsmanship, and also upon his concern with psychological explanations.

The doctrine of skilfulness

The key to this way of thinking is embodied in a term found frequently in his discourses. This term is *kusala*, whose primary meaning is 'skilful', as a goldsmith may be skilful at making gold ornaments. It is a term which the Buddha made his own, and he used it in the first place to refer to skill in meditation. But he also used it widely to apply to skill in moral discipline and in the acquisition of merit. In this application 'skilful' also means morally good, as we might say 'he is a good man' or 'that was a good act'. Indeed in many contexts 'skilful' is the opposite of evil, and refers to the same kind of sharp distinction that is made in Christianity between good and evil. But for the Buddha 'skilful/good' always had a practical, not a metaphysical or absolute flavour to it. The dead centre of the term is best conveyed by a sense lost to us (but still alive among the ancient Greeks), that just as one could be skilful or *good at* a craft, so one could be *good* at being a sentient being, and hence one could be *good*.

This term was animated by 'thorough reflection' upon the consequences of deeds and in particular of the attitudes, the mental actions, behind deeds. For the Buddha skilfulness cut two ways: its consequences were good for oneself, but good for others as well. For example, the act of giving food to a monk gained one merit, and indeed with the characteristic Buddhist emphasis upon the mental side of things this merit was conceived as being also a psychological good, a wholesome frame of mind pursuant upon liberality. But giving is also good for the monk, at the very least because the monk thereby assuages his hunger. By the same token, to cultivate moral discipline is simultaneously to avoid harm to others and to create good/skilful frames of mind in oneself. We tend to think of doing good as involving the sacrifice of one's own interests for someone else's, but for the Buddha to do good was precisely to act in both one's own *and* in someone else's interest. For the monk the stress was on one's own interest, liberation, while the means – exemplary moral

discipline – incidentally achieved others' interests. But this way of thought was easily turned around to apply to laymen, who by being good to others achieved the end of being good to themselves. This reasoning was further bolstered by the teaching that to be kind, gentle, honest, and harmless to others was in fact to invite them to behave in the same manner to oneself: do good to others that they may do good to you. By wise reflection and moral action Buddhists, whether monks or laymen, could achieve the fruit of their skilfulness 'both here and in the next world'.

The Buddha's doctrine for laymen, therefore, was intimately and organically connected to his thought on his monks' training. But this connection was not limited to the level of morality alone. For the monk the moral discipline underpins cultivation of the mind in meditation; but for both monks and laymen the cultivation of certain mental skills and attitudes could in turn underpin morality. It is here that compassion, concern for others, enters the picture again, now as an attitude to be cultivated meditatively and as a value directed to others' welfare in general. One can transform oneself not only for liberation, but also for love. In the Buddhist texts compassion is analysed into three: first, compassion proper, defined as sympathy with others' suffering; second, sympathetic joy, the enjoyment of others' good fortune; and third, loving-kindness, the Buddhist sentiment *par excellence*. The attitude cultivated by monks and laymen in loving-kindness is expressed in this famous passage of very early Buddhist poetry:

> Whatever beings may exist – weak or strong, tall, broad, medium or short, fine-material or gross, seen or unseen, those born and those pressing to be born – may they all without exception be happy in heart!
>
> Let no one deceive anyone else, nor despise anyone anywhere. May no one wish harm to another in anger or ill-will!
>
> Let one's thoughts of boundless loving-kindness pervade the whole

world, above, below, across, without obstruction, without hatred, without enmity! (S 146–8, 150)

This passage compresses the attitudes underlying the morality taught by the Buddha into a single sentiment, capturing the positive spirit that is to accompany the negative injunctions. Indeed loving-kindness is absolutely necessary both in the monk's training and in the lay morality, since for Buddhists it is the mental action, the intention or attitude, which counts and not the deed itself. The sentiment of loving-kindness is certainly impersonal, and in this the Olympian detachment of the renouncer shows through. One must treat all equally, regardless of position or relationship. Indeed in this universal sentiment the Buddha's moral reasoning has a place, for in prescriptions for loving-kindness the meditator is to 'identify oneself with all' (A II 129). That is, just as I am subject to pain and pleasure, so are others, and just as I wish myself well, so I should wish well to others. Throughout the Buddhist world loving-kindness, supplemented by compassion for suffering, was to become the model for social sentiments beyond the family and a value in its own right. In later Buddhist folklore and thought these sentiments grew so prominent as to overshadow even the premier value of liberation.

The Discourse to the Kālāmans

The assembled structure of the Buddha's teaching to laymen is revealed in the Discourse to the Kālāmans (A I 188–93), a people on the northern fringe of the Gangetic civilization. In that discourse the Buddha is represented as touring with a body of monks through the area. A group of Kālāmans learns of his presence and goes to him in the village of Kesaputta with a problem: various wandering ascetics and Brahmans have travelled through expounding and recommending their own views to the Kālāmans, while attacking and rebutting the views of others. The Kālāmans are confused, and seek advice from the Buddha. Whom should they believe? To this confusion the Buddha replies with a

teaching which has frequently been quoted to demonstrate the Buddha's lack of dogmatism and advocacy of individual judgement. He asserts that the Kālāmans should not rely on 'hearsay, on tradition, on legends, on learning, nor on mere inference or extrapolation or cogitation, nor on consideration and approval of some theory or other, nor because it seems fitting, nor out of respect for some ascetic'.

This is not a recommendation for capricious individual fancy, however, for what the Buddha recommends is his own moral reasoning from wise reflection and skilfulness, and he is confident that if the Kālāmans so reason they will each one arrive at the Buddha's moral teaching:

> when you know for yourselves that this is unskilful and that skilful, this blameworthy and that blameless, this deprecated by the wise because it conduces to suffering and ill, and that praised because it conduces to well-being and happiness ... when you know this for yourselves, Kālāmans, you will reject the one and make a practice of the other.

The moral teaching at which they will arrive is a straightforward one. The Kālāmans will not kill, they will not take what is not given, they will not take another's wife, they will not incite others to their own harm. These injunctions will arise naturally out of the Kālāmans' experience and their reflection upon skilfulness.

In the first place it is possible to infer a certain topicality in the discourse. There is reason to believe that the Kālāmans, like their neighbours the Sakyans, the Buddha's people, had had an independent oligarchic republican government and had been, in the remembered past, a relatively autonomous people. But now they were subjected to the power of the Kosalan king, as the Sakyans were soon to be, and in their economic life they must have felt the magnetic pull of the distant Kosalan capital. These political and economic forces were drawing the Kālāmans out of a relatively simple and closed tribal society into the complex world of Gangetic civilization, and these dislocations were

compounded by new cultural forms, embodied in the conflicting advice of those messengers of the Gangetic civilization, the wandering ascetics.

It is impossible to believe that the injunctions against killing, lying, stealing, and so forth were wholly new to the Kālāmans: their own ancestral culture must have offered analogous injunctions. It is difficult to conceive the survival of a society which did not hold these values in some form, at least as touches the members of the society itself. However, it is characteristic of societies like the older Kālāman one that such values are not reasoned, but are rather held by virtue of tradition and custom, and dramatized in legend and ritual. Under the new conditions these inherited moral traditions had lost their unquestioned hegemony, though, and hence there was occasion for the Buddha to offer a new form of moral reasoning which grew out of the most basic conditions of human life. The proposed morality was not a specifically Kālāman thing, but grew out of the sheer fact of being in society at all, of having a common life, of being able to reason for one's own and others' ends, whoever was involved. This morality was meant to hold for all conditions.

But the Buddha envisaged more than just a new foundation for Kālāman morality. For the injunctions are meant to apply not only within Kālāman society, but to all individuals, Kālāman or not, with whom a Kālāman might deal: and the Kālāmans were already implicated with many other peoples. It is typical of small-scale societies, and of small groups within a larger society, that their members alone are treated as full constituents of the moral community. But now the Kālāmans were invited into a larger world to embrace within their moral community all living beings, and certainly all the people of the Gangetic plain. The Buddha promulgated a universal morality to fit the Kālāmans' enforcedly more cosmopolitan life.

To this extent the Buddha's teaching to laymen was founded on

his moral reasoning, but in the discourse this moral reasoning is in turn founded more deeply in his teaching and experience, in his analysis of the human constitution and his project for self-transformation. When he taught the monks the Buddha emphasized that the sources of suffering – greed, hatred, delusion – lead to one's own harm. But in this teaching to laymen he stressed that they are generally harmful, not only harmful to oneself.

> When greed rises within a man does it not conduce to harm? Or when hatred and delusion arise within a man? Is it not when his mind is overcome with greed, hatred, and delusion that a man murders, steals, lies, and so forth? And is it not by having a mind unconquered by these things that he is able to avoid all these acts?

In this passage 'harm' refers to harm caused both to oneself and to others: just as to be skilful is to serve both one's own ends and others' ends, so to be harmful is to harm both oneself and others. The point is worth emphasizing, because not only Westerners but also later schools of Buddhism have wished to reject or improve on the Buddha's teaching on the grounds that it is oblivious to others' welfare or to the existence of society. Although on balance the Buddha was more concerned with the anatomy of individual experience than with the anatomy of society, his teaching always recognized that to be human is to be a social being.

Moreover the Buddha's view of how a layman is to mend himself so that his mind is 'unconquered' relies on more than just wise reflection. On the one hand, the Buddha presupposes in laymen a rational faculty which, if rightly directed, will produce skilful solutions to moral problems. Laymen can calculate what to do. But on the other hand this view of laymen as having a capacity for rationality is only part of the story, for the Buddha also felt that laymen could – to an extent appropriate to their station – transform themselves. Hence in the Discourse to the Kālāmans the Buddha recommends the meditation on the social sentiments, especially loving-kindness. Laymen are to practise

by directing loving-kindness to all quarters and all beings, 'identifying oneself with all . . . having a heart free of anger and hatred'. The effect of this mental exercise is to establish loving-kindness sooner or later as a lasting habit and motivation in action.

This has two important implications. First, it means that the Buddha recommended not only *why* one should act skilfully, but also *how* the sometimes intractable human constitution can be made to do so. The Buddha was an optimist in that he thought humans capable of skilful rationality, but a realist in that he knew this rationality to require an emotional transformation as well. One may calculate an act to be good and skilful, and yet be unable to carry it out, and this common weakness was taken fully into account. Second, this practice of self-transformation is portable, in the sense that in principle it may be practised effectively by anyone. This is important because much of human experience, and especially that beyond the bounds of an enclosed group such as the Buddhist Order, cannot be manipulated to one's own ends. The Kālāmans were subject to natural changes but also, and increasingly, to social changes which were beyond anyone's power to control or even to understand fully. But here at least was a matter which one could effectively handle: one's own habits and motivations. If one cannot change the world, one can at least change oneself. True, a practice for laymen such as the meditation on loving-kindness must be partly dependent for its effectiveness on one's being part of a Buddhist community which cleaves to such values; but the final effort is one's own and the focus of effort is oneself. A Kālāman travelling to the Kosalan capital or a Kālāman working his ancestral fields could both equally well practise loving-kindness and compassion.

The Discourse to the Kālāmans is perhaps quite topical, but as the Buddha phrased it the discourse, like many of his other teachings to laymen, is applicable to anyone in a similar plight. In this the Buddha is strikingly modern, for today it is difficult to find a people which has not been drawn into a wider, more complex, more confusing social world,

as the Kālāmans were drawn into Gangetic civilization. The Buddha addressed himself by the very generality of his discourse to the wide variety of possible fates in the experience of a complex society, and that experience of complexity is ours at least as much as it was the ancient Indians'. On the surface people now, as then, obey the dictates of a bewildering variety of different necessities and values, but there are some traits which they all share: the capacity for misery or happiness, the capacity to harm or benefit others.

Cultural relativism

Indeed this modernity corresponds to certain hard-won views of our own. The Buddha was original in his consciousness of the varieties of culture in his milieu, and he was capable of recommending in the canon, for example, that different groups adhere each to its own ancestral morality and religion. The Buddha recognized, that is, that peoples' values are relative to their own history and culture. We too have come to recognize this irreducible difference of values: we call it cultural relativism, and we take this to mean that other societies are not to be judged by our own. But just as cultural relativism cannot realistically be thought to mean that people can live according to just any values or with no values, so the Buddha advocated that people adhere to ancestral standards *only in so far as* those standards are consistent with moral skilfulness. Similarly the Buddha taught that human individuals are not to be seen as isolated from each other, but as conjoined to each other in a weighty and consequential relationship. This is consistent with another modern view, a growing awareness that individuals are not to be understood in isolation, but as being inextricably involved in a social context.

There is another kind of modernity, however, which the Buddha did not have, and that is an overriding preoccupation with the political dimension of human affairs. For the most part the Buddha's discourses define three areas of concern which, between them, make up the

human world as it is seen by the Buddha: an individual's concern with the events of his own mind and body, his concern with his face-to-face personal relations with others, and his concern with the welfare of all sentient beings. For these three areas, the psychic, the socially very small-scale, and the universal collectivity of all beings, he was willing to lay down both the way things are and the way they should be. But these descriptions and prescriptions say little about how men do and should behave as members of political collectivities, and how political collectivities should be organized. Certainly this relative indifference to the specifics of political affairs must have contributed to the ease with which the Buddha's teaching has been found relevant in very different political climates.

But this is not to say that the Buddha's teaching is devoid of political interest or political implications. In so far as we can infer the Buddha's own preferences, they were for the sort of oligarchic egalitarian or republican political organization that seems to have held among his own people. And we know this because his prescriptions for the organization of the Buddhist Order, which appear in a long biographical text on his last days, are set beside very similar prescriptions for another such people. The Order (or the people) are to conduct their business in concord, their decisions are to be unanimous, they are to respect and defer to elders, but where elders' views conflict with the teaching and disciplinary code (or the tradition of the group), one is to follow the teaching. Had such oligarchies prospered and expanded, we might have had ancient Indian theories of democracy and citizenship such as ancient Greece gave us. But oligarchies had probably never been the principal form of government in India: they were very much on their way out when the Buddha lived, and very soon they were gone forever. Most of the Buddha's experience was with kingdoms, and no king wishes to hear radical political thought.

So the Buddha was left to talk about kings if he was to talk about politics at all. There are left to us a number of fascinating discourses

which must have taken their complex literary form after the Buddha's death but some of which quite possibly represent the Buddha's views, and in these he expounds on kingship. The chief message is that kings, no less than anyone else, are subject to the moral order, to considerations of what is morally and socially skilful. When there came to be Buddhist kings these discourses were taken at face value to construct a specifically Buddhist theory of ethical kingship. Other messages include what seems to be a recommendation for state capitalism, to the effect that the king should finance enterprises in order to bring prosperity to the people; and a contract theory of the monarchy, to the effect that the king is elected because he is the handsomest and best and able to keep people in line. But these messages are set in highly ironical and even humorous frames, in which the Buddha tells a fanciful story to an imaginary figure (e.g. Sharptooth the Brahman), and the consequence is that the Buddha is distanced very far from the messages he seems to convey. Part of this distancing is that of a world renouncer looking down from the perspective of liberation upon the folly and pettiness of even grand state affairs. But there is a keen edge to this commentary which implies that the Buddha must have been a very perspicacious observer of the political scene.

In the light of our deeply disillusioning experience of the teachings of the past as they have been applied in the world, we might very well doubt that any past master still bears cogency and relevance. And one might further object in the case of the Buddha that his mastery is not *world-wide,* but is grounded upon views of the cosmos, such as transmigration, which can never be accepted by the West. But I have tried to show that the philosophy of the Buddha was concerned with matters that do make his mastery available to everyone, that do bring him within Western history, though the West must – quite appropriately – expand its view of its own history beyond parochial preoccupations to embrace him. The Buddha was concerned with the physical and psychological bases upon which human self-transformation is possible: such a mastery could not be lost to us. His

teaching was suited to a world of different political philosophies and different religions, but a world in which certain basic values must guide personal relations if we are to live together at all, and it is difficult to see how that mastery could be irrelevant to us.

The story of the Buddha's death is recounted in a long text (D II no. 16) which, shorn of its mythical elements, portrays the last journey of an old man. Accompanied by his now continual companion, the loving but, as the text portrays him, rather bumbling Ānanda, the Buddha made his way northward over hundreds of miles, plagued by illness. Finally the Buddha was struck down by food poisoning and came to rest in the obscure village of Kusinārā.

When Ānanda realized that the Buddha was about to die, 'he went into a house and leaned against the doorframe weeping'. The Buddha called Ānanda to himself and told him,

> do not mourn, do not weep. Haven't I told you that we are separated, parted, cut off from everything dear and beloved? . . . You have served me long with love, helpfully, gladly, sincerely, and without reserve, in body, word, and thought. You have done well by yourself, Ānanda. Keep trying and you will soon be liberated.

Note on quotations

Abbreviations

References to works in the Buddhist canon are to the Pali Text Society editions of the Theravāda canon. The letter refers to the appropriate *nikāya* (collection), the first number to the volume within the *nikāya*, and the second number to the page in the volume. Thus a reference to the *Majjhima Nikāya*, second volume, page 91 would be written M II 91. Where I have referred to a whole discourse I have given the number of the discourse, e.g. MI no.15. The following abbreviations are used:

D *Dīgha Nikāya*
M *Majjhima Nikāya*
A *Anguttara Nikāya*
S *Saṃ yutta Nikāya*

Other references are to the *Udāna* (U) and the *Paramatthajotikā* (P), also in Pali Text Society editions; and to the *Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad* (B) and the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (C), which are cited giving book, chapter and section number so that any edition may be consulted.

Translations and terms

The translations are almost entirely my own. Anyone who wishes to trace citations to their context will find that the Pali Text Society's English translations are keyed so that one may light more or less on the

appropriate passage, though one's aim is better if one can consult the Pali. A little experimentation will be necessary.

The technical terms are in Pali, except where I have noted that they are in Sanskrit.

Pronunciation

To avoid really embarrassing mistakes in Pali pronunciation it need only be borne in mind that *c* is equivalent to English *ch*, so *cetanā* is pronounced very roughly chay-tuh-naa; and that *h* after a consonant means only an extra breathiness in pronunciation, as in the English pit*h*ead or dog*h*ouse. Those wishing to pronounce *Buddha* correctly will need to know that the doubled *d* is pronounced as such, rather as doubled consonants are pronounced in Italian. Thus it is roughly Bud-dhuh, *not* Booduh.

The special symbols that appear above or below certain letters in Pali and Sanskrit words transliterated in the text affect the pronunciation of those letters *roughly* as indicated in the following table of equivalence:

ā	*ah*
ś	half-way between *s* and *sh*
ñ	*ny* as in can*y*on
ṭ ḷ ṇ	instead of the tongue touching the back of the teeth, as in English, it is taken further back towards the roof of the mouth
ṣ	*sh*
ṃ	*ng*

Further reading

A great deal has been published in English about Buddhism, some of it very technical, some of it misleading, and some of it very good indeed. These are suggestions which will lead to a more comprehensive understanding of the Buddha, of his teaching, and of the history of Buddhism.

Quite a different approach to the Buddha's biography was taken by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli in *The Life of the Buddha* (Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy, 1972), which is available from the Society in Kandy, Sri Lanka. He tells the story of the Buddha entirely through accurate translations from the Pali texts themselves. This book is perhaps the best introduction to the Pali texts, with their peculiarly meticulous and laconic style. Yet another approach was taken by Michael Pye in *The Buddha* (Duckworth, 1979). He conveys a vivid sense of the Buddha's life as well as of the stories and myths through which the early Buddhist community came to see the Buddha. Both of these would very usefully supplement the picture I have given.

For the Buddha's teaching there is nothing better than Walpola Rahula's *What the Buddha Taught* (Gordon Fraser, 1967). This combines lucidity with a warm advocacy of Buddhism from the point of view of a practising monk. Nyanaponika Thera has written a similarly lucid book

on insight meditation, *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation* (Rider, 1969). These are both based on the Theravāda tradition.

For a broader introduction to the breadth of Buddhist philosophy and history Richard Robinson and Willard L. Johnson's book, *The Buddhist Religion* (Dickenson, 1982) is especially good. This may then be followed by Heinz Bechert and Richard Gombrich (eds.), *The World of Buddhism* (Thames and Hudson, 1984), which is composed of articles on Buddhism and the Buddhist order in each of the Buddhist countries. Though written for a general readership each article represents the latest scholarship on each area.

It would be well to supplement such reading with an acquaintance with the Buddhist texts themselves, which can be consulted in Henry C. Warren's *Buddhism in Translations* (Atheneum, 1963) or in Stephen Beyer's more recent *Buddhist Experience: Sources and Interpretations* (Dickenson, 1974).

Many of these books have useful bibliographies which will then lead the reader further into the subject he or she wishes to study. My own interest has been in the actual practice of Buddhism in Buddhist lands today. On this Holmes Welch's *The Practice of Chinese Buddhism, 1900–1950* (Harvard University Press, 1967) is particularly thorough. My own understanding of Buddhism is based on field work in Sri Lanka, and I have written of that in *The Forest Monks of Sri Lanka* (Oxford University Press, 1983). This picture of strict meditative practitioners is complemented by Richard Gombrich's *Precept and Practice* (Oxford University Press, 1971), which concerns the beliefs and practices of popular Buddhism in Sri Lanka.

Index

Page numbers in *italics* refer to illustrations.

D

E

F

G

H

N

O

P

R

S

T

U

V

W

Y

第一章
绪 论

在斯里兰卡古都阿耨逻陀补逻(Anuradhapura)[1]的故址上，废弃着一尊石佛的坐像。这尊坐像比人身略显长大，孤零零地呆在荒草中冒出的一块残基上面。这尊佛像在这里坐了大约上千年，它的造型是佛化亚洲(Buddhist Asia)各处所习见的那种样式。像中的佛陀双腿结跏趺坐[2]，双掌互叠置于膝上，入甚深禅定之中。佛教徒自古相传，2,500多年前，佛陀就是以这样一种姿势，在一棵树下获得开悟的。他对人间的实相，获得了决定见(decisive knowledge)，对自己已得解脱，获得了不动信(the unshakeable certainty)。

阿耨逻陀补逻的这尊坐佛像，在其宝相庄严的刻画上，不落窠臼，与传统样式大异其趣。他的头背挺直，但双臂松弛，面部显出沉浸在寂灭当中的喜悦之情。佛像看上去睿智而安详，和坚硬无比的花岗岩结合得完美无缺。有一次站在佛像前，一位上了年纪的英国社会主义者告诉我，在人类历史的长河中，至少这尊佛像和它背后所代表的那种东西，是值得我们为之感

[1] 斯里兰卡的佛教圣地，从公元前3世纪到公元10世纪是古代锡兰（即斯里兰卡，又称楞迦岛，狮子国）的都城，今天是斯里兰卡中北省省会。那里佛教古迹甚多，设有斯里兰卡考古总局。

[2] 关于“结跏趺坐”，请参看本书第三章的“禅定”一节。

到骄傲的。他还说，宗教这东西对他来说早就没有意义了，可冥冥之中总有一种感觉，就是觉得自己一路走来，始终都是佛陀的弟子。

也许正是由这尊佛像启沃了如此强烈的个人沉思。可是，还有更值得我们注意的事，就是这种想法是很多人心中都有的。就拿克洛德·列维-施特劳斯[1]来说吧，他不是佛教徒，可是他说过这样的话：

> “我听过很多大师的教诲，读过很多哲学家的书，调查过很多种社会，可是我究竟从这里面学到了什么呢？西方人引以为豪的那种科学，到底教会了我什么呢？只给了我一两条残缺不全的教训，如果放在一起，连为一体，大体上也许可以等同于菩提树下圣者的沉思了。”[2]

这足以证明佛陀对于我们来说依然有他的感染力。这种感染力有没有充分的根据呢？身为一个东方的预言家，佛陀生于耶稣纪元前第一个千年的中期，所处的历史环境和文化背景和我们完全不同，他究竟可以给这些想法如此现代的思想家提供些什么东西呢？这是我要尝试回答的首要问题。

我想通过写一册佛传尝试着回答这个问题。此乃明智之举，但绝非显而易见。(这是因为)历史上曾经出现过很多人物，他们的意义很少体现在个人生活中，只有在思想学说里，才能见出他们的真正意义。可是，在这一点上，佛陀是很特殊的，因为他的学说和生活紧密相连，根本无法分开。

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[1] 克洛德·列维－斯特劳斯（Claude Lévi-Strauss,1908—）是法国结构主义人类学家、哲学家，本书作者的同行和前辈，主要著作有《苦闷的热带》、《结构人类学》、《野性的思维》、《神话学》等。

[2] 这段话的出处待考。

传略

传统的佛传对佛教徒影响深远，而且早就被翻译成多种欧洲文字。就让我来根据传统佛传的讲法来描述一下佛陀的生平。佛陀生为王子，在富贵安乐中长大，有朝一日还能继承王位，大权在握，这些福德都为世人所歆羡。可是等他长大成人后，却先后遇到了病人、老人和死人。以前他长在深宫之内，哪里见过这些，遂深受震动：原来，不管有多少的财富，有多大的权势，他也难逃生老病死之苦。与此同时，他也见到了一个游方的沙门(a wandering ascetic)，这个沙门一心想做的事，就是从苦中获得解脱。佛陀细审所见，发现苦终不可免，就不顾家人之劝，抛妻弃子，舍弃尊位，也出家做了沙门，一心寻求解脱。在他的一生中，这是第一个重要的转捩点。

出家后若干年间，佛陀先习禅定，后修苦行，发现都不能证得[1]解脱。于是，他不再自苦身心，反而坐下来静观人间，在静观中终获开悟，证得解脱。这是他一生中第二个重要的变化。他“所作已办”(had done what was to be done)，参破了痛苦的谜题。从自己的亲身体验中，他得出一种哲学。此后45年间，他就传授这种哲学。人生在世的大多数问题，没有他的学说谈不到的。他建立了僧团，僧徒们仿效他的样子寻求解脱，还把他的法门传播到世界各地。他最后也是死于一般人的病痛，和其他人没有两样。但和其他人不一样的是，他的死是“大般涅槃”(utterly extinguished，巴利语 *parinibbuto*)，死后不再投生转世，再受痛苦的煎熬。

上述所言是经过高度概括的，就算是这样，要想提出确实的理由来怀疑它，也并非不可能。不过，至少这些总是真的吧：出生、成人、出家、访道、开悟和解脱、弘法、涅槃。这部传

[1] “证得”就是“证悟”、“悟出”、“领会”，是一种神秘的宗教体验，不同于我们一般所说的知识的获得。

记还有两个关键的转变，即出家和开悟，为佛陀和他的弟子们提供了戏剧化的情节，可以借此来宣讲教法，也提供了心理学和哲学的型范，可以以此为根据来创立他们的思想。在戏剧性方面，情节集中在英雄般的个人奋斗所取得的精神转变上，而在哲学方面，则集中于佛陀身心内部所获得的发现。

因此，佛陀说："我今但以一寻之身，说于世界，世界集，世界灭，世界灭道迹"(《相应部经典》，第1卷第62页)。[1]在此范围内，佛陀所遭受的和一切凡夫没有什么不同。对一切凡夫来说，用佛陀的话讲就是，"生苦，老苦，病苦"。在他看来，这些无法避免的紧迫的事实是任何人都能发现的，只要他们肯内省一下自己的经验。同样地，解脱的方法也是向每个人敞开的。比如说，佛陀所发展的禅定方法，也是根据简单而现成的现象，如每个人的出入息(breathing，即呼吸)。佛陀所拥护的道德规范，是建立在清晰而实际的原则上面，而这些原则都得自他自己的生活。佛陀拿自己当实验室[2]，概括出自己的发现，并推己及人，用之于施惠众生。

第二个问题是，佛陀是如何获得转变和发展的？因为从方方面面来说，这种发展正是他的哲学所要说明的主题。对佛教徒来说，这个问题最为紧要。佛陀自己也经常回答这个问题。有时候，他通过直接讲述自己的生平事迹来回答这个问题。在

[1] 引自《杂阿含经》第45卷第1307经。这段话意为：在这个一寻长的、附随有心灵和各种意见的臭皮囊里，我（向你们）开示这个世界，这个世界的生起和灭坏，还有这个世界灭坏的道。

[2]《四无量心》(性空法师讲，释见恺文字整理，"法悦丛书"第3种，台湾嘉义市，香光书乡，2004年，第22—23页)："只有闻、思不算真正的了解，要用自己的身体去实践、验证才算真正的了解。解脱只能靠自己的身体，不能靠别人的身体解脱。自己的身体是我们的实验室，除了这个实验室外，没有其他的实验室可以检验佛陀所开示的法。解脱从自己的身心开始！第一阶段的修习很重要，了解第一阶段才能了解身体的各种情况。虽然身体臭臭的，给我们许多麻烦，但它是我们的实验室，所以要好好了解修行方法，运用智慧修行，以自己的身心做实验求证。不然，坐在这里做什么？对自己、他人无益。"

其他的场合，他会间接地回答这个问题，比如他会说如果甲某做了某事，那么紧随其后的有害果报就会发生，如果甲某做了另一件事，那么他获得的果报就会是好的，而且有助于他的解脱。在这后面暗伏着一个假设，就是佛陀知道这些事，全是因为他自己亲眼见证过这些不同的选择。他要求他自己，就像要求他的僧徒一样，坚守一条有关证据的法则："汝等是言，依汝等所自知所自觉"(《中部经典》，第1卷第265页)。[1]

佛陀哲学的这种自传性格，并不意味着单单讲一讲他个人的生平，就足以解释他哲学的起源。虽说佛陀喜欢独处，但毕竟是他所属的社会和这个社会所经历的历史的一部分。他生活的那个时代，在社会和知识方面都在发生巨大的变化。对这些变化所带来的结果，他有所继承，而对这些变化的进一步推进，他也作出了很大的贡献。他的思想是革命性的，只是这场革命早已酝酿了很长的时间。在我的心目中，这场革命是这样一种形象：一股变动的暗流，经过数世纪的汇集，越发强劲，浸润到古印度人生活的所有方面。佛陀被推到这个洪波的浪峰，对人间万象获得了深微而广博的识见。所以，根本的问题是如何估定佛陀的所见有多少来自他达到的这种高度，来自他在历史上所处的位置，以及他的前辈和同代人的工作，又有多少是来自他本人敏锐的洞见。

资料来源

对于生活在2,500年前的一个人，要追述他的生平和环境，

[1] 此处引自巴利语《中部经典·爱尽大经》，参看江炼百、夏丏尊等据日译本重译的《南传大藏经》(台北市：佛教出版社，1981年)，第548页。南传巴利语佛典分"经""律""论"三部分(三藏)，"经藏"中最重要的有四部，即《长部经典》、《中部经典》、《增支部经典》和《相应部经典》，都是若干部经文的汇编，略同于汉文大藏经里的《长阿含经》、《中阿含经》、《增一阿含经》和《杂阿含经》。

我们手里有什么资料可以依凭呢？关于佛陀的生平，我们几乎全得依据佛教的圣典。这些典籍有多种东方语言的版本传世，其中年代最久远，而且与佛陀关系最密切的部分，是《经藏》(*Suttapiṭaka*)和《律藏》(*Vinayapiṭaka*)。它们的各种版本，足足可以占满图书馆的好几个书架。而且，它们大多数被视为佛陀金口亲说，每一部都有自己特别的说法时处和说法因缘。佛陀弟子们的意思很清楚，就是尽量要在历史背景下保存大师确实说过的每一句话。

他们的这种意图完成得究竟如何呢？让我们先看看佛典的构成。经律(canonical discourses)的构成，取多种样式：有时是佛陀与外道弟子的对谈；有时是佛陀对僧徒个别疑难的回答；有时则是佛陀面对僧众的无问自说法要；个别情况下还有对在家众(自己不行出家事，仅做出家者的外护)的说法。

佛法的对象主要是出家的僧众，所以住持大法的任务，主要也落在他们身上。一年大半时间，佛陀和僧众都要四处云游说法，仅在北印度季风起时，才聚在各个僧舍中，度四个月的雨安居[1]。佛陀和僧众一边云游，一边弘扬教法，可是在雨安居中，他们只在僧团内部研讨和覆诵法义。当然，还有一小部分经律的内容，属于僧徒间的问答论议。在全部藏经之中，某些法义以略不相同的面目出现，这多半缘于佛陀在世时或入灭后僧徒所作的加工。当然，还有一种可能，就是佛陀有时也会改变或修正他自己的教法，而僧徒后来散处各地，也使得同一种法义早期和晚期的不同版本，都随他们所在的不同地方，保存在他们的团体当中。

只是在佛陀入灭之后，圣典结集才真正开始。可能佛灭不

[1] “雨安居”（rainy season retreat）是佛教术语，又译“安居”、“夏安居”、“夏坐”、“坐夏”等。在古印度雨期的三个月（公历约五月至八月共四个月）里，禁止僧尼外出，因为外出容易伤害草木小虫，所以应该在寺内坐禅修学，接受供养。

久，僧团就举行了圣典结集的大会，佛灭百余年后，肯定还举行过一次。在这些会议上，僧团力图保存佛说，确立其真实性和权威性。他们还注意到应该系统地建立起若干规条，据此可以判定何者可以接受为佛说，何者为非佛所说，应该摈弃。而且，关于对佛法的住持，僧团还想出了很多办法。他们借鉴身边流行的文化，或者依靠自己的智慧，发展出一套记诵圣典的方法。他们使多数的经文保持一种叮咛反复、高度简括的形式，以便于记忆。他们还采用了诗偈，这类诗偈当时恐怕是可以唱诵的。佛陀在世之时可能就已经采用了诗偈。而最重要的是，他们将教典分门别类，化为内容重叠的若干部，而每人则负责记诵一部，代代相传下去。佛典是在佛灭后三四百年时才写成文字的。这些口传和会诵法确保了他们对佛说的保存要比我们这些习于印刷的人所认识到的要好得多。

这绝不是说，佛典里保存的材料都是信实可靠的。有些佛语早已失传，其他的则被曲解。有些变成了套语，在不相干的场合中反复出现。而且，僧众后来还自作主张加进了许多东西，特别是佛陀的形象越来越被夸大。不管佛陀本人说什么语言，现在用来记录佛典的语言，没有一种是佛陀自己使用过的语言。虽然这些语言中的巴利语可能非常接近佛陀使用的语言。有内部证据似乎可以证明，这些最古老的巴利语圣典变成今天这个样子，时间是在第二次圣典结集之时或者在那以后不久。所以，关于佛陀的形象，我们顶多能够看到他圆寂后第三代弟子所知道的那样。

单是得出这点儿结论，就害得许多西方学者埋头干了一个多世纪。第二次结集结束后不久，僧团内部就发生了部派分裂。随着每个部派的形成，原始经典固然被保存下来，但都经过了重新编纂。纵观整个佛教史，有一条通则是不变的，就是不管圣典如何编辑，绝不会丢弃其中任何一个部分。在旧的材料上面，不同的部派都增益了新的材料。现存各派所传圣典，代表

了它们不同的侧重点和新的法义，被保存于若干有亲缘关系的北印度语言如巴利语、梵语或某一种俗语[1]当中。古时这些教法上的新发展，都发生在印度次大陆上。印度语言中关于这个阶段的文字记录，只有巴利语三藏保存完整，此外还有保存在其他语言中的一些断简残篇。

可是，还有其他不少材料靠译本流传下来。这是因为很久以后，在佛灭不到1,000年时，佛教先后传入了汉、藏两地。如今有很多材料在印度的各种语言中已经看不到了，却被翻译成汉藏文字，一直流传下来。在这些译本藏经中，充满了各种新说，佛陀当年说法的原样，反倒为其所掩。19世纪西方学术研究证明，佛教内部曾经异说纷起，派别林立，丝毫不亚于基督教教会内部的纷争。

初看上去，斯里兰卡、缅甸和泰国三地由上座部(School of the Elders)[2]传承的巴利语三藏，应该是最古老，最接近于佛说的。上座部僧众也是这么看的。从那时起，就有学者为验证此说的真伪，开始学习巴利语、梵语、藏语和汉语。同时，中亚一地又出土了大量古代经文。研究结果表明，在佛传的资料上，巴利语三藏虽然还是最有用的，但中亚残经以及汉藏译本的异文，在很多方面都足以补正巴利语三藏之不足。在复原原始材料的本来面目方面，汉藏文材料还是不可或缺的。本书的译文和术语主要依据巴利语三藏，同时也不忘援引学者们在其

[1] 俗语（Prakrit）：俗语是相对于“雅语”（Sanskrit，即梵语）而言，指若干与梵语有渊源、流行于古代和中古印度民间的地方方言。巴利语也是一种“俗语”。

[2] “上座部”（巴利语 Theravada）是小乘佛教非常重要的一支。佛陀圆寂后，僧团因为对戒律方面的十个问题发生争议，分裂为上座部和大众部两派。“上座”就是“长老”（Thera）的意思，“上座部”就是信奉“长老”（僧团中位置较高、比较保守的人物）所“说”（vada）的部派。上座部主要流行于今天斯里兰卡、缅甸、泰国等地，巴利语三藏就是上座部的圣典。Theravadins 是英文化的巴利语词汇。Theravadin 是巴利语“上座部信徒”的意思，Theravadins 是这个词的复数形式。

他语言材料方面的研究成果。

巴利语三藏优点虽多，但在有一点上稍显遗憾，即不能为“名人录”上有关佛陀的词条提供信实可靠的史料。最棘手的问题出现在佛陀的纪年上。佛陀享高龄，耄耋乃入灭，前后说法45年，这是经文中一般都会说到的。可是，确切日期为何，却为另一问题。依斯里兰卡旧传，兼参西方学者考证，佛灭时间是在公元前483年。汉传材料将佛灭定于公元前368年。这个问题现在还在争论之中，恐怕以后也不会有结论，因为每家的论证都包含了一长串的推论，但这些推论都不够细致严密。这个问题倒是说明了所有古印度人的一个特点，就是他们对纪年问题一点兴趣也没有，却热衷于哲学上的论难。所以，我们的处境很矛盾，我们现在比较了解佛陀的思想，却不太了解他生活的那个世纪。

佛陀在世时印度的社会生活

可是，这并不意味着这些资料在历史内容方面就贫薄。佛陀是一个践行家，当他说法的时候，常从身边生活中就近取譬。这样一来就透露出了当时社会上的很多信息。僧众致力于保存真实背景下的佛说，所以也发挥了同样的作用。我们从而了解到当时的人们从事着何种职业，如何互相划分等级，当时有什么样的政治设施，流行什么样的宗教习俗。对佛陀时代的印度，我们可以画出色彩斑斓内容复杂的画卷，这幅画卷还可以借助佛教的对手耆那教徒的圣典来作修订和补充。可以这么说，自从有了佛陀，印度才算第一次走进了历史。这是因为，在任何的叙事文学中，只有从佛陀在世的时代开始，历史细节才变得清晰起来，这样我们才能有把握地描写某某国王治理着某某国家，某种经济制度如何如何，某某宗教教师在传授何种教法。

参照其他的材料，这幅相对静止的画卷就会变得鲜活起来。关于佛陀出世前的那个时期，我们手里有古婆罗门教（后来演变成印度教）的梵文圣典可以参考，我说的是《梵书》（*Brahmaṇas*）和《奥义书》（*Upanishads*）。这些圣典很少带有佛典里面那种益人心智的细节，这是因为它们本来先是关于某种祭仪的专门著作，后来又演变成关于某一类密法的秘籍。它们在几个世纪中陆续编成，从内容上说并没有反映出某一时代的生活。可是，它们却能证明，印度早期社会大大不同于佛陀生活的时代。这些差别已经从考古学的记录上面获得证明。佛陀出世前的几个世纪中，还没有我们所习见的城市和国家，只有若干武士阶级组成的小邦国。佛陀在世时，城市和国家一下子都有了。在他圆寂后的一两个世纪当中，北印度迎来了孔雀帝国（the Mauryan empire），这是大英帝国取得统治之前印度次大陆上最大的国家。佛陀生活于印度文明的上升时代，正像苏格拉底生活于古希腊所代表的西方文明的上升时代一样。

在古代印度，同时发展出许多崭新而恒久的思想习惯。这些思想习惯在某些方面还很像我们的思想习惯，像得都辨认不出彼此了。我们可以拿它们和古希腊作个比较，相信会是大有裨益的。只有通过回顾我们历史上的同一时期，我们才会发现这些思想习惯确实是在当时形成的。我们现在惯于以一种语言和一种方式谈论各种社会，或者讨论某种普世的伦理会引起什么样的结果。我们还习惯于认为，关于我们自身可以提出很根本的问题，这些问题的答案可以适用于不同环境中的不同人。而且，我们很轻易地就以为，关于这类事大家可以按照某些法则来讨论，这些法则与个人无关，却对所有人都有效。总而言之，我们已经习惯于一种思想，这种思想是普遍的而非特殊的，是抽象的而非具体的，是需要经过论证的，而不是靠超自然的力量来保证、常规的意象来说明，更不是靠传统的惯性来维护其神圣性的。

可是，一旦我们比较苏格拉底和他的希腊前辈，一旦我们拿佛陀和他的印度先人来对照，就会发现这些思想习惯原来是不久前刚刚获得的，显得如此之新鲜。这绝不是说，早期的希腊人和印度人不能去思考他们的自然或社会。他们当然思考过。可是，他们在这样思考的时候，却被牢牢地束缚在自己小圈子的狭窄眼界里面。他们只在为自己说，只对自己说，只有生活在他们这个社会里的人才能完全分享他们的思想成果。他们的思想是象征性的，这种象征性的思想只能激发或者表达(而非问难或解释)一个相对较小的团体所共享的经验和价值。只要这种经验是共享的，只要这个团体不含纳过多的分裂因素，就不会有任何理由和机会来让人质疑他们的价值观。

随着城市的兴起，以及一种复杂的世界性共同体的发展，经验不再是共有的，各种价值观也不再被当成是不可置疑的。传统的思想和生活之间的和谐一致不复存在。日常生活的形式已经发生了很大的变化，这些变化又带来了这种新的可能性，即这些生活形式可被重新考虑，可被讨论，可被重新思考。人们可以对这些事进行哲学的思考。西塞罗说过，苏格拉底“头一次把哲学从天上带到人间，让它在城市里安家落户，甚至引它走进千家万户，驱使它思考人生和道德以及善与恶”。西塞罗的这番话，也可以用在佛陀的身上。佛陀和苏格拉底都敬鬼神而远之，对怪力乱神不感兴趣，可是他们却热切关心人生的目标和指引。

第二章

早年生活和厌俗出家

关于佛陀早年生活得怎样，相貌又如何，后人都作了大量的渲染，但很少可以信从。在表现他独特的禅定之姿时，传统的造像大概是忠实的。可是，这些造像都是在他圆寂数世纪后才雕凿的，所以绝非是反映他真实面目的肖像。我们有理由相信，照他那个时代的审美标准来说，他的相貌是俊美的。在时代较古的《起世因本经》(*Aggañña Sutta*)[1]里，佛陀的俊美受到人们的赞叹，甚至盖过了邻国的胜军王[2]。在他的哲学之外，他的性格如何，我们几乎一无所知。在我们掌握的材料里，他的性格就是他的哲学。虽说如此，我们还是可以想象出，他年轻的时候一定热情洋溢而且性格叛逆，否则一个性格平和恭顺的人，敢不敢去成就他那番事业都不好说，更别说成功了。

有两件事实，我们还算比较有把握。第一件事实是，佛陀出生在释迦族，生地大约在释迦族的都城迦毗罗卫(Kapilavatthu)[3]，

[1] 即《长阿含经》第20卷的《起世因本经》。

[2] 胜军王（Pasenadi）一译波斯匿王，是中印度憍萨罗国（Kosala）国王，佛教的支持者，后被其子毗琉璃王篡位，在出逃的途中饿死。据说，胜军王与佛陀同年生同年死。

[3] 亦译“劫比罗伐窣堵”（梵语 *Kapilavastu*），意译“妙德城”，是古印度国名，释迦族聚居之地，佛陀在世时被憍萨罗国的毗琉璃王（即胜军王之子）所灭。现为佛教圣地，在今尼泊尔南部提罗拉科特附近。

也就是今天尼泊尔低地台拉河谷(Terai)地方的蓝毗尼镇(Lumbini)[1]。第二件事实是，佛陀的家姓或族姓是乔达摩(巴利语Gotama，梵语Gautama；他被尊称为佛陀，也就是“觉者”，是在他获得开悟之后；本书为了叙述上的方便，只用佛陀来称呼他)。关于他的童年或他所受的教育，这些事实虽然什么也没有揭示，但却使他置身于更为广大的恒河文明当中，显示了他所继承的环境中的某些东西。

释迦族是恒河盆地北缘多种散居的部族之一，处于当时正在发展中的北印度文明的边缘。当佛陀出生时，这些部族的人民多少还是独立的，采用大体相似的各种政体。统治者或为寡头集团，或为元老会，或为二者的混一，所以最好可以称他们为部族共和国(tribal republics)。某些部族也许会选出首领来治理一段时间。严格些说，他们没有国王这类概念。所以，后世所传佛陀为王子一说，实在不可依信。可是，就更广阔的文明背景而言，释迦族人自认也有国王、贵族和武士的分别，却肯定不像别的部族一样承认高等祭祀阶级，也就是婆罗门在祭祀上的优越地位。释迦族人都自视为神明的贵胄。我们难免都会有这种印象，就是当佛陀与外界交往时，他对自己高贵的出身极为自信。

有证据显示，释迦族极欲对当时的世界保持冷眼旁观的态度，可他们已经深陷其中，无法摆脱。佛陀的族姓“乔达摩”，也用在别的地方，也许最早还是一个婆罗门的姓。的确，释迦族人对他们高贵的出身自视极高，若不求其原因于域外，实在无法理解。他们实际上早已是南方某个国王[2]的臣属，在经济上也早已受制于南方的商业。不管是释迦族人，还是所有的部族共和国，都是受制于人，而非制人。他们将对印度文明贡献

[1] 佛陀的诞生地，传说佛陀的母亲摩耶夫人在蓝毗尼的一棵树下生下了他。现为佛教圣地，属尼泊尔。

[2] 指南方的憍萨罗国（Kosala）。

的只有他们伟大的族人佛陀，以及一部分保存在佛法中的部族价值观。

变化和权力的各大中心，主要集中在中央恒河盆地。数世纪以来，若干小的武士集团就沿着恒河扩张势力，发展成为中央集权的君主制邦国(centralized monarchical states)。印度古来素有十六"大国"之称，可是在佛陀年轻的时候，有数国已经吞并了周围的小国，并欲继续其征伐。其中的憍萨罗国已经在佛陀在世的时候征服了释迦族。另一个大国摩揭陀国(Magadha)已经统治了西孟加拉，为未来孔雀帝国之核心，并且将于佛灭之后吞并拔耆族人若干部族共和国的联盟[1]。未来属于国王们，而非共和国。

在这些邦国中，出现了真正意义上的市镇中心，这在以前是从未有过的。在这些不断扩充的城市中，有国王们的宫廷，而宫廷和城市则引来了城市生活所需要的一切：商人、技师、士兵、工匠、纳贡的诸侯、他国的难民、异邦人、投机者。在人与人之间，劳动分工变得更为复杂，社会地位更为悬隔。语言不同、文化背景相异的各类人，如今聚居在一起，尽可能地和谐共处。国王的军队和官吏的武力征伐，远途贸易的微妙影响，人口的多次迁移，这些原因促使乡村也被拉进了宫廷和城市生活之中。考古记录显示，这些古印度的城市缺乏城市规划，完全是一盘散沙。可是，正是这一盘散沙，象征着这些新形成的复杂社团所面临的各种困难和各种创造性的机遇。问题的关键在于，面对日常生活中发生的这些前所未有的变化，印度人是如何认识他们自身的？

四种姓

印度人开始调用一个非常古老的知识工具，这就是一种在

[1] 关于拔耆族人，请参看本书第五章里"伽蓝经"一节。

社会中划分不同阶层的观念。这是往昔英武的武士社会的一大特质，令人想起欧洲中古时代对社会阶层的划分。当时的欧洲社会，把人分为三等，即祈祷的人，打仗的人，还有劳役的人，也就是教会、贵族和农奴。在古代印度，则有四大种姓(梵语 *varṇa*)。居最上者是婆罗门，主要指祭祀宗教的祭司和掌握知识的人。除其地位崇高外，婆罗门并不握有实权。实权乃在第二种姓，亦即刹帝利(巴利语 *khattiya*，梵语 *kṣatriya*)的手中。刹帝利的职责是打仗、治理国家以及供养婆罗门举行祭祀活动。释迦族人即以刹帝利自视。刹帝利一姓，包括了国王和贵族。第三种姓包括平民、工匠、农夫，统称吠舍(梵语 *vaiśya*)。第四种姓是首陀罗(梵语 *śudra*)，即执役人(the Servants)之义。首陀罗不能分享宗教祭祀的权益，被迫屈居其他三大种姓之下，过着一种执役的生活。这种思想在各大种姓之间，划分出上下尊卑界限森严的社会等级。每一种姓对其他种姓都有若干的权利和责任，并对在上的种姓持恭顺的态度。种姓观多少也刻画出印度社会的实际情况，就是刹帝利精英和他们的婆罗门祭司一起，统治着平民和地位更低的被征服的土著民[1]。

可是，还有最为重要的一点，这种种姓观不仅是一种反映不同职业或社会阶层的意识形态，还是印度人观察人世的一种深入人心和普遍流行的方式。因为，它意在描述每一个种姓的

[1] 王恩洋《佛教概论》(译者自己收藏的一个油印本)说佛教实行了“三种革命”，第二种就是对种姓制所实行的“阶级的革命”：“印度社会，阶级制度极严，它共分四阶级：一、婆罗门，掌宗教，并赅括文化教育。二、刹帝利，掌政治军事。三、吠舍，操经济权，业工商。四、首陀罗，农奴，工奴，实际的劳动生产者。此外，还有贱民，不在四姓（即四阶级）之列。这种组织，好像柏拉图的《理想国》。在柏拉图以为是职能的分工，合理的统治，他是奴隶制度的拥护者，在佛即以为最不平等、最不合理的。因此，佛的教义力主平等，他说：四河入海，同为海水，四姓学佛，同为释迦。他的弟子四姓皆有，不分高下，高下只有由学龄与造诣来分。难陀是佛的兄弟，优波离是难陀的剃发工奴，优波离先出家证道，难陀后来出家，便要礼拜优波离。这种平等精神，在印度是违背制度的。婆罗门在印度专断教化大权，佛既成佛，即称世尊，立教施化，取婆罗门地位职权而代之，这便是阶级的革命了。”(第 4—5 页)

人民所具有的先天根性。比方说，称一个人为刹帝利，不单单是把他说成一个持矛荷戟的人和国王，其中还包含了他一定富有、有权势、慷慨大方、英勇善战以及出身高贵的意思。身为一个婆罗门，不仅仅意味着他在职能上是一个祭司，还寓含着他生来就有智慧、有美德、学识渊博、身体清净、出身清白。叫一个人吠舍，不仅是指涉了他的工作，还点到了他的贫困、身体虚弱、人格卑下、出身微贱。在一个人身上应该被知道的每一种有意义的东西，不管是为了什么目的，诸如宗教上的、心理学上的、政治上的、经济上的以及社会上的，都会通过他属于哪个种姓而为人所知。一个人的仪表，身心的秉赋，甚至他的本质，完全被他属于什么种姓决定了。不同种姓的人，好像属于不同物种一样。在这个意义上，没有一般的人，只有婆罗门、刹帝利、吠舍和首陀罗，好似南非种族隔离政策里面，只有黑人、白人和混血人一样。在古代武士社会的圣典《梵书》里面，这种种姓制度完全被视作理所当然的。它来源于定居恒河的印度人在感受城市化之前的经验，反映的自然也是那个社会的性质。如果在我们看来它显得不够公正的话，这种不公正早就以各种方式熔铸进他们的世界里了。

如今的世界以城市为中心，非复往昔英雄的世界，种姓论已失其与世界紧密而有机的联系。究其原因，约有如下数端：第一，种姓论已经不能涵盖在职业和社会地位上发生的新变化和复杂形势。比如在古代的典籍中，我们从未见到任何有关商人的记载。可是，在佛经和耆那教经书里，商人已经是当时生活舞台上十分显著和活跃的角色。在古代的教典中，只见有武士，而在佛经和耆那教经书里，还出现了雇佣兵和拿薪俸的官吏。这些新出现的专业化现象，缘自国家的兴起和货币的使用。国家和货币正是随着城市的兴起而出现于北印度的。这些新型职业者的出现给种姓论提出了巨大的难题。种姓论本来所面对的，只是一种简单的只有四种人居住的农牧世界。在什么地方

安插这些新出现的人呢？他们属于哪一类呢？

但是，新环境所带来的最大挑战还不是这个。有一个更大的挑战，直捣种姓论的核心。它体现在一部佛经(《中部经典》，第2卷第84经)里提出的两种相关论点中。第一种论点是，若一个人犯了罪，不论其出身婆罗门还是首陀罗，刹帝利还是吠舍，在新兴的集权国家里，国王必须严格按照其所犯罪行的严重性而断罪，而不是按照他属于何种种姓。这一点与古时所行的就完全不同。古时的刑罚，不论是赔款还是服苦役，均视犯罪者为何人，属何种姓而定。至于所犯罪行为何，不是唯一的标准。婆罗门和刹帝利犯罪，能和普通犯人一样接受同样的刑罚吗？不应该尊敬他们的种姓吗？[1]第二种论点是，在佛陀生活的城市化世界里，一个人很有可能出身于婆罗门或刹帝利这样的高级种姓，却被出身于首陀罗或吠舍这样低级种姓的人雇为仆从。这种情况在旧秩序之下是绝对不会发生的。因为，首陀罗只能服侍别人，而婆罗门和刹帝利只能役使别人。

在这部佛经里，这些评论意在显示世界的真实状况已经与奉持种姓论的婆罗门的空疏而虚骄的想法大为不同。如果我们取佛教之前的教典，与佛陀时代刚刚开始出现的另一种新的文献，也就是《达摩奢萨怛罗》(即《法论》；我这里指的是最早的《乔达摩法论》)相比对的话，就会了解到国王正在取得新的裁断和惩罚的权力。不论如何，他们就像在部族共和国里那样，可以免去旧的贵族，并且提升新的贵族。在佛典和法典里面，我们还读到新的财政制度——信贷、利息、土地市场——都出现了。这就带来了这样一种可能，一个有地位有财产的人因为想发大财而经营生意，最后却失掉了一切，而一个社会地位很低的人，却可以借助同样的方法而暴富攫升。

种姓论的难题在于，它描述了四种理想的人，每一种类型

[1] 这和中国古代所谓的“刑不上大夫”很接近。

都有一套和谐相处的性格特征。比如说，刹帝利之为刹帝利，是靠他的出身，他的政治权力，还有——因为权力肯定是对人民和土地的权力，而财富只能来自人民和土地——他的财富。可是，现在这就大大地有悖于事实了。如今有了出身固然为刹帝利，却没有权力和财富的人。还有很多有钱的商人，他们既没有高贵的出身也没有权力。在新兴的邦国中，出现了有权力的人，可是他们按出身来讲却不是刹帝利。深处这些境地中的人就会发现，自己的实际处境和种姓论的规定完全不同。这种关于人性和人世的旧观点，完全没有反映出新的现实。

对于这个问题，出现了两种反应。第一种反应来自婆罗门，也就是种姓论的制定者。佛陀灭后数世纪间，婆罗门编写了一系列的《法论》。在这些典籍里面，他们逐渐对种姓论作了修正。他们采用的策略是印度思想中经常出现的那种，保留旧的一切，再增益上新的内容。他们通过把新职业插进旧制度，从而保留了种姓的等级制。商人被划为吠舍，许多手工行业被放进首陀罗种姓。地方集团和部族被分散在后面三个种姓里。他们还发明了一个理论，把世袭的地方团体或职业团体——现在称为噶斯德[1]——的出现，解释成不同种姓间通婚的结果。在这件事情上，婆罗门干得很成功，今天的印度人还在按照简单的种姓结构来理解复杂的噶斯德制度。

可是，我们更感兴趣的，还是另外一种反应。这种反应来自苦行者与哲学行脚者[2]，与婆罗门的反应正好针锋相对。佛陀后来要加入的，就是这些人的队伍。他们的回答可以在佛经和耆那教经籍中找到。这个回答是苦行者团体的思想之本，在

[1] “噶斯德”（castes）制度，和古代印度的种姓制度有联系也有区别，它主要是指按照财产、继承的地位和特权以及职业的不同，把人划分成若干阶层或者阶级。和它相比，古代的种姓论更加强调人种、血缘和婚姻的因素。

[2] philosophical wanderers 这个词不好译，这里参考了本书的台湾译本（第53页），勉强译作“哲学行脚者”。

佛陀登上历史舞台之时，至少已初具雏形了。

在和一个婆罗门的对话(《长部经典》，第1卷第4经)[1]中，佛陀以极为清晰的方式，把这个共同的观点表述了出来。在对话中，他问了婆罗门这样一个最重要的问题："汝婆罗门，成就几法，得名婆罗门？"这实际上相当于在问："靠什么能成就最好、最优越的人种？"因为，按照种姓论的逻辑，婆罗门就是人类中最好的和最优秀的人。婆罗门在回答中说，他和他同种姓的人，是因为同时成就了五法而获得如此优越的地位。他们同时拥有最高贵的血统，最深湛的学识，最端美的容颜，最聪明的头脑，以及最淳厚的美德。

这完全是正统的说法，也就是说这个婆罗门相信，一切美德都和谐地集中于他的一身。可是，佛陀通过探问细节来剖析这一主张的实质。不具备父母两边远溯七世血统纯粹这一点，是否依然可被称作婆罗门？看上去明显是可以的。不精通婆罗门诵经持咒之学，是否依然可以被称作婆罗门？也可以。容颜不端美的话，是否依然可以被称作婆罗门？当然可以。[2]但是，不具足智慧和美德，是否依然可以被称作婆罗门？不可以，婆罗门回答说，因为婆罗门立身之本，全在此智慧和美德之上，依此方能居最高之位，领导师之称。

看来智慧和美德是最重要的！有人会怀疑说，一个婆罗门真的会被迫作出这些有损于自己的让步吗。可是，事实是这种论点的确有人提出来过，这就说明当时知识界的风气已经发生了实质性的变化。因为，现在不仅婆罗门的观点遭到了挑战，而且智慧和美德这两种性质，也脱离了婆罗门教的各种传统解释。就拿美德来说，关于什么才构成善良的行为，如今有了一

[1] 即巴利语《种德经》("种德"为发问的婆罗门的名字)，参看《南传大藏经》，第66—73页。

[2] 以上一段婆罗门的回答，本书的台湾译本（第53—54页）把意思完全译反了。

些普遍的观点，这些观点完全和“什么对于一个特殊的种姓是合宜的”脱离了关系。因为，佛陀的观点是这样的，美德是一种人人都能有的东西，它不是靠出身给你的，而是靠努力赢得的。同样的，智慧也是后天获得的，并非先天赐予你的。所以，真正的婆罗门就是兼有智慧和美德的人，不管他出身如何。

这种论点，正是针对婆罗门的虚骄而发，表现了对苦行者德慧双修主张的赞同。但是，它的意涵还要广大得多。因为，它暗示出存在着某种可以增慧修德的基本人性，这种人性完全与一个人属于何种种姓、有何地位无关。不同等级和不同命运表现出来的那种令人惊异的繁杂性，一下子就被抛到背景之中去了，在前台保留下来的只有一种简单的为人人所共有的禀赋。从原则上说，任何人都能变得聪明而善良。佛陀的许多同时代人，都是以这样或那样的方式作出了这个假设。他们的说法不仅是专门就这个情况或者那个情况而发的，也不是专门冲这个种姓或者那个种姓而来的，而是面对人类的境况本身。这是很具革命性的一步。因为，在迈出这一步之前，印度人还不能超越狭隘地方性的、束缚在印度社会旧制度之上的种姓观念来谈论人的生活。他们现在终于有了机会，可以对一个更加广大的世界说话。佛陀比他任何一个同时代人都更好地利用了这个机会。

弃世出家

弃世出家这件事，也许在我们看来显得意义重大，可是事实上它只是佛陀弃世时从沙门团体那里继承来的一个更大计划的一小部分。沙门团体所关心的不再是人类社会，而是其边际：生死大事以及此生转瞬即逝的浮相背后的广大精神世界。他们好像从远方俯视恒河盆地的社会，深深地蔑视它。他们就是没有家室的行脚僧人(*paribbajakas*)，有精神追求的人(spiritual

strivers，巴利语 *samaṇas*[1]），离弃了世间及其一切利益的人。但是，他们可能也是印度唯一真正的世界主义者，是全世界的而非全世界某一部分的公民。

他们的世界主义通过这个事实表现出来：未来的佛陀那时还很年轻，他决心加入沙门团体之中，就是因为在他僻远的故乡就已经知道了很多关于沙门的事情。关于佛陀出家的最古的记载虽然十分简单，可是它们却很充分地印证了沙门出家时的景象。佛陀出家时，“尚少年，黑发如漆，韶华之时”（《中部经典》第1卷第163页）[2]。这就不由得教人怀疑他当时有无妻子（按照佛教后来的传统，佛陀出家时已有妻儿）。可是，它的确显示出，弃世是一件需要一辈子来完成的使命。

此外，还有一个特别的出家动机：“时我作念，在家生活，拥挤脏乱，出家生活，广大清净。是故住家而修梵行，欲求一向具足清净，是事实难”（《中部经典》，第1卷第241页）。[3]从这里面我们可以推想，佛陀时代的沙门生活有着富于冒险精神的崇高理想。沙门追求一种完美的理想，这种理想远远高过日常经验的卑琐需求和意气之争。他们完全不追求自身的快乐，而是投身于一桩崇高的事业中。这桩事业有时给他们带来荣誉，有时也带来挣扎和艰困。做一个出家人，是每一个青年，每一个浪漫之人的雄心壮志。从这个观点来看，佛陀不过是当时无数受到沙门生活吸引而出家的青年之一。

可是，与这股热情相对的，是对这个终身的责任所持的清醒而极为严肃的观点。首先，美德和智慧的崇高理想反而会使这些沙门承受追寻完美的负担，但很少有人能圆满无缺地达到这种完美。其次，他们离开常人的生活，不仅因为这种生活有

[1] 指沙门。

[2] 此处引巴利语《圣求经》，参见《南传大藏经》，第467页。

[3] 《南传大藏经》，第527页（原文241页似有误，应为240页），译者作了部分改写。

着无数的烦心事，还因为这种生活充满着危险。有一段经文简单叙述了佛出家前的反思，它这样描述佛的第一次心灵的巨变：

> “我为生、老、病、死、烦恼、杂染所困，何故复求为生、老、病、死、烦恼、杂染所困诸法？我既知为生、老、病、死、烦恼、杂染所困，见彼过患，何不求不生、不老、不病、不死、无烦恼、无杂染、无上离系安稳涅槃？”[1]

这段叙述已经经过了佛陀后来思想的过滤，可是我们还是可以透过过滤器看到多种选择的严峻性。未曾经过检查和驾御的在家生活，只能引向不断重演的悲伤和失望。只有出家人的生活可以给人带来希望，这种希望使人能从知识和冷静的高度来俯视欲望和痛苦的泥沼。西方作家经常把这种观点算作没有止境的悲观论，可是他们却没有注意到有望证得“不死境界”的乐观论。出家人的态度中混合着黑暗的苦难和光明的希望。

这种态度背后暗伏着一个更加宏大的理论，使它显得引人注目。这个理论解释并证明了出家人弃世的原因。根据这个观点，在家者平常的积极有为(activity)和出家者超常的清净无为(inactivity)之间形成了鲜明的对比。因为在家者为了追求世俗的目标，比如性的快感、生儿育女、发财致富和支配他人，就必须造业(梵语 *karman*)。这些业不包括不招果报的行为，比如说刷牙，而只包括招引果报或者带来结果的行为，这些行为会从实质上影响你自己或旁人的状况。另外，这些行为在完全可见的效果之外，还会带来精神上的结果，因为它们身上附带着给无助的在家者创造另一付身体和生命使他转世投生的力量(如果这听上去有些古怪的话，请记住比起那种认为我们的行为会使我们上天堂下地狱，或者给我们招来超自然惩罚的信仰

[1] 此处引自巴利语《圣求经》，参见《南传大藏经》，第467页，译者作了不少改写。此文后面紧跟着就是上引“尚少年，黑发如漆”一节。作者引佛经，为节省篇幅，常据己意删节重组，此处即为一例。本节专讲佛陀出家，几乎全依巴利语《圣求经》。

来，它并不缺乏理性）。而当他转世投生以后，他注定要在另一个生命里继续受苦和欲求，就像他在这个生命里一样。所以，一世的受苦，不过就是一个人死后不断在欲苦交织的轮回（巴利语 *saṃsāra*）世界中一次又一次地转世投生，从而不可避免地要体验到的无始无终的受苦过程的一个特例而已。

与此相较，出家人生活于独住、安贫、无害、无欲之中，这虽然不能算是行善，却可以算作是无为而住，因为他完全不造任何业，这些业里包含着使他转世投生的可怕力量。缘此之故，成功的出家人可以完全越度生死的轮回。在家者因造善业可以投生善处（转生天界或投生婆罗门家），或因造恶业投生恶趣（陷于地狱或转为傍生[1]）。在家者掌控他的命运只能至此程度。这就是说，不管投生何处，就算是投生在最优越的地方，苦、死和转生都是无法避免的。只有完全离弃世间，弃绝一切有漏业（all flawed activity）[2]，人才能逃离这个可怕的樊笼，证入“无生、无老、无病、无死”的境界。

这种因果法则是无我的（impersonal），不被神支配，它是普遍的，适用于一切有情[3]，不论动物、人还是超自然的生物[4]，他们无不依其所造之业而转生各处。的确，大概是依靠这个观点的发展，而非仅仅依靠对种姓论的批评，才引领着这些出家人发现了人性。主张任何人皆可成为持役者，或者任何人皆可按其行为被国王惩罚的佛经，也要诉诸这条普遍的因果法则。佛经中说，不管是婆罗门还是首陀罗，必然会在来世尝其业果，可是不管你是婆罗门还是首陀罗，也都可以通过出家行道从而完全摆脱轮回之苦。这些才是对种姓论最根本的驳斥，而从社

[1] “傍生”为佛教术语，指动物、畜牲。

[2] “有漏”是佛教术语，意思是有烦恼。原文里的 flawed 可能就是用来翻译“有漏”一词的。

[3] 按佛教教义，“有情”（sentient beings）一词包含天、人、傍生、恶鬼等，实较“人”字为广。

[4] “超自然的生物”（supernatural）指天神、阿修罗等。

会角度对种姓论进行的批评，倒显得不是主要的了。出家行道者所见的是一切有情的困境，而在一切有情中人的境况只是一个特例而已。

作为新的出家行道之人，佛陀对这一点大概只有一个大概的认识，未能细致而深入。但是不论如何，道德因果律的理论以及如何摆脱因果系缚的计划均已建立，尽管以世纪为标准来衡量，这个理论和计划多少还算是新的。在佛教之前较早的典籍[1]里，对此只有不多的暗示。在佛教之前较晚的典籍里，也就是在诸部《奥义书》里，它已略具雏形。而到了佛陀的时代，转世说已被大家共同接受，出家者实际上已经变成第五种姓，构成社会生活中极为重要的组成部分。关于出家者和他们的世界观如何发展，还有很多的问题，这些问题或者还没有答案，或者根本无法回答。但是，不论如何，他们的修行和理论一定是一起发展出来的。只有一群以远离日常生活为其常例的人，方能站得远看得清。也只有这样一种广大兼备而涵盖一切的理论，方能证明过上这样一种艰苦的生活也自有其一番道理，或者才能激发遍居恒河盆地的人民把出家行道者当成托钵僧(mendicants)来尊敬和供养。

这些出家行道者是他们的世界造成的，可是他们身为教师、传道者和人群的典范也在塑造这个世界。他们的转世说常被当作是一种非理性的宗教观，也许它是各个武士团体征服北印度的时候就已经存在的一种古说。这么说也许有些道理，可是它却忽视了这个理论解释一个复杂世界的力量，同样也忽视了这个理论所具有的相对的诡辩性。不管一个人出身好坏，不管一个人是在宫廷里面飞黄腾达还是丧失了祖传的地产，不管一个人经商成功还是被国王的军队打败，这个理论都可以作出解释。今生的成功、美貌和权势，都是来自前世所造的善业。穷人今

[1] 这里提到的“佛教之前较早的典籍”，和后文提到的“佛教之前较晚的典籍”，都是指古婆罗门教典籍说的。

生的微善，会为他积攒来世的善报，而今生在荣华富贵中犯下的恶行，都会在来世招致惩罚。而且，不仅生命里的事件，甚至生命的各个关口——生、老、死——都被安排在一个更加广大的结构中，在这中间它们都可以得到补救。在整个印度文明中，这个理论以这样或那样的形式，得到了广泛的接受，连婆罗门也不例外。这一点儿也不叫人感到惊讶。在将善恶的抽象道德范畴应用于一切行为，以及在设立无我的因果自然律上，这个理论是数代人或数世纪脑力劳动的产物。它将继续在佛陀和他同时代人的手中得到提炼和发展。

三种思想运动

在较早的婆罗门教经书中，导致后来这些发展的讨论和辩难的声音，却相对减弱，甚或销声匿迹了。可是，在反映出佛陀身边环境的佛经和耆那教经籍中，却回荡出各种各样争辩的声音，使人仿佛置身于各类哲学观点和禁欲法门的闹市上一样。当时就有公共的论议厅，各派沙门聚在里面辩论法义。公开的讲演或布道蔚然成风，它们不仅面向本宗的弟子，还面向潜在的俗家信众。（各派之间）有某些修行是大家共守的——比如乞食、云游、独身、自制——可是在这共同律则后，却点缀着五花八门的的意见和哲学，还有光怪陆离颇具创意的自苦法门。

这里面多少有点儿标新立异的成分。有些人像狗一样饮食，另一些人像鸡一样单腿站立[1]，还有许多人四处裸行[2]。更

[1] 此即汉译佛典中常见的“持鸡狗戒”的外道。水野弘元《原始佛教》（如实译，台中市：李炳南居士纪念文教基金会，2004年．第117—118页）：“又当时的苦行者之中，有只用某一定的食物与衣物者，有模仿狗而生活者，模仿牛者，模仿象而终生过此动物所过之生活者等，为数不少。他们认为依此能于死后生在幸福的世界……（注五）错误的沙门、婆罗门们以为模仿象、马、牛、鸡、乌鸦及鬼神，即是清净而可得解脱。立誓模仿象者，仿象的走法、坐法、卧法、大小便之法，以及其他一切象所做之事，过其一生。可知其他禁誓者，亦是同样的情形。”

[2] 这是指耆那教徒。

为重要的是大多数的标新立异表现在思想方面。佛陀后来破斥的那类“聪明黠慧，善于辩论，在论点中像虫一样宛转扭动的吹毛求疵之徒”[1]，正指此辈人物而言。可是，这类“吹毛求疵之徒”嘴里嚷嚷的那些骂人话，反而证明了当时论难的质量颇有提高，而且已经有若干的思想习惯传播开来，能够允许人们在两种论点之间作出抉择：“依汝之所设，结论固如是，然汝之结论，实含汝所设”；“汝之诸论点，试为阐明之”；“若汝有能力，试解汝之难”。当时还出现了多家的怀疑论者，他们是这样一类哲学家，怀疑此事或彼事之中有效的知识能否成立。这些人的存在，也许可以充分证明当时学问界风气的热列和复杂。当时还有唯物论者，他们完全否认轮回转世这类无影无形的精神世界的存在。还有一些命定论者，他们虽然相信轮回转世，但却认为每一个有情在证得解脱前须先经历他所有可能的命运。[2]

然而，与佛陀关涉最深的，有三种思想运动。第一种思想运动可以在婆罗门教经籍中追溯它的痕迹。在最古老的祭祀文献中，献祭活动的举行，全是指向献祭者本人，他的肢体和官能，意在使他充满法力，可以成就俗世的一切益利和福寿功德。这在后来就逐渐演变成对来世、死后生活的关心，并且同时演变成关于献祭者本人，也就是他的神我(Self)[3]的一种更为内在的概念。大约在佛陀出世之前不久编纂完成的诸部《奥义书》已

[1] 这段话出处不明。

[2] 王恩洋《佛教概论》：“佛教之兴，兴于婆罗门教衰、山林学派勃兴之际。那时印度人的思想极其自由，信仰绝无限制，人心踊跃，向上发展，有一种奇花怒放、蓬勃奋兴之象。由生机之勃发，有智慧之寻求，渴爱知识，尤重辩论。在个人则为学业之切磋，在教派则为教理之破立，而且质直诚谛，服从真理。在这样的时代，自然会有伟大崇高的佛教发展出来。”（第10—11页）

[3] 本文凡遇大写的Self，都按旧译佛典的译名，统一翻译成“神我”。

经把神我这个内在的本质看成是从此生到彼世的轮回主体。[1]

第二种思想运动就是瑜伽。在几个相关方面，瑜伽思想和《奥义书》非常相似，我们有理由说存在着一系列的瑜伽/《奥义书》学说。透过佛经中对这些瑜伽/《奥义书》学派观点的攻击，我们可以窥见一个思辨的宝藏，以及许多辨析精微的学说，这些学说都对神我问题提出了自己的不同主张；有些人说神我是物质的，有些人说神我是一种精细的物质，或仅由心识构成，还有另外一些人主张每个个体都有若干由粗到细的神我。每一种观点都伴有一套稍微不同的对精神世界的建构，以及一整套的禅修法门。这些禅修法门意在有朝一日能够证得神我，从而使自己没入其中，摆脱世间与轮回的痛苦与纷扰。

第三种思想运动是所谓泥乾子外道(proto-Jains)，我们现在多把它与耆那教联系在一起。[2]耆那教的祖师叫大雄(Mahavira)，是佛陀的同时代人。有很多的材料证明，他的学说仅仅是在组织某些早已存在的影响很大的教义。这个学派持有一种特别严格的轮回论，严格到把对任何有自己灵魂的生物的伤害，都看成是对自己灵魂的伤害，认为使自己的灵魂附著上了尘垢，好像尘土使衣物蒙尘一般。若想涤除已经沾染的尘垢，必须自愿去做禁食一类的苦行。为了避免再染尘垢，必须禁止大小一切杀生之行。这就是不害论，或非暴力论[3]，巴利语

[1] 汤用彤《印度哲学史略》(北京：中华书局，1988年．第18—19页)："所谓神我者，谓阿提茫(atman)。《奥义书》之大义，可以一言以蔽之，即梵即我是也。此为密意，昏昏者难知，而知之者，即可解脱。如《大毗婆沙论》卷200引明论说曰：'有我士夫，其量广大，边际难测，光色如日，诸冥暗者，随住其前，而不能见。要知此我，方能越度生老病死，异此更无越度理趣。'"

[2] 尼乾子是佛陀在世时"六师外道"之一，也就是耆那教的前身。

[3] 原文non-violence，译作"非暴力论"或"不抵抗主义"，指西方读者很熟悉的圣雄甘地的学说（参看止默［金克木先生年轻时的笔名］：《甘地论》，重庆：美学出版社，民国32年．第9—15页）。

叫 *ahiṃsa*。耆那教的苦行，一方面和当时对出家沙门普遍要求的自制合流，另一方面和若干极端的苦行派合流。同样地，不害论或者非暴力论，也是当时出家沙门共守的戒行，但实行最力的也许还要算耆那教徒和尼乾子外道了。当然，在其他学派中也可以见到。

佛陀与这些思想运动的关系十分复杂。首先，他对他们的主张有取也有舍。他立足于瑜伽/《奥义书》学派对观心内省的关注，发展了他们的禅法，但是却舍弃了瑜伽师们的神我论。他把不害论留为己用，却抛弃了苦行的学说。然而，这不是一个简简单单的从别人那里借来合理的东西，或者被动地接受前人和同时代人影响的问题，因为凡是佛陀所接受的东西，都是经过了他自己的加工和改造，而他会抛弃哪些东西，也自有其一套很有独创性和创造性的理由。佛陀生活于其中的世界，充满了活力和竞争，面对来自各个方面的损人利己的强求，迫使他在思想上要完全保持忠诚，在生活上完全采用一种生活方式。佛法表现出来的那种相对的简单性，以及冷峻威严的口吻，多少掩盖了他为了在众人中奋力传达出自己声音所付出的艰苦努力。

第三章

访道

佛陀离家后，南行至散布在中央恒河盆地四周的人口中心区。他圆寂前，一直云游四方，其所游履之地，西起憍赏弥(Kosambi)，东至瞻波(Campa)，约250英里长，150英里宽。关于此一时期的事迹，后世留有一部编年史，但不甚可靠。不过，真正重要的，还是佛陀这种云游行脚的生活方式。很明显，他曾在深林里栖身，甚至暂居牛舍中以避风雨。和他打交道的，既有国王和妓女，也有商主和梵志[1]。他身为云游僧人，可以见识到各种各样的生活方式，领略他所属文明的每一处风光。他享有云游僧的特权，不属于任何社会阶层，愿意去哪儿就去哪儿。因为从原则上说，云游僧对谁都不构成威胁。也许只有商主或者小贩——佛陀时代文明的典型人物——才能懂得世界之大，才会有这样一种世界公民的体验。

可是，尽管佛陀目睹了其所属世界的每一个角落，但他却并不属于这个世界。“如芬陀利善开敷，处于水中得增长，终不为水之所著，清净香洁人所乐……我亦如是生世间，同于世

[1] “梵志”就是“婆罗门”的另一种译法，这里出于音律方面的考虑（“商主”是两个音节），选用“梵志”。

法不染著”(《增支部经典》第2卷，第38—39页)。[1]他有时候与其他外道的云游僧住在一起，有时候经常长期住在诸大城——王舍城、舍卫城、波罗奈城、吠舍离城、憍赏弥城——附近的林苑中。这些林苑是专门供各种云游僧挂单[2]的，后来也供不断壮大的佛教僧团使用。

关于佛陀的一生中这段思想成形的时期，以及他与其他外道僧徒的交往，我们所知道的仅限于一段既短少又贫乏的文字，如果删去重复的地方，以及不可信的细节，翻译出来仅能占到一两页的篇幅。这对写传记来说，用处不是很大。可是，这段叙述是用术语写成的，这些术语却可以借助其他谈论教理的佛经来作详细的引申和发挥。经过这样的引申和发挥，这段文字就比初看上去显得有用得多。在敏锐存疑的学者看来，这段文字没有一处不能被质疑。但是，整个故事和佛法其余的部分联系得非常之好，想来其中必有不少真实的成分。

据这段文字(《中部经典》，第1卷第163—166页)[3]说，佛陀在沙门团体中最初遇到的是两位教授瑜伽禅定的教师，阿逻罗·迦罗摩(Ālāra Kālāma)和邬陀迦·罗摩子(Uddaka Rāmaputta)。佛陀先来到了阿逻罗·迦罗摩那里，仅就“口诵和复述而言”，佛陀“于未久之间”即习得其法。佛陀发现迦罗摩的教法——在这段佛经里却意味深长地没作任何交待——是以他所证得的禅定经验为根据的，于是就问阿逻罗·迦罗摩说：“尊者迦罗摩，以证得何种境界，汝乃敢宣说已经证得此法，以禅定所生之智亲证此法？”阿逻罗·迦罗摩回答说，以自己证得了“无所有处”(the Meditative Plane of Nothingness)[4]，才

[1] 《别译杂阿含经》第15卷。意为“正如莲花生于水中，长于水中，出污泥而不染，我生于此世，长于此世，但超脱了这一世界，清净地生活”。

[2] 挂单：佛教名词，即云游行脚的僧人投寺院暂住之意。

[3] 即巴利语《圣求经》，《南传大藏经》，第467—470页。

[4] “无所有处”是一种禅定的境界，后来被吸收进佛教的“四无色天”中，详见145页注释1。

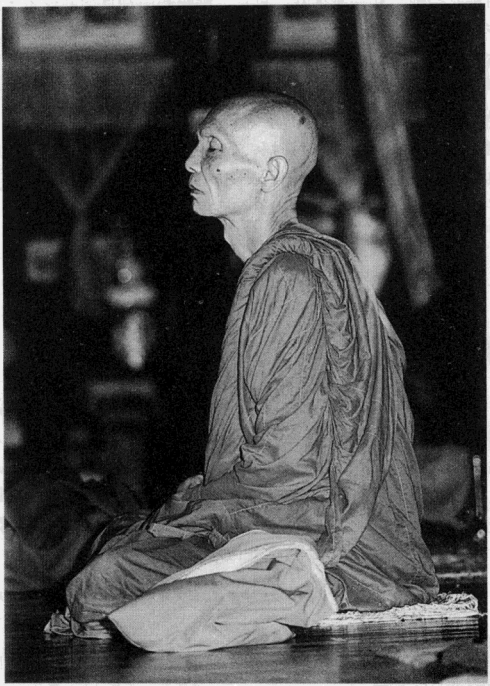

图1. 一位泰国和尚按照佛陀根据自己的亲证所教授的方法在坐禅，他的这种坐姿很有利于他获得注意的集中和心灵的警觉

敢宣说已经证得此法。佛陀随即也证得了“无所有处”，当他向阿逻罗·迦罗摩描述自己的成就时，阿逻罗·迦罗摩大喜，邀请佛陀与他一起共领徒众。可是，佛陀心中却自念阿逻罗·迦罗摩之法“唯到无所有处为至极，不能趣入厌离，不能趣入离贪，不能趣入灭尽、寂静、从禅定生起的现观、开悟、解脱”，于是他便舍离阿逻罗·迦罗摩而去，往诣邬陀迦·罗摩子处修学。佛陀到了以后，同样的事情又发生一遍，他发现邬陀迦·罗摩子的教法也不能引向开悟，仅能引向“非想非非想处”(the Meditative Plane of neither perception nor non-perception)[1]而已。于是，他复舍离邬陀迦·罗摩子而去。

在佛陀的求道生涯中，这也许是最为重要的一章。欲明其义，非弄清四禅不可。四禅是什么？为何佛陀会舍弃它们？

禅定

证得四禅的根本行法，在印土禅修诸派之间，不管你属于佛家，还是属于瑜伽/《奥义书》派，实在是大同小异。修行开始，当先觅一闲寂处，结跏趺坐[2]，腰背放直。腰背之直与跏趺之结，比较容易使人生起一定程度的警觉。这种警觉，若以比较安适的体式，比如卧倒一式，则不容易获得。[3]然后系心所缘，有说此物先为一个物理的对象，之后则换为心理的意象，一

[1]“非想非非想处”也是一种禅定的境界，后来被吸收进佛教的“四无色天”中，详见145页注释1。

[2]“结跏趺坐”(sitting cross-legged)是佛教术语，略称“跏趺”，指修禅定时双腿的坐法。分两种：一、“全跏坐”(俗称双盘)，两足交叉置于左右股上，若先以右足押左股，后以左足押右股，称为“降魔坐”；若先以左足押右股，后以右足押左股，两足掌仰于二股之上，称为“吉祥坐”或“莲花坐”。二、单以右足押在左股上，或单以左足押于右股上，叫“半跏趺”(俗称单盘)。《大智度论》卷七：“诸坐法中，结跏趺坐最安稳，不疲极，此是坐禅人坐法。”

[3]《印度哲学史略》(第99页)：“坐法之讲求，为瑜伽之必要条件。入三昧地，当先修坐法。在急走及睡眠之中，人心自不能加以修持。”

种单一的感觉，或者也可能是一个默念的声音。按一家《奥义书》之说，应当系念于心中所居的神我之上，这个神我“小于芥子，成真金色”(《唱赞奥义书》第3篇第14章)[1]。或按佛家的说法，可以系心于一种颜色之上，比如青色。或按佛家和瑜伽派的禅学，可以系心于自己的出入息之上。和这种心一境性(this concentration on one object)相对的，是不再注意其他的感觉，以及不再被任何妄想扰动。人由此全神贯注于禅定的所缘[2]之上——在某种程度上，对所有埋头做事的人来说，这种境界大概都曾经历过。

可是，由于在禅修者的心眼前，禅定的所缘历长时而不变，禅修者能获得若干极为神异的效果(神通)。研究这些作用的心理学家，不仅确定若干可以测量的物理变化会伴随这类禅定发生，而且还证实了——暂且不说我们对应该发生什么所抱持的信念——心理上面也会发生改变，比如禅修的所缘变得越来越历历分明，自己感觉到轻安(comfort)和喜悦(pleasure)，远离周围的世界和自己的偏执之见(比起上一代来，西方人现在已经很熟悉这类境界了)。

在禅定成就的大小上，这些都只能算是微不足道的功效。还有其他更加神奇的功效，比如出现特殊的觉触，或者产生光明，甚或亲眼看到一整套复杂的幻象。在其他的教派中，这些功效也许就会成为禅定的所缘，代表了禅修的全部目的。

所有的禅定经验从根本上来说都是主观的，所以好像很难找到一套语言，对它们作一种客观的、价值中立的叙述。不过，佛经里却有一系列对禅定境界的详细叙述，这些境界和某些瑜伽教典中描述的大体相当。从我们的角度来看，佛家这种对禅

[1]《五十奥义书》. 徐梵澄译. 北京：中国社会科学出版社，1995年，第138页。

[2]“所缘”就是“境界”、“对象”、“客体”的意思，和“能缘”(“心灵”、“精神”、“主体”)相对。

定姿态和经验的描写，相比之下不带任何夸饰的成分，这是它的长处。这种描写，不拘哪种体系，都可以被很好地用来描写禅定。佛家的这套禅法，因其未受任何教条的污染，西方心理学家索性就直接拿它来描写一般的禅定现象。

这套禅法就是所谓"四禅"(*jhāna*)[1]。这是指一连串由粗变细的禅境。在初禅中，坐禅人对周围的一切都没有了觉知，但仍然有寻求和伺察[2]，专注于禅定所缘之中而不间断。在这个境界里，他感觉到身体的轻安，和在这种放松的定境中获得的更加精微的心灵的喜乐。住于这种心境的坐禅人，不会被没有实现的贪欲(unachieved desires)、嗔恚(anger)、昏沉睡眠(torpor)、疑(doubt)和掉悔(restlessness)[3]扰动。

在第二禅和第三禅中，坐禅人渐渐止息一切思虑，越来越只专注于禅定的所缘当中，以此增长的注意力和专一性，使他超越了身体的轻安和心灵的喜乐。他完全专注于禅定的所缘当中。最后，在第四禅中，坐禅人只知有禅定的所缘，心中常觉一种坚定的平静，超越了痛苦与快乐。从他的角度来看，他可以说是不断地在变成禅定的所缘，因为他除了凝定的心境(firm concentration)或"心一境性"(one-pointedness)这个简单的事实之外，几乎什么也意识不到了。在佛陀所开演的修行法门中，

[1] 吕澂编译《印度佛教史略》释曰："禅那梵云驮衍那，译言静虑，即定慧平等生起而寂静筹虑之义。此以粗细次第分为四段。初静虑，行者之心专注一境，寻求伺察而觉喜乐。寻求伺察者，为智粗细之用，喜与乐则情之内转外转分别也。第二静虑，心住一境，离于寻伺，仅觉喜乐。第三静虑，更近而离前之喜乐，别觉内门转之微细心悦。第四静虑，更进而离所有之寻伺喜乐，达于不起一切智情动摇之状态。"(第46页)

[2] 寻求和伺察(casual and concerted thought)分别指智慧对事理的粗和细的推求。

[3] 巴利语《有明大经》曰："尊者！初禅有五支捨离，五支具足。尊者！若有到达初禅比丘，能捨贪欲，能捨嗔恚，能捨昏沉睡眠，能捨掉悔，能捨疑，具足寻、伺、喜、乐及以一心。尊者！初禅有如是五支捨离，五支具足。"(《南传大藏经》，第571页)

四禅将会发挥特殊的作用，它们表现了控御个人经验的特殊而有用的技巧。

在四禅之外，还有禅定成就的更高境界，这就是所谓的“四空处”(the Meditative Planes，巴利文 *āyatana*)[1]。在佛教文献中，对“四空处”有比较抽象而不带任何色彩的描述。“四空处”起源于各种瑜伽体系，很有可能它们在那里是被用来代表一些场所(places)或界域(spheres)，也就是不可见的精神世界[2]的若干境界。证得这些境界，也许被当成是一种魂游(astral travel)。在诸部《奥义书》和瑜伽教典的精神宇宙学(spiritual cosmography)中，这些“空处”已经略显端倪，而佛经中通过对其他瑜伽体系的描述也透露出这些讯息。的确，在晚期佛教宇宙观里，这些境界都是有天神居住的精神层界。甚至早期佛教对它们的抽象讲述，也不能掩盖这一点：它们和“四禅”一样，不是对禅定的一般描述，适合于所有特殊的禅定理论、禅定目标和禅定技巧。它们毋宁都是与某种关于不可见世界的地形学的特殊观点有关。这一点并不令人感觉奇怪，因为一旦坐禅人毅然不顾日常经验的世界，踏进一块新的领域，他很有可能要为自己提供一张这个领域的地图。

按照佛教对“四空处”的看法，这些境界的证得全靠止息“差别想”(perceptions of variety)。这个词的意思不是很清楚，但它似乎要表达的是，(在“四空处”中)禅定所缘上所见的种种

[1] “四空处”又名“四无色天”、“四空天”，是佛教所说修习“四无色定”者死后所得的果报(投生处)，依次为是“空无边处”、“识无边处”、“无所有处”、“非想非非想处”，总称“无色界”(“三界”之一，另外二界是“欲界”和“色界”)。吕澂编译的《印度佛教史略》释曰：“四无色者，第一空无边处，加行时厌色而思维无边之空乃得此定。第二识无边处，加行时厌无边空思维无边识而得此定。第三无所有处，加行时厌无边形相粗动，于心所缘，舍诸所有，寂然而住乃得此定。第四非想非非想处，不如下之胜想名为非想，又非昧劣想名非非想。”(第46页)

[2] 原文 the unseen spiritual cosmos (不可见的精神世界)，应该是指“无色界”说的。

差别相被超越了，坐禅人虽然还有意识，可是却不再了了分明地意识到心识的所缘。我们可以在第一"空处"，也就是"空无边处"(the Meditative Plane of undelimited space)中看到这种情况。在这个"空处"里，坐禅人只意识到空间的广延(extension)，却在这种广延里面觉察不到任何的限度和属性。这个"空处"实际上是没有边际的。在第二"空处"，也就是"识无边处"(the Meditative Plane of undelimited consciousness)中，坐禅人只意识到心识，却意识不到心识的确定所缘。在第三"空处"中，坐禅人唯知"廓然无物"——按照晚期佛典详尽的说法，这就好像一人入室发现空无一人的那种感觉。不是意识到谁不在那儿，而是直接对无人在场的一种意识。[1]这就是"无所有处"(the Meditative Plane of nothingness)。唯一超过"无所有处"的，就是"非想非非想处"。在这个"空处"中，心识的活动极为微细，或者说心识的活动被完全抑制，乃至于坐禅人只能从这样一种状态中略微找回有这样一种境界存在的意识。

这样深的入定，我想大概可以解释今日在印度尚可见到的那些由瑜伽术引发的更加惊人的神通。(通过修习瑜伽术)呼吸几乎完全被抑制，心率明显减慢，其他生理表征也进一步发生变化。当然，这种现代西方生理学式的描述，未必符合瑜伽行者对这件事的看法，他们也不会以佛教描写禅定时所采取的那种不带任何色彩的抽象方式来看待此事。在他们眼中，这样的禅定经验，毕竟是他们精进修行的完成，一定是着落在某一个色彩缤纷的精神境界中。这种精神境界也许很像诸部《奥义书》里描绘的那样，仿佛在熟眠(也许可以被想成与这类甚深的禅定相似)中一样与神我交通。这种禅定经验或者也可以像古印

[1] 觉音尊者《清净道论》(叶均译，北京：中国佛教文化研究所，1995年，第305页)："譬如一人，看见了为些事情而集会于园堂等处的比丘众，便到别的地方去，在比丘们终结了集会之事离座而去之后，此人又来(园堂处)，站在门口，再看那集会之处，只见空，只见(人已)离去，此时他并不这样想：'那些比丘都已命终或去诸方了'，但见此处空、离去、及无有。"

度史诗《摩诃婆罗多》(*Mahabharata*)所收的若干早期瑜伽教典中说到的那种"无相禅定"(meditation without qualities)。但是，不管怎么说，能修炼到这些境界，不能不说是证明了人有自我修炼和自我超越的能力。

佛陀舍弃禅定

可是，佛陀还是舍弃了这些禅定境界。或者，再精确些说，他舍弃了瑜伽教师认为禅定境界可以代表精神生活顶峰的主张。为什么他要这样做呢？第一个接近实情的答案，可以在巴利语《损损经》(*Sallekha Sutta*；《中部经典》，第1卷第40—46页)[1]中寻到。在这部佛经里，佛陀概说了"四禅"和"四空处"，称它们为"寂静住"(tranquil abidings)和"现法乐住"(comfortable abidings in the here and now)[2]。可是，它们都非"损损"[3]，也就是从生死之苦中获得完全的解脱。要想求得这种解脱，唯有随顺佛陀觉悟后所开示的正道。从这个角度来看，"四禅"和"四空处"都非圆满究竟。原因有两个。第一个原因是，它们仅仅是暂时的状态，仅仅是"现法乐住"。这种批评，在别处(《中部经典》，第3卷第243—245页)[4]有更清晰的回应。在那里面，佛陀曾说善修禅定者可得长时住于禅定境界之中，但是这个禅定境界却是无常的，以后必然会归于消散。在另外一处(《中部经典》，第3卷第236—237页)，某一修禅者深信自己凭借"四禅"和"四空处"已经获得最后的决定解脱，可是他实际做的却是完全不同的两回事。事实上，他仅仅是徒劳地摇摆于"苦恼(平常

[1] 《南传大藏经》，第355—360页。

[2] 原经以"四禅"为"现法乐住"，以"四空处"为"寂静住"，本书在叙述时，顺序有所颠倒。

[3] 原文应译为"大损"(Complete Expunging)，《南传大藏经》译为"损损"，是取《道德经》"为学日益，为道日损，损之又损，以至于无为"的意思。

[4] 巴利语《舍弥村经》。

的意识)”和“由于独处而发生的身体轻安”之间，或者顶多是摇摆于“非肉体性的禅悦”和“非苦非乐受”之间而已。换句话说，尽管这些禅定成就给人带来暂时的，甚至是较长时间的解脱感，它们还是不能对苦的问题作出决定性的一劳永逸的解决。修禅者出定以后，会发现自己毫无改变。

第二个原因，如同《损损经》所示，就是与佛陀开悟后的修行法门的圆融相比，这样的禅法显得单一而偏狭，完全没有触及到智性和德性方面的发展。我们可以拿登山为例，看看究竟为何会这样。尽管登山运动所锻炼出来的能力和心理素质，会有利于登山者个性更广的发展，可是这些能力和素质却未必一定如此。这是因为勇气和耐力这类品质，也可以被用来达到非常不道德而且带有破坏性的目标。所以，虽然佛陀掌握了禅法，可是光靠这些禅法是不足以把他从普通人的醒觉生活中解脱出来的。

关于佛陀舍弃了什么，重要的是获得一种持平的观点。一方面，他舍弃了瑜伽教师认为他们的特殊成就已经导向最后解脱的主张。可是，另一方面，他又暗中接受了禅定是最高精神工具的主张。特别是“四禅”频频出现在佛经里，它们被认为有很大的功用。一个熟习“四禅”的坐禅人，会具有很强的集中精神的能力。对他来说，“其心平等，清净离垢，柔软调柔，具足光明”(《中部经典》，第3卷第243页)，就像金子在被做成饰品之前，被金匠熔解和提纯一般。这种心境的专一平等——它当然不是佛教坐禅人所独有的——到时候可以被用来达到最后的目标，也就是佛教所特有的开悟和解脱。

佛陀对“四空处”的最终看法，我们更难以判定。一方面，在三藏各处散落的经文中，它们频频被提及，被当成是很接近于最后解脱的大成就。若以同样类型的更多努力，把它们再往前推进一步，就可以达到“想受灭尽定”(complete cessation of

what is perceived or felt)[1]。可是，总的来说，三藏中已经说得很明白，这种“灭尽”也还不是最后的解脱，因为在那之外还需要智性和情意上的转变，也就是要获得佛教的智慧。佛陀明显愿意接受许多种解脱道，甚至那些十分接近于他的瑜伽教师所授解脱道的道路。可是，最后目标的证得，还是得需要一个完全不同的步骤，一种思想和感情上的质变，而非一种禅修精进中的量变。

亲证的价值

佛陀与瑜伽师相遇的史话，其用途绝不止于此而已。这是因为，它还指明了佛陀所要选取的积极而有创造性的方向。这从他批评瑜伽师的用语中就可以看出来：因为佛陀在这里认为有缺陷的不是他们提出的理论——尽管对他们可能持有的理论在佛典中有很多地方作了抨击——而在他们的践行上面。他们的不足乃是源于不管以何种关于精神世界的观点来包装他们的禅定法门，这些法门本身就是不完备的。一方面，这显示出佛陀将要开创自己特有的禅定法门，和这些法门比起来，“四禅”这类禅法仅仅占有辅助的地位。另一方面，它还预示出一种永久态度的形成。这种态度不仅标示出佛陀的教法，也标示出他的人格，可以被称作是一种“经过严格规训的践行主义”(stubbornly disciplined pragmatism)。不管古印度货源充足的思想市场给佛陀提供了什么样的学说和行法，只有当它们表明可以在他自己的经验中发生效用时，他才会接受它们。

我们只要看看佛陀所处的社会环境，就能理解这种态度的意义。在数世纪之后，印度人之间逐渐达成一种共识，就是只

[1] 又称“灭尽定”，是佛教圣者所修的一种禅定。

承认几种权威或者有效知识的标准[1]，任何精神真理只有通过它们才能得到检证。这些标准在佛陀时代已经隐然存在。有一个标准干脆就是讲，一种学说之正确与否，全看它是否出现在婆罗门教典(包括诸部《奥义书》)之中。我们可以发现，佛陀认为这种传统妄自尊大，它的标准也是外在的，他不会接受。第二种权威，是往世中一些令人敬畏的并且获得神启的教师以其超常的经验为根据而提出的证言[2]，佛陀也无意接受它。因为，在这一点上，佛陀是很自信的，甚至是很叛逆的，他确信假如苦的问题可以得到解决的话，那么它一定带有只靠他自己的力量就可以解决的性质。并且，不论如何，这些教师距离他还没有隔着几个世纪那么远，他们的知识对他而言不是一种无可反驳的超人的权威，因为他自己就曾亲眼见过他们，而且连这些教师都说任何人都可以体证他们的知识，以及这种知识所带来的解脱果(liberating fruit)。第三种权威，就是单单依凭推理或者推论，这对于佛陀来说也是无法接受的，这可能和他已经形成的对禅定修行的信奉有关。所以，他只依凭第四个标准，也就是亲身的证知，亲自的体验，“当下之亲证”(direct witnessing in the here and now)。就像佛陀所表达的，这个标准在我们看来不过是最最普通的常识，很难说是佛陀发明了它。可是，他坚持严格而一贯地使用这个标准，这是他最独特和独到的地方。

这种态度的结果，也表现在佛陀全部的成熟教法中。“不要轻信只凭听说的任何事物，不要轻信那些世世代代流传下来

[1] 即印度哲学中所说的“量”。下文依次讲了“圣言量”(包括宗教的圣典和宗教圣人说过的话)、“比量”(推理、推论)和“现量”(感觉、直接的认识)，佛教最重视的是“现量”，不过各派之间对“现量”有很多不同的解释。

[2] 水野弘元《原始佛教》(第131页)：“在《长部》十三《三明经》(《长阿含》二六《三明经》)中，有佛陀与婆罗门青年的问答，而使青年招认：当时的婆罗门，或其师们，甚至七代前之祖先们，皆无一人实际见过梵天者，亦无人听闻见过梵天者，并将祈拜这种实际上未曾见闻过的梵天之不合理，以恰如一个青年，热恋上不知住于何处，不知其姓名、家世，甚或容貌、身材的美人一样不合理等等的许多譬喻，加以述说。”

的传统，不要因为众人都这么说而相信它，不要因为经典上的记载而相信它，不要轻信权威、导师或长辈的教导，当你经过观察和分析后，认为事物与原则一致，并有助于个人及大家的善行和利益，才接受和实行"(《增支部经典》，第1卷第189页)。[1]佛陀的僧徒不对未来和过去作玄想，也不会思考世界有无终始这类深奥的问题。他们把全副精力只放在一件事上，就是"这一寻臭皮囊"(this fathom-long carcass)中苦的生灭[2]。佛陀说，知识有多种可能的形式，只有那些和直接经验有关的知识，才和他追求解脱的弟子们有关。

在佛陀自己的求道过程中，这种把践行主义限定在一定范围之内的态度(this attitude of circumscribed pragmatism)[3]，绝非仅仅是盲目地投入禅定的修行。它还使得佛陀完全抛弃了伴随在他的瑜伽师[4]修行背后的那类理论。这并不奇怪，禅定修行得在某种关于修行目的何在、人体构造如何和精神环境如何的理论指导之下才是可能的。假如禅法无效的话，那么禅法背后的理论就会遭受质疑。我们当然不知道佛陀的老师[5]持有什么理论，但是我们还是有理由断言，这些理论一定是属于瑜伽/《奥义书》一派的思想。而且，从佛经中攻击它们的地方来看，在佛陀眼里它们都具有某些共同的特征。它们都是神我(梵语 *ātman*)论，尽管在不同的体系之间，对这个内在的人格本原有很多种不同的称呼。

[1] 此处引自巴利语《伽蓝经》(参看第五章"《伽蓝经》"一节)，译文采自台湾"原始佛法三摩地学会"印赠的巴利语、汉语合璧本《慈爱经·慈爱静坐法》(2005年4月修订4版，第28页，佛陀法语"羯腊摩经")，本书的文字是略引经文。

[2] 这句话来自《相应部经典》(略等于汉译《杂阿含经》)，参看114页的脚注1。如《四无量心》(第22页)所说："在《杂阿含经》及在其他经中也可找到，佛陀说：这五尺的小小身体，是我们的世界，我教这个世界的生、灭、灭的道。"

[3] pragmatism 应当是指佛陀重视践行中的亲证，circumscribed 应指不对未来和过去作玄想，把思考和亲证限定在一定范围之内。

[4] 指阿逻罗·迦罗摩和邬陀迦·罗摩子。

[5] 亦指阿逻罗·迦罗摩和邬陀迦·罗摩子。

神我的知识[1]

争论的焦点是特殊的瑜伽知识观，因为这些体系弘扬的关于神我的知识与其他类型的知识完全不同。从瑜伽的观点来看，知者(神我)即所知(神我)，它们(指知者与所知)与知者的心境也是同一的。

为了能对这一点有所认识，我们先拿一个常识作例子来对照比较一下。这就是善巧金匠的譬喻[2]（佛陀自己经常使用这类譬喻，因为在这些譬喻身上，已经打上了佛陀那种特别崇尚践行的思想倾向的印记）。在这个譬喻里面，知者，也就是金匠，毫无疑问和他的所知本来就是不同的。身为匠人和认知的主体，他明显与自己关于金子、金子的属性和用途，以及锻金技巧的知识不同。尽管我们会承认，没有这种知识，他就不能算是金匠，可是按照常理，我们从来不会因此而说，金匠和他关于金子的知识是同一的。人是一回事，知识是另一回事。

我们也不会说金匠的心境和金匠本人是同一的。金匠可能会生气发怒，或者安静警觉，可他还是金匠。他的心境和他的知识，我们也不会混为一谈。不管他生气还是安静，他还是保有金匠的知识。在金匠身上，知者、所知和心境明显是不同的东西，尽管它们都共住于金匠一人身上。

可是，从观心内省获得的对神我的瑜伽知识却不同于此。

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[1] 本节提到的“知识”(knowledge)，不同于我们所熟悉的文史哲、数理化的知识，而是一种神秘的宗教知识。在旧译的佛典里，一般都是用“智”来翻译，可是在现代汉语里，“智”字是不被用来翻译“knowledge”一词的。所以，为了不至于使得对照原文看译文的读者产生迷惑，本节一律用“知识”来翻译，请读者注意。

[2] 在本节后面引用的《大林间奥义书》第4分第4婆罗门书里，也有关于“金匠”的譬喻：“譬如金工，资（旧）像之金质，别铸为至新尽美之形，心灵蜕弃此身而祛除无明已，亦复如是，乃别制至新尽美之形……”（第4节，《五十奥义书》，第612页）

首先，因为在这种瑜伽知识中，知者和所知是一样的：作为所知的大写的神我(Self)，与作为知者的小写的神我(self)，完全是同一个东西。在宣扬这个主张的诸部《奥义书》[1]中，确实没有在“神我”的两种意义之间作出明显的区分。在这种瑜伽的意义上，“认识”自己，就是“证得”或者“变成”自己的神我。《奥义书》中所传达的洞见的力量，就表现在这个地方。因为，证见者，或者说知识的主体，达到了这样的一种状况，在这种状况中，它只证见到它自己。这是一种带有彻底单一化性质(radical simplification)的洞见，洞见了神我完满的自我同一。“在它(神我)之中没有差别”(《大林间奥义书》第4分第4婆罗门书第19节)[2]。要证得这个神我，瑜伽师只需向内反求诸己就可以了。

这种彻底的单一化还带来其他的结果。由于所觉和觉者不二，在神我之中也就不存在任何可以觉知或者可以分析的属性(《大林间奥义书》第4分第4婆罗门书第13节)[3]。譬如说，假如在禅定中证得的是作为(禅定所生)喜(meditative Bliss)的神我——这是《奥义书》里常见的心诀(formulation)——那么，从禅定者本人的角度来看，神我和喜是同一的。这个喜不可能从神我当中分离或者区别出来。换句话说，假如被证得的神我是“无相神我”(Self without qualities[4]，也许近似于佛教徒的“空处”)，那么就没有任何可以和神我分离开来的“无相的”心境。

[1] 本节以下主要引用《大林间奥义书》第4分第4婆罗门书中的偈颂。这些偈颂，据徐梵澄先生说，“皆诸《奥义书》智慧之菁华，因时代进步，思想皆已成熟，非复初期依约揣摩之言，皆锻铸而成颂制矣，亦无由确定谁本之谁，固传诵广远者也。”(《五十奥义书》，第618页，脚注3)

[2] 徐译为：“唯以意会彼，斯世无异多，若见其多似，得死如流梭。”(《五十奥义书》，第617—618页)

3 徐译为：“若人已求得，觉知此自我，于此聚集身，渊薮已深入，则为遍作者，宇宙之大化，世界属于彼，彼即此世界。”(《五十奥义书》，第615—616页)

[4] 也就是没有任何属性限制的神我自体，这在《奥义书》中被当作最高层次的神我。

这是因为，在神我之中是没有“差别”的。从瑜伽师的角度，大家可以看出这一点的可信性。因为，在已经获得成就的禅定境界中，瑜伽师确实会感觉到自己正在变成禅定的所缘，自己的经验也变得彻底单一化起来。

再者，这样一种彻底单一化的感觉，也显示出神我的不动性(immutability)。这是因为，由于神我如此完美统一，所以决不能想象它会发生变化，会舍弃旧有的属性而取得新来的属性。的确，仅就其定义来说，“无相神我”就不可能被显示为会变化的。说它是不动的，也就是说它是恒常的。佛陀对此回答道，正因为这些禅境迟早哪一天就会终止，它们就不可能是恒常的。但是，对于一个深信其所求者是永恒的人来说，对禅定中所发生的稳固和彻底单一化的体验，正好能够证实他对永恒的信念。它还会证明这个信念，也就是这个恒常、不动、彻底单一的神我，超越了因果的世界，它不是被造的，它是“无生的”(《大林间奥义书》第4分第4婆罗门书第20节)[1]。它不能被分析，不能被分解为组成它的各个部分(《大林间奥义书》第4分卷第4婆罗门书第13节)。对他而言，它就是笼罩一切，没有差别的“宇宙的根基”(大梵)。

简单来说，神我就是一个永恒的、无缝的整体，自我同一，超越了从感官认识到的各种现象，不可分析，却可以通过修习瑜伽禅定来证得或者认识。这种从瑜伽中修得的洞见，是既有力量而又令人信服的。这也许是因为它能够穿透日常经验的差异性和潜在的纷乱，对根本实在一举提出一种简易直截的看法。这种看法的每一个组成部分——诸如甚深禅定的经验，在痛苦的现象世界彼岸存在什么的问题，或者自我认识的本质——都会很容易地引出其他任何部分。所以，毫不奇怪，在印度教化

[1] 徐译为：“唯悟彼为一，不变而贞恒，不垢超空间，性灵大无生。”(《五十奥义书》，第618页)

的印度(Hindu India)，尽管佛陀尽了最大的努力，还是挡不住这种观点继续流行传布。

可是，一旦这种观点的一部分松动了，其余的部分也就会随之瓦解。在《布吒婆楼经》里，佛陀曾经回答过沙门布吒婆楼(the ascetic Poṭṭhapāda)提出的一些问题(《长部经典》，第1卷第185页以下)[1]。根据佛陀的回答，我们可以重现他对禅定所坚持的践行主义推论是如何使他舍弃了各种神我论的。假设——还是从甚深禅定的经验谈起——坐禅人能够直接证见神我，从而获得对它的知识，那么就可以像布吒婆楼那样问：是先有甚深禅定的心境生起，随后才有相应于这种心境的关于神我的知识生起呢？还是先有关于神我的知识生起，随后才有禅定的心境生起，或者两者同时生起？[2]这就是说，布吒婆楼是先证得一种禅定的境界，然后再想法去寻求神我呢，还是禅定境界的证得就会自动地带来神我的证得？

佛陀对此回答得头头是道："先有一种特殊的意识或者心境生起，然后才有伴随着那个意识的知识生起。"[3]这是佛陀的禅定践行主义在现身说法了。因为修行道行很深的坐禅人，早已修得这种意识，故而知道"实由此缘故，于吾想生起"。[4]坐禅人的修行技巧，在于控御身内的各种因缘，这些因缘成熟后会生起越来越微细的意识状态[5]。由于证得这种细微的意识状态，再加上对和它相伴的内省心理学的谙熟，就会最终证得关于神我

[1] 巴利语《布吒婆楼经》，《南传大藏经》，第98—111页。

[2] 这段经文的原文是："世尊，先有想生，然后智生耶？先有智生，然后想生耶？抑智与想，非前非后而生耶？"，参看《南传大藏经》，第102页。经文里的"想"相当于the frame of mind of deep meditation（甚深禅定的心境），而"智"则相当于the knowledge of the Self（神我的知识）。

[3] 原文是："先有想生，然后智生，实由想起，而智生起。"（同上注）

[4] 原文是："实由此缘故，于吾生智慧。"（同上注）"于吾生智慧"似误，因为"智慧"相当于本书的knowledge（"知识"），而这里出现的却是consciousness（相当于"想"、"意识"）。

[5] 即"想"（consciousness）。

的知识。

任何人都可看出，就算是瑜伽教师也得放弃这么多东西，因为在任何禅修体系里，总有很多的修行和技巧以及伴随它们的实用的忠告。可是，一旦承认了这一点，整个瑜伽体系就开始动摇了。因为，从这种完全讲究践行的观点来看，既然禅境的生起是以瑜伽师的修行为因缘的，它就不可能同一于无因的、无生的、不可分析的神我。因为，禅境本身是完全可以分析的，而且肯定有其生起的因缘。

在随后的经文中，佛陀继续开演这种践行主义的各种蕴义。布吒婆楼问了另一个问题："世尊！想即我耶？抑想与我为异耶？"对此佛陀反问道："汝以何者为我耶？"这一反问的意义是因为以下事实，那就是从佛陀的观点来看，各种神我论的基本形式虽然大体相同，但在理论上明显存在不少的变体。不同的理论会把它们不同的神我论置于十分不同的精神景观中，或者一个理论中会认为有多个神我存在，这些神我变得渐次微细一直通向最根本的神我。布吒婆楼先这样回答说："世尊！我信有粗我(a material Self，物质的神我)，这个神我有特殊之形，四大[1]所成，段食[2]所养。"佛陀回答说："布吒婆楼！汝之粗我……设若真实，则心境与我，实非一物……就算承认有此粗我存在，但于此人，仍有各种心境生起，他种心境谢灭。"布吒婆楼变换策略，先提出一个非四大所成(made not of material)，而为心识材料所成的(of mind-stuff)神我，再又提出一个意识所成的(of consciousness)神我，佛陀以不变应万变，重述了他的论点。如是所成的神我与意识或心境等并非一物。其理由是很清楚的，

[1] "四大"(four elements)：指"地水火风"。

[2] "段食"(solid food)：佛家有"四食"的术语，就是按由粗到细，由身体到心灵的顺序而划分的四种资益身心的"食物"，即"段食"、"触食"、"思食"、"食识"。"段食"的"段"即分段，断开之义，简单说就是可以咀嚼吞咽的食物和饮料，是最粗糙、最显眼的一种食物。

按照瑜伽派的界说，我不论是四大所成，非四大所成，还是意识所成，都是恒常不变，独立于世间的因缘的。而出于某些禅定者自己可以理解，或者在有限程度上可以控制的原因，意识的状态有其生起和谢灭，却是禅定经验的事实。所以，不管什么是恒常的，意识的状态不会是恒常的，所以它们和恒常的神我是完全不同的。

在这个判断当中，有一个名词的使用对佛陀帮助不少。这个名词，被佛陀吸收进自己的词汇，成为他自己的财富。这个词(巴利语 *saṃkhata*，有为法)的字根，有着"准备好"或者"聚合"的意思。可是，它的意思要远比"准备好"宽广得多。事实上，它有两个与此相关的意思，既是"愿意的"或"有意的"，也是"因生的"或"缘起的"。禅境都是有为法，它们都是靠修禅人的意志和愿望而修证的，这就意味着它们都是因缘所生法。它们的生起，都要归于前行诸因的牵引，以及同时诸缘的具足。这样一来，它们绝非"无生"的，亦非独立于诸种环境之外的。

大家也许会猜测，这可以远溯到佛陀与瑜伽教师[1]相遇，并研习其禅法和神我论之时。在其成熟教法里，佛陀对瑜伽教师的神我论进一步作过充分的解明，以至于实际上完全舍弃了神我论，而代之以典型的佛教无我论(doctrine of non-self，巴利语 *anatta*)。无我论说的是，不论在日常经验中，还是在禅定境界里，或者别的什么地方，都没有一个永恒、独存的神我。[2]无我论很好地融入了佛陀关于伦理学和心理学的其他思想里。在他成熟的见解中，这个常住的神我实不可得而见，而神我论

[1] 指阿逻罗·迦罗摩和郁陀迦·罗摩子。

[2] 王恩洋《佛教概观》："佛法在整个宇宙推翻了万物的主宰'神'，在每一个人身中推翻了主宰'我'，在宗教上成了特出的平等睿智的教理。它说一切无主宰，佛不是神，他只做众生的善知识——善友——他不能勉强度众生，而说人人皆可成佛与他一样。这是佛教的民主精神，在一切宗教中特殊而独有的。"(第 36 页)

者就如同一个男子一样，欲求国中第一美人，却不能道其姓氏、家族及相貌(《长部经典》，第1卷第193页)[1]。

换言之，此常住之我，实为妄想所生，或者由于错解禅定经验而生，或者由于传闻而生。佛陀是愿意承认有一自我(self)存在的——此处用小写的 self 是最合适的——可是这个自我只是“世间共相，世间言语，世间名称，世间记述法”(《长部经典》第1卷第202页)。[2]大家可以有理由说“修炼你自己”，“认识你自己”，可是在这么说的时候，不见得会设想真有一个常住的实体。佛陀举牛乳为喻。牛乳变为酪，酪变为生酥，生酥变为熟酥，我们不能说有一种常住的实体(也许可以叫做“牛乳性”？)在历次的变化中持守自性不变：牛乳就是牛乳，生酥就是生酥。英国学者里斯·大卫[3]这样解释这个道理：

> “当(人格结构中的)变化达至某一点时，为方便考虑可以改换此人格的姓名称谓，人格就是按照这个姓名称谓被人知道的——就像乳制品的情况一样。可是，抽象名词只是一种方便的表达形式。任何时候，都没有作为独立实体的人格存在。”

于是，当我们说“我觉得今天好像变了个人似的”，实际上是触及到了关于人性的一条重要真理。这个学说很难理解，也很有勇气，因为它导向了一片未经佛陀时代修禅者勘探过的水域。困难之一属于单纯理智理解上的。当佛陀想发展一套崭新的禅法时，这套禅法的重点就放在精细地分析修禅者的自我(小写的我)上面。按照这种方法，可以明白所谓我者事实上是“聚

[1] 《南传大藏经》，第 106 页。

[2] 《南传大藏经》，第 110 页。这段话意为：一个大家共许的术语，语词的共同形式，一种世间的习惯法，一种实用的标志。

[3] 里斯·大卫（Thomas Williams Rhys Davids, 1843—1922），英国 19 世纪末 20 世纪初最杰出的佛学家，巴黎圣典学会的创立者，其妻亦为同样有名之佛学大家。

集而成”的，是由以前的诸因所造，靠同时的诸缘相续存在的。这个学说的细部极为复杂，可是它的基本原则却很简单。就像牛乳不断变化一样，我们所经验的自我也因若干可以说明的原因而不断变化。

可是，真正的困难还不是在理智的理解上，而是在情意的可信性上。因为任谁都会惊骇地问道：明明知道有我，怎么能叫我接受我没有我这个怪论呢？理智上的答案可以是，人人都有一个自我，就是没有常住的神我。可是，重要的还是在于情意上的答案。任何一个企图证得或证见常住不变的神我的人，在佛陀看来注定都要失败，因为神我论是招致以后的苦恼的诱因：“此(神我论)是彼等可敬沙门婆罗门的一种感觉，是他们在不适中的辗转反复。他们无知无识，被(对神我之)爱所缠缚”(《长部经典》，第1卷第40—41页)。[1]舍弃神我论，实乃根绝失败的潜在根源。无我论在情意上的调子，是一种平静而如释重负般的超脱。它是一种解脱，超越了神我论者遭到挫沮的努力。神我论者围着神我绕圈圈，“就像绑在桩子上的狗一样”(《中部经典》，第2卷第232—233页)。

苦行离系[2]

让我们暂时回到那个时刻，当时佛陀悟出那些禅定的瑜伽体系因其自身的局限，仅能引人至想的变灭无常的境界，而这个境界完全不同于他们鼓吹的目标，也就是恒常不变的神我。从这样一个结论中，随即会产生两种后果。一种后果是，根本

[1] 此处译文改写巴利语《梵网经》汉译本，参看《南传大藏经》，第30—31页。

[2] 本章标题是 Release from bondage through self-mortification，直译就是“通过对自己实行苦行(self-mortification)而从系缚(bondage)中获得解脱(release)”，主要内容是讲佛陀在获得开悟前修行苦行的事迹。“离系”是“解脱”的另一种说法。

图2. 佛行苦行，自饿其身，形销骨立，以求解脱，终觉无益

没有常住的神我，这正是佛陀最后选取的道路。另一种后果是，神我还是有的，可是靠瑜伽不能证得它。也许还有另外一种修行法门，可以帮助我们证得神我。我们手边就有这样一种修行法门，这就是我们在耆那教那里已经熟悉的自我禁欲和极端苦行。按照这种观点，个体身上的永恒本原被称为"耆婆"(*jīva*)，即"命"或"性灵"之义。因前世的罪恶业缘之力，"命"被系缚于这个苦恼世间之中。"命"受制于这种业缘之力，就如明镜易蒙尘垢一样。人可以通过不再造作恶业，从而免于这个苦恼世间的痛苦系缚。修持禁欲苦行和自愿惩罚，可以从"命"上烧尽前世因违犯善法而遗留下来的业垢，从而证得喜悦，永脱诸苦。[1]在耆那教中，既无禅定修行之必要，亦无使用内省知识之必要。全靠圆满修持苦行，禁制人欲，正智[2]自得神奇地生起。

佛陀舍离邬陀迦·罗摩子后，转于苦行中求道。关于佛陀苦行的精勤，三藏诸经无丝毫疑义。他完全停止了出入息，以至于"有绝大风，骚扰我头……有绝大风，切破我腹，犹如巧技屠牛者……以锐利屠刀，切破其腹"(《中部经典》，第1卷第244页)。时有诸天神路过，咸以为佛陀已经死去。佛陀于彼时每日禁食，以至于"我之脊柱凹凸，如纺锤之连锁；缘少食故，我之肋骨腐蚀破碎，如朽屋椽，我之眼窠瞳光，如穷井水光，向极深处，才可得见"(《中部经典》第1卷第245页)。因苦行之故，佛陀本来清净皎洁的形貌大为衰损，过路之人目睹其状，有把佛陀当成皮肤本黑色者。以此等难行苦行，佛陀得出这个结论："诸有过去沙门，或婆罗门，虽受激烈痛楚苦受，若我今者，当为最极，更无驾越；诸有未来沙门，或婆罗门，虽受激烈痛楚苦受，若我今者，当为最极，更无驾越；诸有现在沙门，或婆罗门，虽受激烈痛楚苦受，若我今者，当为最极，更无驾越"

[1] 汤用彤《印度哲学史略》："常人正智为业所蔽，离系成道，业已烧尽（苦行原字之义为烧），得无余智，同时遍照，净寂长存，成阿罗汉。"（第45页）

[2] 这里提到的"正智"，是指耆那教里获得解脱所必需的智慧。

(《中部经典》第1卷第246页)。[1]

可是，他同时还得出结论："我虽以斯酷毒苦行，然尚未得过人法，逮达特殊最胜知见。"或者换句话说，他的苦行唯一可以示人的，不过是换来一付瘦骨嶙峋的模样而已。[2] "是则通达菩提，当有他道"。

中道

按旧传记载，这个结论把佛陀推到了开悟的门槛上。可是，在史料的诠释方面，它也给我们出了很大的难题。这是因为，一方面按照旧传所载，佛陀是在较短的时间内获得了解脱智(saving knowledge)，知道了"我生已尽，梵行已成，应作已作"(《中部经典》，第1卷第249页)。[3]这里确实暗示出开悟是在一夜之间发生的。可是，佛陀在开悟前精进修行的过程是漫长而复杂的，这一点也很清楚。在这个过程当中，他通过修持各种法门，渐渐地改变了自己，对他自己和世界想出了一套可信的见解。在后来的佛经中，也可以看出这一点来："如海之渐倾，渐退，渐沉，未尝突落，于佛法中，亦复如是，修炼、践行、道路，是渐非顿，无有顿悟。"(《增支部经典》，第4卷第200—201页)

[1] 引自巴利语《萨遮迦大经》，参看《南传大藏经》，第534页。

[2] 王恩洋《佛教概观》："当时的宗派多修苦行，者那教尤甚，它是宿命论者，以为人生之苦是由历劫多生的罪恶造成的，既成为罪恶，必应受苦果，苦既受尽，罪自涤除，因此说：人愈能提前受苦，合并受苦，积极地自觉自动地受苦，受苦已尽，自然解脱。佛初修行，便严守它的教条，而极端受苦，至于六年之久，而终不得道，后来悔悟，改换途径，才证菩提，因之排斥苦行。以为有情的罪恶，唯有更造善业，乃至无漏善业，乃能抵消，乃能拔除。决不是单独受苦所能消除的。比如有杀人罪者，不是自杀便成无罪，自杀并不能于人有益的，如果能做出救得十人百人的事业，那杀一人之罪，自然消了，而且还有功了。"(第7页)

[3] 引自巴利语《萨遮迦大经》，参看《南传大藏经》，第536页。

我们如何来解决这个矛盾呢？[1]首先，我们得承认，纯粹的传记文字都是经过压缩的。它们都是故事，而故事的进度又相当快。构成故事的素材，不仅被当成是信史，还希望能对以后的教徒有所启发，于是就被嵌入一段较易处理的时间跨度里。这些故事带有戏剧性的张力。所以，就算我们承认开悟是在一夜之间发生的，当时佛陀心中一念信心(a moment of certainty)生起，相信自己已经走在正道之上，可是这种信心一定已经酝酿了很长时间，要想把它的深义开显出来，还得花上更长的时间。

按旧传所载，佛陀认识到极端苦行的无益之后，就接受了一点施食，然后坐下来寻找另一条道路。实际上，他还是接受了一种仍然较有控制的苦行论，不过这种苦行论远离了纵欲和自苦这两种极端而已。这种比较有节有度的苦行论，他后来称作“中道”。[2]

佛陀忆起幼时曾坐在田畦畔阎浮树下看父亲犁地。[3]那一次，他第一回证入初禅，“有寻有伺，成就离生喜乐”[4]。他还发现，“唯斯当是通达菩提之道”(《中部经典》，第1卷第246页)。

访道

[1] 这个矛盾就是：“开悟”究竟是一个渐修的过程呢，还是瞬间的顿悟就够了？

[2] 王恩洋《佛教概观》：“佛反对宿命，反对苦行，但也反对纵欲，他说纵欲为极乐行边，苦行为自苦行边，前者灭性，后者戕生，他便主张少欲知足的中道行，少欲不是绝欲，生活所需必得享受，知足便应适可而止，禁止贪求，不要因而损害身心，侵夺他人，扰乱社会。”(第7页)

[3] 印度古代习俗，国王每年要亲自耕种田地，以祈求来年的丰收，类似中国皇帝每年开春在先农坛举行象征性的耕田仪式。佛陀的父亲净饭王曾经在佛陀幼时举行过这个仪式。

[4] 这是“四禅”中“初禅”的特征，“有寻有伺”(accompanied with casual and applied thought)是说“初禅”还伴有“寻求”(casual thought)和“伺察”(applied thought)两种粗细不同的心理活动，“成就离生喜乐”(with bodily happiness and the mental pleasure born of seclusion)是说住于“初禅”的人会感觉到因为“远离欲恶不善之法”(seclusion)而生起的(born)“身体上的幸福感”(喜)和“心理上的快乐感”(乐)。

这段叙述只是间接地涉及到佛陀开悟前已经获得的禅定成就。这些成就，一方面来自他自己养成的禅修践行主义(meditative pragmatism)的习惯，来自他关注在自身内能够靠自己而证见的东西，另一方面则来自他现在坚守不变的分析和批评的倾向。尽管他舍弃了瑜伽师的学说，却依然继续培养对身心状态的觉察，这种觉察只有靠瑜伽师的御心术(psychic technology)才能练成。假如在这些生灭变化的经验背后，找不到一个恒常不变的实体，一个大写的神我(Self)，至少可以对这些转瞬即逝的身心过程的自性(nature)获得一种洞见。这里都是些可以直接验证和直接理解的东西，正是在这些身心过程上面，佛陀倾注了他全副的注意力和强烈的好奇心。这是因为，就算他找不到神我，至少可以寻得解脱。

这些努力所产生的，是一种极为殊胜的、大异于其他瑜伽师所行的禅法。[1]因为这种对直接经验的关注，不仅要求注意力集中的力量，还要求意识应该时时保持正念(mindfulness)和正知(self-possession)，只有这样，佛陀事实上才能看到身心上面所发生的变化。[2]这些性质，也就是正念和正知(*satisampajañña*)，在佛陀成熟时期的讲道中都会谈到。它们要求当下可以了了分明地亲证自己内外诸法(以及他人身上类似经验)的能力。教授弟子这种修行法门的最重要的单部经典是《大念处经》(《长部

[1] 这种禅法就是佛教独特的修行方法“四念处”(亦称“四念住”)。“念处”是以智观境的意思，指在精神专注的状态中按照教理认真思考“身”是“不净”，“受”是“苦”，“心”是“无常”，“法”是“无我”，以此破除那种以“不净”为“净”，以“苦”为“乐”，以“无常”为“常”，以“无我”为“我”的“四颠倒”的思想(请参看性空法师讲《念处之道：〈大念处经〉讲记》，“法悦丛书”第1种，台湾嘉义市：香光书乡，2006年)。

[2] 《念处之道》(第68页)：“修习四念处须具备四个条件——具备热诚、正知、正念三心，以及去除身心世间的贪欲与忧恼。如果修行者不热诚、不正知、失念，无法去除贪欲与忧恼，那么他的业处就无法成功，此四个条件是随观念处不可或缺的要素。”原文中的a power of concentration、mindfulness、self-possession，大约分别相当于热诚、正念和正知。

经典》，第2卷第290页以下）。[1]这些念处（foundations），就是对坐禅人身（body）、受（feelings）、心（state of mind）、法（mental contents）的远离贪忧、亲切明了的觉知。这样警醒的觉知，在很大程度上预设了四禅的心一境性和行捨（equanimity），同时还需对最微细的觉知有明了的觉察。强调和开示醒觉的和热诚的观心内省，构成佛陀对禅法最独特的贡献。以此内观所得结论为缘，开悟就会随之而来。

如何才能客观对待并且分析自己的直接感受和态度呢？比如说，想努力而不掺杂欲望地来观察欲望，难道这不会破坏研究对象本身[2]吗？这些问题的答案，都隐藏在修行的过程中。佛陀在求道之时都已经经受过这种修行过程，只是不甚系统而已。在求证禅定成就和严守苦行的过程中[3]，佛陀不断地修炼自己，使自己不去注意那些感觉和冲动，这些感觉和冲动通常都会产生作用或者反作用，从而阻碍他达到目的。他不顾禁食之时饥渴的呼求，同样也不顾因长时间坐枯禅所带来的身体上的疼痛和心神上的散乱。这样长时间修行的效果——如今日的坐禅人所证实的那样——不仅可以使人随意获得心神的安稳，而且可以打破各种根深蒂固的、机械的、无意识的习惯。通常一个人会停止禁食去吃饭，可是苦行者不会这样。通常一个人还可能因为一个姿势变得越来越难受而放弃它，可是坐禅人不会。想体会一下坐禅的感觉吗，试试这个实验吧：拿一把舒适的椅子，摆个最舒服的姿势坐上去，保持这个姿势不变，试着坐上一个小时。佛法能够预见到，几分钟内你就会想挠挠鼻子，转转手指，挪挪腿脚。如果一个人能够一心不动地观察这些欲念的升起和谢落，那又会怎么样呢？

[1] 巴利语《大念处经》，参看《南传大藏经》，第282—293页。

[2] 指被观察的欲望。

[3] “求证禅定成就”，指佛陀在阿逻罗·迦罗摩和邬陀迦·罗摩子二人门下学习“无所有处”和“非想非非想处”一事，“严守苦行”，指佛陀禁食自苦，以至形销骨立一事。

可是，这绝非在说应和这些呼求的冲动消失了。它们没有消失，或者至少没有永远消失。在坐禅人身上，这些冲动只是不会再造成反作用。他是安稳的，其心调柔(malleable，巴利语 *kammañña*)。如果他愿意的话，就像在四禅中那样，可以暂时完全不理会这些冲动。可是，他和这些冲动的长期关系却发生了改变，因为当他现在面对这些冲动时，他可以作出合理的而非机械的反应。

再者，因为这些感觉和冲动并未消失，他就可以随意使用在已经习惯的行捨中安然建立起来的正念去观察和分析它们。普通未曾修行过的人，可以在记忆平静，未受时间影响之时，很清楚地观察自己的苦受和乐受，以及相伴随行的冲动和感情。而当这些经验出现时，坐禅人则很快就能学会这么做。也许由于长时的修行，禅修苦行僧看待自己的苦乐和欲求，不像一般人那么强烈和紧迫。但是，这也不会改变苦乐和欲求的自性。不论如何，坐禅人可以使用记忆，以及对别人的观察，去证实他在自己身上对较好地受到控御的情绪所观察到的一切，应该也是在他人身上对较未受到控御的情绪所观察到的一切。

这种新式的禅观，叫做“止观”(“观”被称为“毗钵舍那”，巴利语*vipassanā*)[1]。它是佛陀的实验方法，搜集讯息的渠道。根据自己目前身心变化的讯息，佛陀可以建立起对人类境况的分析。

[1] “毗钵舍那”是“观”(insight)，“奢摩他”就是“止”(meditation)，合称“止观”(insight meditation)。

第四章

开悟

在佛化诸国中，佛陀之开悟，一般被认作是在阴历毗舍遮月(Vesakha)——相当于四五月份——满月时的某夜，佛陀坐在一棵硕大的菩提树下(*ficus religiosus*)时发生的。佛陀圆证"三菩提"(*sambodhi*)[1]，先获得对人世本相的正智，此智可使人获得解脱；次乃获得正信，信己身已从人世烦恼中解脱。早期圣典将许多法门，当然都是那些最重要的法门，全部都看作是佛陀在开悟之夜所悟得的。这样一来，佛陀全部成熟教法都得归于开悟一事。就算此说并非句句真实，那天夜里所获得的正智和正信，一定是一切成熟教法的基础。

佛陀的开悟，生发于两个主要信念之间的一种创造性张力。第一个信念就是：解脱答案的寻得，须求之于对止观中所亲证的所有经验细节作特别的关注(尽管那种禅法的明确形式也许还没有完全成形)。可是，假若佛陀所得的仅仅是这种信念，那么他大概只能成为瑜伽思想的一个无足轻重的贡献者。而他的另一个信念，则是深信轮回(transmigration)的真实。佛陀对轮回的看法，为其教法在人类生活中创造了活动的机会和感化力，使其远远超越了瑜伽一派狭窄眼界所能关注的东西。佛陀

[1] "三菩提"，巴利语"正觉"的意思。

的原创性来自于他对个人经验的深细分析，而他的重要性则是来于他接受了这种为印度人所共同信奉的转世投生说。

在佛陀那里，对轮回转世的信仰，归根结底就是一种深刻的道德严肃性问题。在其他教派的教法中，轮回转世说一般都伴有一套关于精神世界(the spiritual cosmos)的精致而复杂的学说。轮回就发生在这个世界之中。一个人升天入地，一时变成动物，一时变成天神，一时在做某层地狱里的居民(the denizen of some hell)，一时又投生为刹帝利或婆罗门(a Warrior or Brahman)[1]，奴隶或国王(佛教后来对这类观点作了很多发挥[2])。可是，对于佛陀来说，轮回的任何特殊细节，都不如轮回背后的原理来得重要。这个原理就是：人的任何作为都有其道德上的结果，这些结果谁也无法逃脱，不是在此生，就是在来世，必然要应验在他的身上。世间有一种根本的道德秩序。一个人偷盗，口为妄语[3]，与别人的妻女私通，或者"行恒河岸，杀或使杀，截或使截，苦或使苦"(《长部经典》，第1卷第52页)[4]，而最后竟然不会招致恶果，这是绝对不可能的。天地之间有一种不受人我控制和摆布的[5]道德因果律，所有人都要服从它。恶行在今生和来世必然会招致苦报。佛陀的教法好像只是注重个人私我的解脱，只面向那些有情识的存在者(sentient beings)[6]，只有这些存在者才能感受苦恼，才能从苦恼中获得解脱。可是，佛法也能触动作为道德主体(moral agents)的有情，身为这种主

[1] 原文 Warrior 大写，后面又跟着"婆罗门"，所以应该是指代表武士阶层的"刹帝利"种姓。

[2] 这是指佛教文献中十分庞大的《本生经》，它们都是通过讲述众生在前世善恶轮回的故事，以达到宣扬佛家学说的目的。

[3] "妄语"是佛教术语，就是说谎、撒谎的意思。

[4] 此处引自巴利语《沙门果经》，参看《南传大藏经》，第 37 页。

[5] 所谓"不受人我控制和摆布的"(impersonal)，本书一般用它来翻译佛教术语"无我"。

[6] sentient beings 就是佛学术语"有情"，指有感觉或思想的存在者，以区别于没有感情或思想的存在者（比如山河大地、木石星辰）。

体的有情不但能影响到自己的福德，也能影响到别人的福德。佛法的某些部分，似乎只谈个人解脱(personal liberation)，有些只谈天理人伦(morality)。可是，对佛陀来说，这两件事总是紧密而必然地联系在一起。

四谛

与开悟最密切相关的法门主要是和个人苦恼以及个人解脱有关。这就是四圣谛论(Four Noble Truths，巴利语 *cattāri ariyasaccāni*)。在四谛法这张大伞下，可以说是概括了佛教的一切心要法门。四谛的表述是仿自医疗上的诊断：这是病症，这些是病因，这是关于病能否治愈的诊断，这是治病的方法。[1]病就是“苦”(suffering，巴利语 *dukkha*)。苦是这样一种状态，它包括了英语里的 suffering 所包含的一切意义。但是，在此意义之外，苦还有更多的意思，这个较宽的义域，我们必须时刻记在心里。第一圣谛是说，谛实[2]有病，也就是说，谛实有苦。这就是苦圣谛(Noble Truth of Suffering)。第二圣谛是

[1] 水野弘元《原始佛教》(第 59 页)：“此四谛，正如医生治疗病人的病时，首先要正确地诊断其病状以了解其所患者为何种病，其次要追究病因——其病由何种原因产生，这是很重要的。同样是下腹部疼痛，若不正确地诊断是腹膜炎，或是盲肠炎，就无法治疗。诸如应予冷敷却予以暖敷，应予温热却予以冰凉，如此错误之处置，或许会使病情更加恶化。故作为一个医生，首先最重要的，就是要正确地诊断病症，并正确地把握其病因。其次所必要的是，要知健康体为何种状态的正确标准，并要有使病者恢复健康体，对其病应施以何种治疗法、养生法、健康法的正确知识，而应依其知识，采取适切无误的方法。如此始可治愈病人的病，令其得以恢复健康体。如上述，正确地了解病状、病因、健康状态、治疗方法之四诀，据此采取正确无误的措施（治疗），乃是医治肉体之病的医生，最为重要的事。与此同样的道理，对于医治精神上疾病——人们的苦恼——的宗教家而言，需要正确地了解苦的现状，苦的原因，无有苦的理想状态，脱离苦的修行方法，即苦集灭道之四谛，而依此采取正确无误的措施。由这一点，佛教之四谛，乃被比喻为医生之治病四诀。”

[2] “谛实”是汉译佛经常用语，就是“确实”和“的确”的意思，译者用它来翻译表示强调语气的“indeed”和“in fact”。

说，有诸苦因可得。这就叫苦集圣谛(Noble Truth of Arising of Suffering)，它包含了对诸苦因的叙述。第三圣谛是说，谛实有苦灭，这就是苦灭圣谛(Noble Truth of Cessation of Suffering)。第四圣谛就是灭苦之方，也就是苦灭道圣谛(Noble Truth of Path Leading to Cessation of Suffering)。

我们来依据旧传看看第一谛，也就是指出有苦存在的圣谛。按照旧传的描述，佛陀在开悟后不久就开示了苦圣谛："苦圣谛者，即生苦、老苦、病苦、死苦、愁悲忧恼苦"(《相应部经典》，第5卷第421页)。[1]在这里，把巴利语的 *dukkha* 翻译成英语的 suffering 是没有问题的。这种苦是我们一般都能认识到的那种苦，在一个较长的时间层面上，它伴随着人生的全体：只要我们有生，我们注定要经受生苦、病苦、老苦、失去所爱者的苦和死苦。这种从长远着眼的看法认为，生死相续的过程，不过就是任何人生命中都要遭遇的烦恼在一生又一生中的增广。我们所有的经验，甚至普普通通幸福的经验，都是被痛苦和烦恼包围着。因为从长远来说，我们终有一死，所以苦的问题是很迫切、亟待解决的问题。

在这个层面上，苦谛论很接近其他出家者所共持的观点，就是世俗生活只是痛苦的泥沼。可是，佛法并没有变成老套的悲观主义，这缘于它和一种精心构建的人类命运观的联系。当对苦谛继续作描述时，这种观点就逐步明晰起来："怨憎会苦、爱别离苦、求不得苦。"[2]这是更短时间层面上的苦，因为它可能在一年、一天甚至一小时内就会出现。这种苦与佛陀对可直

[1] 此处引巴利语《转法轮经》。

[2] "怨憎会苦"就是"不喜欢见到的人，却偏偏遇上，甚至要朝夕相处"，实在令人痛苦；"爱别离苦"就是"亲爱的人却要分开，不管生离或死别"，最令人心痛；"求不得苦"的"求"，就是"在找寻什么，想要得到什么"，"'求'是一种爱，当我们努力于某个目标却得不到时，就会有苦受"(《四圣谛与修行的关系——〈转法轮经〉讲记》，第48页)。

接观察之物的特别关注更为相关。它还是对苦所作的一种更加普遍的描述，不仅因为它伴随着人生中的历次危机，还因为它每天都会出现在日常的境遇中。这些日常的境遇，也许不会引起悲伤，但会使人刻骨铭心地意识到失败、挫折或者未能实现的愿望：诸如错失的机会，徒劳的努力，令人腻烦的按部就班的生活，生活中和别人难免的磕磕绊绊。在这里，*dukkha* 就不一定翻成 suffering，而是某种虽然事情不大，但却常有的经历：比如不舒服、不满意或者不餍足。在佛典三藏中，这一点通过许多故事表现出来，比如求官者的凄惶不安，农人的焦虑，家庭生活中的摩擦和挫沮。这种学说把苦带进日常经验的轨道中来，因为它指出了生活本身无法避免的无常性(changing nature)，这种无常性吞没了一切我们以为是安稳而坚固的东西。

可是，这样一种观点在佛陀的时代也为其他学派所共同信奉。所以，要想找出完全属于佛教独有的东西，我们还得看看描写第一圣谛的最后一段："略说为五取蕴苦。"[1]这条对苦的定义，可以说是引向了佛法中最具有独创性的东西，引向了佛陀对苦的看法的那一部分，也就是佛教圣典中有关人类困境的描述，这部分的描述经过了充分的论证，不带任何感情色彩。根据这种描述，苦如细针密缕一般地织进了人生经验的每一条纤维中。这里的经验，是被放在最小的时间尺度上来考虑的，即在一秒一秒的刹那中，仿佛被放在显微镜下一样，接受观心内省的坐禅人客观而冷静的诊视。在显微镜的放大下，*dukkha* 带上了另一番意思，就是不完善(imperfection)、无常(impermanence)、变灭(evanescence)、不堪能(inadequacy)、不实在(insubstantiality)、不完全(incompleteness)、无法宰制(uncontrollability)。使人产生悲伤的大灾大难，使人发生不满的生气光火，只是内在于一切经验中的那种根本的"不完善性

[1] 意为：总之，身心中所有的体验……皆为痛苦。

加无常性”——也就是“苦”——的比较明显的例子。就其迁流无常、变动不居、无法宰制、最终无法令人满足来说，经验本身就是苦。

要想看看这一切是怎么运作的，我们且拿“受”(feeling，巴利语 *vedanā*)来作范例。“受”是禅观中鼓励大家当作直接内省对象的所缘之一，它也是“五取蕴”之一。受可以分为身受和心受两种，也可以分为苦受(unpleasant feeling)、乐受(pleasant feeling)和不苦不乐受(neither pleasant nor unpleasant feeling)，也就是捨受(neutral feeling)。这样一来，修禅观者思维观察身心上正在生起的经验时，随着生起的受的不同，会发现此为乐受，此为苦受，此为不苦不乐受。比方说吧，坐禅结跏趺坐时觉得膝盖疼，这就是苦受；因为能够长时坐禅，并获得少许禅定境界而愉快，这就是乐受；介于苦受和乐受之间的许多感受，比如对静静呼吸过程的感受，则为捨受。再比如说，禅室外面汽车喇叭的轰鸣，可以产生苦受；夜莺的鸣啭，可以引生乐受；下雨声也许既不产生乐受，也不引生苦受，它什么也不产生。尽管某些感受中的一部分如是如是生起，并引起人的注意，甚至还会持续一段时间，比如上边提到的膝盖疼，或者也许会不断重新回来，可是不需要我们用多深的禅观力就可以看出，为什么佛陀把受看作是无常的。前受才灭，后受即来，就算是在大的禅定成就中，受也不可能保持永驻。佛陀所探索的最核心的问题就是：“我最后应该以何为依？”按照这个诊断，肯定不能以受为依，因为就算是乐受也会因变坏而产生苦。这就是说，当时可能会觉得是乐，乐受中却载着不安稳的种子，或者说乐受自身内部解体的种子。通过观心内省发现的苦谛，是一种关于永不停息的运动，关于不断变化的过程的真谛。这种过程由于不能主宰自己，常在变化之中，从而造成不堪能和无法令人满足，所以不过就是苦而已。

进一步说，不堪能性浸满个人身心的一切经验。佛陀对人

的身心提出过几种不同的分析性描述[1]，每一种描述都是为了适应不同的情况而提出来的。但是，总的来说，这些描述都是描述一个过程，而非一个恒常不动的实体。在佛陀的眼中，个体更像是一团燃烧的火，或者一条湍急的瀑流，而不是用来盛装经验的坚硬器皿，或一块可以把知觉往上刻写的不动石板。我们的语言很容易掩盖这一点，因为我们习惯于想到相对稳定不变的身体和心灵，它们接纳着变动不居的经验，从而认为可以独立于经验之外来描述心灵和身体。可是，佛陀的语言却很特殊，在这种语言里，经验和身心复合体被放在一起，作为过程的一部分来描述。这里举一个这类描述的例子：

> “以眼为缘，于色而生眼识。三事和合(即眼根，色境，眼识)有触，缘触有受，而想所受，觉知所想，迷执所觉知。”(《中部经典》，第1卷第111—112页)[2]

按照这种说法，经验的对象，经验的器官(比如眼根)，还有由此产生的经验意识，也就是“心识”，都不可分割地联系在一起。三者之一，若缺其二，是不可想象的。用佛经里的比喻说，它们就好像束芦一样，相持不倒。[3]

进一步说，经验的这些特点，比如受、想、识，也可以被说成是在“心”里面，它们“是结合的，而非别异的，于此等法不得以分解知其差别”(《中部经典》，第1卷293页)。[4]如是从诸色尘(objects of perception)，经过诸色根(physical organs of

[1] 此处指佛教法相学中所谓“三科”，即五蕴、十二处和十八界。

[2] 此处引自巴利语《蜜丸经》，参看《南传大藏经》，第421页。意为：依靠眼睛和可见的对象产生了视觉意识。这三者（眼睛、观察对象和视觉意识）的统一形成了接触。依靠这种接触有了感受，一个人知觉到所感受之物，并思考所有知觉之物，然后从思考过的事物中发展出各种相关的观念。

[3] 汉译《杂阿含经》第12卷曰：“今当说譬，如智者因譬得解。譬如三芦立于空地，辗转相依，而得竖立，若去其一，二亦不立，若去其二，一亦不立，辗转相依，而得竖立，识缘名色，亦复如是，辗转相依，而得生长。”

[4] 此处引自巴利语《有明大经》，参看《南传大藏经》，第570页。

perception)，到受、想、行、识，只有一个变动不居、相依相持的复合体存在，这个复合体可以被称作“个体”或者“自我”，但其内里实无任何常住者可得。

五蕴

“五蕴”(five aggregates，巴利语 *pañcakkhanda*)这个佛教术语，就是对这个过程所作的分析性描述之一。这个描述暗含了这个过程的无我、变化和相互依持的性质。第一蕴是色蕴(materiality)，它包括四大(physical objects)、根(sense organs)、身(the body)[1]。另外四蕴是受、想、行、识。在这些“蕴”中，亦即在这个身心过程之中，包括了属于个体和他所经验的一切东西。受蕴只是这个过程的一个方面而已，是禅观可以发现的一个方面。受蕴的变灭性和不堪能性，刻画了整个过程的特征。这就是所谓：“略说一切五取蕴苦”。或如佛陀在别处所说：“如五蕴生、坏、灭，比丘，汝之生、坏、死，亦复如是。”(《最胜义光》，第1卷第78页)

这看上去像是一种调子很阴郁的学说，大家出于本能会怀疑它的真实性。在这个世界上，肯定还有点儿幸福的东西吧？其实，佛法并未否认经验中会有各种各样的满足感。禅观的修行已经假定，坐禅人了了分明地见识过这样的幸福感。苦就被当作苦，乐就被当作乐。但是，不能认为，这种幸福感会是牢靠的，并且能够延续下去。

可是，这还未能充分地答疑解难，因为这种怀疑的真正根据是在别的地方，也就是在质疑者的经验和佛陀的经验完全不同这一点上。苦的教义预设了佛陀身处的世界和我们的世界没有两样，同样易受病、死、天灾和人类压迫的侵扰伤害。在佛

[1] “根”指“眼耳鼻舌触”五种感觉器官，“身”指躯干和四肢。

经里，苦正是以这些方式被宣讲着。但是，对于大多数西方人来说，人生的这种易受伤害的脆弱性被压制下去了，或者说通过繁荣、医疗进步以及那些负责隐瞒死亡的特殊机构，被弄得不那么引人注意了。没有对人生如朝露一样危脆的觉知，人们就不会有理由把不满足这类小不如意与死亡、疾病、长期的挫败等大苦大难联系在一起。结果呢，大家可以忍受各种小的不适(佛教僧侣也在学着这么做)。可是，对那些在自己的经历中体验过这种危脆性——这种危脆性可能是来自心理、社会以及物质方面的——的人来说，小不如意和大苦大难之间的这种联系，就有很强的说服力。[1]

苦因

四圣谛的宣说，尽管实际上既简短又直白，它里面还是有很多戏剧性的张力。因为，假如苦真的是这样一种无所不在、永无了期的过程，它的起因会是什么呢？怎样才能进入这个轮回，看看是什么在推动它轮转不停？从这个视角来看，第二圣谛(有苦因可得)也就是苦集圣谛的发现就是开悟中最引人注意的内容。有些佛教徒把集谛的发现赞为一个戏剧性的时刻，在这一时刻中，佛陀发现了所谓的“造屋者”(the ‘house-builder’)，也就是这个有缺陷的、不能令人满意的存在的原因。据说，佛陀在开悟时说过这样的诗偈：

多生轮回中
探寻造屋者
而未得见之

[1] 最近的例子，大家可以想一想功夫明星李连杰。他在印尼海啸中经历了生死大难(所谓人生的“危脆性”)，对生命的意义有所觉悟，于是就开始他的“一基金”慈善计划。

再生实是苦

造屋者已见

不再造新屋

(《法句经》，第153—154偈)[1]

我们已经可以看到，佛陀会在哪些方向上寻找这个原因。有一个方向可以从佛陀那种践行主义的倾向上看出来。他不倾向于从纯粹抽象的角度看待这些原因，而是使用来自实际行动中的各种类比。比如说，坐禅人被比作冶工[2]，或者被比作调心如同调箭的矢工[3]。佛经里有一处(《中部经典》，第1卷第240—243页)讲到佛陀开悟前的求道生涯，佛陀把他的努力比作一个人在钻木求火："譬如润湿活树，投诸水中，有人执持最上钻木来……不能钻使起火发焰……任何沙门婆罗门，亦复如是，身及诸欲，从莫之离……纵受激烈痛楚苦受，彼等不能逮达知见无上正等觉……譬如润湿活木，使离于水，置诸燥地，有人执持最上钻木来……不能钻使起火发焰……任何沙门婆罗门，亦复如是，身及诸欲，从莫之离……纵受激烈痛楚苦受，彼等不能逮达知见无上正等觉……譬如已离于水置诸燥地干燥枯木，有人执持最上钻木来……能钻使起火发焰……任何沙门婆罗门，亦复如是，身及诸欲，而能离着……纵受激烈痛楚苦受，然能逮达知见无上正等觉……。"[4]这种思维方式很是

[1] 引自巴利语《法句经》第十一《老品》，参看法增比丘译《南传法句经新译》，台北：财团法人佛陀教育基金会，2005年，第22页。原文剩余的偈子说："椽柱均断折，栋梁亦摧毁，我心证无为，一切爱欲灭。"(第23页)

[2] 巴利语《法句经》第十八《垢秽品》第239颂："刹那又刹那，一分又一分，智者渐除垢，如冶工锻银。"(第32页)

[3] 巴利语《法句经》第十《刀杖品》第145颂："治水者导水，矢工调弓箭，木匠绳其木，善行者御身。"(第21页)

[4] 此处引自巴利语《萨遮迦大经》，参看《南传大藏经》，第529—531页。本书英文未引原文，译者为了使意义更加醒豁生动，改为引用原文。

微妙，因为它承认有辅助、增上(enabling)的因缘条件[1]，比如木棍的干燥性等等。可是它把最主要的原因放在施动者(agent)身上，也就是坐禅人或钻火人身上。这个主要的原因被当成施动者一般，就如同一个使事情产生结果的人。把苦因比喻描写成"造屋者"，正是出于这个意思。造"屋"的材料，必须准备停当，就差一个"建造者"，一个有目的性的和能动性的本原。因此，在寻找苦因的过程中，佛陀是在寻找某种能动而有目的性的东西。在此程度上，这个东西很像是一个施动者或一个人。

而且，这个本原在其他方面也得像一个施动者。首先，就像坐禅人能在一定程度上控制自己，以使其禅法变得完善一样，这个本原必须可以回应改善的行为。就像一个人或一个施动者一样，它必须是可以改正的：对待"造屋者"必须能像对待自己一样，否则就不会有任何解脱的可能。其次，就像这个本原的行动效果在转生的过程中对他人和自己有道德性一样，他还得像一个道德的实行者，也就是一个行为有善恶的人。这些想法也许看上去太抽象了，与佛陀的那种践行主义并不一致，可是它们却指出了佛陀必须克服的行动上的障碍。对这一切最简单的解释，也许就是认为有目的性和能动性的本原就是一个施动者，一个神我、人格或者灵魂。可是，佛陀有很好的理由破斥这个观点。的确，在他的禅观中，他只发现了有一个无我的过程，也就是苦的过程。他必须得透过这一切发现一个本原，这个本原在许多方式上很像一个施动者或者人格，可是它最终还是无我的，完全不是施动者和人格。

下面就是他发现的：

"诸比丘！苦集谛者，即：渴爱引导再生，伴随喜贪，随处欢喜之渴爱，谓：欲爱，有爱，无有爱。"(《相应部经

[1] 这就是佛教中很重要的"增上缘"。所谓"增上缘"就是各种有助于或者无碍于事物发生的条件。

典》，第5卷第421页）[1]

驱此一大苦聚向前的，是渴求或欲望。巴利语 *taṇhā* 一词，从字面上讲，就是“渴”的意思。正是这层意思，使得这个词显得活灵活现。然而，它在术语上则是意为“渴求”或“欲望”。在这层意思里，它是无法满足的渴求，“随处欢喜之渴爱”（which seeks fresh pleasure now here and now there），不论此生还是未来的无数世，缘此而有轮回转世。而且，因渴求“伴随喜贪”（bound up with impassioned appetite），火的譬喻自然不会不被佛陀注意到。在旧传以为是佛陀早期所说的《火喻经》（《相应部经典》，第4卷第19页）中，经验的每一层面都被描写成“被欲火洞烧”（aflame with desire）。

这种思维方式在很多方面是诗意的，而非理智的，纯技术性的。佛陀成道前后所主要从事的，多半就是把这个观念的蕴义阐发出来。当然，渴求可以被说成是带有目的性的：渴求就是渴求某物，感到渴就是感到因何物而渴。“爱生于何处，止住何处耶？谓世有可爱喜者，则爱生于此处，止住此处”（《长部经典》，第2卷第308页）。[2]在大多数对渴求的描述中，常常都有突出这个积极欲望，也就是“渴求感官快乐”的倾向。这乃是出家人的清教主义在现身说法。的确，在出家人中，欲望的观念是很普通的：它是阻碍出家人证得自我或者清净灵魂的大障碍。但是，通过把它提升到一个自主原则的地位，佛陀扩大了欲望的定义。对他来说，渴求也包含着嫌恶。“无有爱”（thirst for non-existence）讲的恐怕就是这个意思。一个人既可以渴求吸引他的东西，也可以渴求逃避和解脱叫他感到不愉快或不

[1] 此处引自巴利语《转法轮经》，参看《四圣谛与修行的关系——〈转法轮经〉讲记》，第62页。这段话意为：诸位比丘（指出家后受过具足戒的男性僧人）呀！苦集谛就是，“渴求”或“爱”引导我们走向再生，它和“欢喜”与“贪欲”一同生起，随处寻找新鲜的快乐，“渴求”分为三种，即“对感官快乐的渴求”、“对存在的渴求”和“对非存在的渴求”。

[2] 此处引自巴利语《大念处经》，参看《南传大藏经》，第289页。

乐意的东西。我们渴求的东西很多。我们渴求所有的感官快乐——性欲的、味觉的、嗅觉的、触觉的或其他什么的快乐。我们内心深盼脱离痛苦。我们渴望富贵和权势。我们甚至贪恋自己的身体，或者在来世想换一躯新的身体。甚至还有一种"见爱"(thirst for views)，就是事事都想正确，事事都要知道内情，所有问题都要求得答案。

渴求可以被总说成是"有爱"(thirst for existence)。当然这就是所谓"引导再生的渴爱"(thirst which gives rise to repeated existence)，可是也许我们最好把它想成是想变成和现在的经验所予的不一样的东西的那种渴求。它打扮成不同的样子，骨子里还是同一股不息的追求，追求达到新的状态，成为新的存在，获得新的经验。同时，他还追求屡足和恒常，可又总是遭受挫折。"世人著有，变异不居，既被有覆，悦乐著有。有情所喜，是险所在，有情所怖，是苦所在。"[1]（《无问自说》，第3品第10种《世间经》，此处依据智髻比丘[2]的读法）再生可以是经验前后刹那的再生，也可以是从此世到他世的转生。但是，不管这两种情况如何不同，却都是那种想变为他物的欲念所生之果。

这就是在较大范围内渴求的有目的行为，因为它包括了一切有情识的生命。但是，就如佛陀其他教义中所见的那样，这个宏大的观点还得靠一点一滴的经验来证实。在这个观点下，渴求实际上已经被当作"行蕴"(impulses，巴利语 *samkhara*)，写进"五蕴"这个对身心经验的总体描述之中了。我们回到前面的例子。一个人修禅观坐了很久，逐渐感到膝盖疼痛。就因为觉得这样有不快感，他很想换一个姿势，这一想就是一种想通

[1]《小部经》，台北市：财团法人佛陀教育基金会，2007年，第112页。

[2] 智髻比丘（Ñānamoli, 1905—1960）是英国人，牛津大学毕业，二战时担任英军情报部门审讯官，战后于1948年至斯里兰卡出家，圆寂后所留遗稿《清净道论》和《中部经典》英译本，以及佛学字书《南传字典》等，由菩提比丘（Bhikku Bodhi）整理出版。

过活动来获得安适和解乏的冲动。实际上，这个冲动正是那个不快感的能动而有目的性的一面：它随不快感而生起，和不快感无法分开。在一般的环境下，你可能就自动地改换了坐姿，连想都不带想的，甚至也许完全没有意识到它。同样的事也可以用来说乐受：在坐禅时，你可能感到昏昏欲睡，自己不知不觉地跟着这些感觉就动了。或者，你坐禅时饿了，在继续坐下去之前，很想自己吃一些点心。若不是去努力坐禅，许多这些冲动恐怕都不会被我们注意到，它们变得太快了，前后相续飘忽而过。在这种微观的观察下，经验中被发现有一个不停行动的基础，一个在短时间内会有有目的性冲动的基础。佛陀把这种行动看成是制造经验。“彼‘心’‘意’‘识’，日夜时刻，须臾转变，异生异灭，犹如猕猴，游林树间，须臾处处，攀捉枝条，放一取一。”(《相应部经典》，第2卷第95页)[1]

通过止观获得的这种对存在的驱动本原的洞见，影响着佛陀的思想，是引导他理解人世本相的根据。由于冲动是习惯性的和自动的，根本不假思索，而且也不履行决定的功能，没有理由像其他出家沙门一样，把它看成是某个人或者神我的工作。它只是一种习性，是生命根基上一种能动的倾向，这个生命有着特殊的和招致灾难的无限再造自身的能力。作为一种习性，佛陀把它称作“取”(clinging，巴利语 *upādāna*)。这种习性事实上已经写进了“苦圣谛”，因为它写全了就是：“略说一切五取蕴苦。”(《相应部经典》，第5卷第421页)这些不同的术语——取、爱渴、行、渴求——每一个都从不同方面说明了有情生命背后和内部的那种活动。它们都指向同一个东西，就是无我的能动的本原。发现了这个本原，就等于回答了佛陀的问题：“我是怎样陷进这个苦境中来的？”

可是，佛陀并不认为，单只爱渴就足够解释轮回了——

[1] 《杂阿含经》第 12 卷，第 289、290 经。

他的缘起说绝不许这个问题只有单一的或者简单的解答。在痛苦的轮回受生的过程中，爱渴也许只是主要的动因，此外还有辅助、增上的因缘条件，没有这些条件，爱渴就会毫无用武之地。在这些原因里，有一个原因的地位尤其重要，就是“无明”(ignorance)或者叫“痴”(delusion)。在沙门和瑜伽师之间很流行一种观点，就是他们独享一种特殊的知识，这种知识是他人完全不知道的。可是，按照佛陀的习惯说法，他得到的知识绝不像关于神我的知识，是一种秘传的真理，而是一种对万法如实的(*things as they are*)洞解。相比之下，人们一般来说并非那样无知——比如对税务法规或者对神我无知——但确实被愚痴所困扰。[1]人们总是认为，这个世界上会有恒常而稳固的满足，可是事实上世界却充满了痛苦。人们都错了，这样一来就得任由爱渴来摆布了。爱渴、无明和苦之间的关系，很像热、氧和火之间的关系。热是原动力，可是没有了氧，火是烧不起来的。“诸比丘，有爱生起，有别因缘，某物长养，若无助缘，即不能行。长养者谁，即为无明。”(《增支部经典》，第5卷第116页)[2]

爱渴的道德意义

到此为止所谈的教义，都是和道德无关的。它们是一个立场超然的专门家，一个出家人，对其他同样关心个人解脱的人所宣讲的。但是，佛陀也深信一切有情都服从于道德因果律的法则，他极为关心行为及其对他人影响的评价。因此，在佛陀的思想中，这些和道德无关的教义，就和其他部分的教义有了

[1] 这句是说，佛教的“无明”或“痴”，和科学或哲学上的“无知”不是一类东西。科学和哲学上的“无知”是没有“知”，佛教的“痴”是“知”有了毛病。

[2] 这一段汉译《南传大藏经》未收，是译者自己的翻译。意为：啊，诸比丘，对存在的欲求有一个特殊条件，它被某物滋养，没有它就不会生长，什么是滋养物？那就是“无明”。

不可分割的关系。这些其他部分的教义指向人世境况中根本的道德意义。

我们先从“行”(impulses)说起。就我目前所描写的来看，“行”几乎未带任何道德意义。可是，我们也可以从另一个角度来看它们。我们可以把它们当作意图或选择(intentions or choices)来考虑，这两种意思都包含在关键术语“思”(*cetanā*)中。有时候，把“思”翻成“选择”(choice)，是最近于本义的。因为，“思”是一种心理活动，出现在言或行之前。可是，“思”还包含了意图这个意义。因为，佛陀认为没有表达出来的意图，它们本身也会有一种效果，如果没有表达于心外的话，至少是表达于心内的。佛陀主张在人世的事务中，具有根本意义的还是心理上的选择或者意图，这就是所谓“心为法本”(the world is led by mind)(《相应部经典》，第1部第39页)。[1]所以，比如在为佛教僧团发展出来的戒律中，只有有意的行动才被视为犯戒，而无意的行动——比如睡觉时、发疯时或受胁迫时的所作所为——是不应遭受责罚的。

这一观点包含着很多意义。它意味着，意图是不能忽视的，它们也会有果报。意图也会造业，它们本身就是业。这就是术语“羯摩”(karma)的意义。它最初只是“做”或“行”的意思，可是在佛教上还有“意业”这层意思(羯摩不像我们西方人现在习惯用法中所假想的那样是称呼行为的结果)：“因抉择故，思为羯摩——意业——以有思故，有身语意业”(《增支部经典》，第3卷第415页)。[2]每人有何种意图，每人就有何种世界。意图在造业，我们在苦中收获业果。这些业果形成我们日后心灵生活的历史，就仿佛战争或者条约、瘟疫或者繁荣形成一个国家日后的历史一样。

[1] 《杂阿含经》第36卷，第18经。

[2] 这一段汉译《南传大藏经》未收，是译者自己的翻译。

谈论冲动和强烈愿望的时候，不一定非用带道德色彩的语言不可。可是，选择和行动却正是道德论述的材料。一个人可以作出或好或坏的选择，一个人的行动可以为善也可以为恶。而事实上，从佛陀的观点来看，无意识的冲动实际上和有意识的选择是一样的，唯一的差别在于，冲动产生时不知道它们自己在本性上也是选择。它们是在误以为没有其他更好的选择、没有其他更好的行动方式时作出的选择。在这种情况下，渴求(渴望)这个相对中性的名词，可以被视为贪欲(greed)，也就是某种在道德上应受谴责的东西，佛陀时常就是这么说的。贪欲也许从对世界本相的愚痴那里得到助缘，可是它自身也是不道德的，是一种应受谴责、亟待改进的习性。此外，贪欲在佛典中经常和嗔恚相伴。因此，从一种纯然道德的观点来看，是由于不善选择，为贪嗔所缚，我们才给自身带来在转世投生中遭遇的痛苦。我们对自己所犯的恶，以及对别人所犯的恶，是完全一样的，全都来自同样的根源。苦集谛可以这么说："贪欲所烧，嗔恨所焚，愚痴所误，为彼等所屈，煎迫于心，人自招苦，使他人苦，使自他苦，忧悲苦恼。"(《增支部经典》，第3卷第55页)[1]

或者，换句话说，贪、嗔、痴这三种习性，可以使我们造恶业伤害他人，同样地，它们也使我们命终投生受苦。使人轮回的道德原因，正是受苦的原因。但是，这就引起一个严重的问题来：到底这种原因是在如何起作用的？对于持有神我和灵魂的学说而言，这个问题就很好解答。神我自造业，自招果报，按其善恶，转世投生。就其自身来说，这个基本结构是可信的，因此细节方面就没有那么重要了。可是，如果没有神我的话，那该怎么办？

答案(如《长部经典》，第2卷第15经[2]中所述)要从一个新的身心的出现，也就是一个崭新的心理生理实体的出现说起。怎

[1] 这一段汉译《南传大藏经》未收，是译者自己的翻译。

[2] 即巴利语《大缘经》，参看《南传大藏经》第169—177页。

么出现的呢？当心识投胎结生(the descent of consciousness into a mother's womb)时，它就出现了。[1]乍看起来，这种思想很是原始，可以追溯到早期印度人关于儒童[2]入胎的观念。可是，这种答案纯属空想，超出了佛陀反复叮咛的只以自己所亲证者为真的主张。可是，晚期的佛教注疏家相信，心识的降世投胎只是一种比喻的说法，就好像我们看到一个人失去了知觉时，就会说"黑暗降到他身上"一样。而且，这个结生相续的心识(the enlivening consciousness)，不是一个独立的实体，不是一个经过伪装的神我，而是由各种因缘和合而成的。

那么，依次还有些什么因缘呢？其中之一就是"生"(the act of physical generation)，但是更重要的是前面的"行"。这里的"行"，应该理解成意图或者心理行动，它带有道德的性质，以此性质塑成了来生新的心理生理实体的性质。如果行是善的，那么新的身心就会秉赋好，际遇幸运。如果是恶的，就会禀赋不好，际遇不幸。

还有一个关键的问题：这个神秘的"行"是什么？事实上，它不过就是前生身心临命终前的一念。它绝不是神我，而是跳过此生与他生间隙的最后一点能量，就像佛教后期典籍中的一条材料所比喻的，仿佛火从这支灯芯传到另一支灯芯。它也无法摆脱前面的因缘，因为它是习惯性心理活动的产物，而这种习惯性心理活动又是在前世生活的无明和贪爱的覆从下形成的。这样一来，这个过程可以一直向前回溯，事实上可以追到无始之时。

在这个叙述中，没有根本的实体，只有事件的川流。这

[1]《大缘经》："'缘识有名色'，既言之矣。阿难，云何缘识有名色，当如是知。阿难，识不入母胎时，名色于母胎，犹得结成耶？（阿难答曰）是实不然，世尊。（佛复问）阿难，识入母胎后，若归于消灭，犹得现名色相耶？（阿难答曰）是实不然，世尊。"

[2]"儒童"(homunculus)就是"侏儒"、"小人"的意思。

条事件的川流，有其自身的历史。荷载这部历史前进的，不是神我或者灵魂，而是被包括在爱渴和苦下面，由因缘果报形成的复杂的相互作用。了解了这种相互作用，也就等于是了解了人世境况的本相和缘起。许多佛典都把这看作是开悟的基本内容，佛陀称其为“缘起”(dependent co-origination，巴利语 *paṭicca samuppāda*)。所谓“缘起”者，是指倚仗诸因诸缘之间必然的相互作用，就好像倚仗燃料、热量和氧气等的相互作用才能产生火一样。在它们当中，没有任何一个像神我或灵魂一样，可以最终独立于其他因缘。这样一来，缘起就有了两种功能。第一种功能是，它驳斥了恒常独存的灵魂观念；第二种功能是，它描述了苦的缘起。附随于缘起论的学说，包括了我在前两个圣谛名字下面谈到的所有内容，尽管用语略有不同。它通常(但不总是这样)包括了十二个支分。[1]这十二个支分里包括的，从那些描述心理生理实体的，比如色根(感觉器官)和受，到对苦的生起根源的各种描述，比如无明、爱、取、行，可以说应有尽有。当然，它也包含了苦[2]。尽管我们会猜想，作为一种学说，缘起论出现在四圣谛论之后，可是它实际上早就内涵于四圣谛论之中，内涵于佛陀对爱和苦的理解，以及内涵于佛陀对由爱生苦的相互作用的理解当中了。

[1] 这里指十二支缘起论。十二支缘起论可以按顺逆次序不同，分为“流转缘起”和“还灭缘起”两种形式。“流转缘起”说的是生命生死轮回一面，即“缘无明有行，缘行有识，缘识有名色，缘名色有六处，缘六处有触，缘触有受，缘受有爱，缘爱有取，缘取有有，缘有有生，缘生有老死、忧悲苦愁恼种种苦生。”“还灭缘起”说的是生命修行解脱的一面，即“无明灭故行灭，行灭故识灭，识灭故名色灭，名色灭故六处灭，六处灭故触灭，触灭故受灭，受灭故爱灭，爱灭故取灭，取灭故有灭，有灭故生灭，生灭故老死、忧悲苦愁恼种种苦灭。”(参看水野弘元《原始佛教》，第 34—54 页)

[2] 按指流转缘起第十二支的“老死、忧悲苦愁恼种种苦？”。

医苦

第三圣谛就是苦灭谛，证实了苦的疾患实际上是可以治愈的。尽管没有恒常的造业受果的人格，无我的过程也是可以获得改造并且得到救治。这就是说，人可以获得解脱。在四圣谛中，灭谛的内容相对平淡，似乎是仅仅为了凑足医疗诊断的四句格式而设立的。可是，它还是针对着佛陀时代流行的一套主张而发。这套主张犹以邪命外道(Ājīvikas)[1]为其代表。邪命外道认为，转世投生是一个自动而机械的过程：每一个有情，不论其造了何种业，必须在一切可能的地方转世投生一次，最终命定会证得解脱，所以任何特殊的努力都是不必要的。一个邪命外道很可能问过佛陀，他自己的诸法缘起说最后是不是也会得出和邪命派一样的结论。这些因缘不管多么复杂，难道最后不是也得像一座部件复杂、上满发条、嘀嘀嗒嗒走起来的闹钟一样，达到一个在机械上早已预先注定的结果吗？[2]佛陀回答这个问题说，尽管每个人的禀赋和能力都是由前世的环境所造成的，可是人仍有能力在今生有限的范围内自觉地改变自己的行为。每个人可以按照四圣谛论所描述的，对世界作如实的观照，以求驱散心中的无明。人也可以遵照佛陀所宣讲的出家人中庸有节的修道生活来控制自己的贪欲。

第四圣谛是苦灭道圣谛。在这个圣谛里面，可以说是包含着(医苦的)药方，或者说医术。它通常被说成是八支正道(the

[1] “邪命外道”为拘舍罗·末迦黎子所创学派，是佛陀时代“六师外道”之一。汤用彤《印度哲学史略》(第46—47页)：“拘舍罗乃一坚持命运论者，如耆那教经谓拘舍罗曾曰：无人力，无作，无力，无精进，无人势，一切不变，均系前定。……我如是见——凡已完成未完成或将完成者，须经八百四十万大劫。于此期中，均须依次转生，七次为天上神，七次世间入无想胎，七次世间入有想胎，而终须七次再生于不同之身体，而于此轮回除尽五业三业半业之效用，各依十万六万六百之比例——如此乃达完成。”

[2] 汤用彤《印度哲学史略》(第47页)引佛经曰：“以如是斛量苦乐，于轮回中，不可变换，无可增减，无可多少，如捆缕丸，缕尽便住。”

Noble Eightfold Path)[1]，可是在经律当中，也已经被方便地划分成"戒"(discipline or morality，巴利语 *sīla*)、"定"(meditation，巴利语 *samādhi*)、"慧"(wisdom，巴利语 *paññā*)三学。所谓"戒"者[2]，就是一种闲寂(pacific)、诚实(truthful)、正直(upright)、彻底检束身心(thoroughly disciplined)的生活方式，不伤害自己和他人。对佛陀的僧徒来说，这就意味着要过一种乞食、甘于贫困(却非自苦)、独身不娶、温和端方的生活。尽管佛陀和他断欲出家的弟子们，制定了一整套与佛教原则相应的戒律，可是这套戒律从根本上说也许和佛陀开始求道时所守的戒律没有多大的差别，这套戒律受到了当时沙门出家者团体中流行的道德理想的启发。

八正道的第二部分是定学。一部分禅定和戒律相关，诸如努力制御六根，不做失德之事，培养善良、饶益、善巧的心境，并带着这种心境去做事。与此相对，就是不仅要避开恶行，而且要避开恶的心境，这种恶的心境不会使头脑清楚，只会使其愚痴。在这个背景之下，定学基本的技巧，就是使意识集中，再辅以平等的心境，而这种禅法的控御，就为止观打下基础。可是，止观的修行，不全是坐于闲寂之处。因为，它还要求有一个总的态度，就是自我忆念，意识明了，对周围的环境、内心的经验和自己的业果每天每夜每时每刻保持注意。[3]当佛陀的

[1] "八支正道"又称"八正道"，为组成道谛的主要内容，依次为正见、正思维、正语、正业、正命、正精进、正念、正定（参看水野弘元《原始佛教》，第 64—71 页）。但是，本书讲述道谛，并不依八正道，而是根据三学。

[2] 水野弘元《原始佛教》(第 87 页)："戒学，是修行方法中，特别对情意性、习惯性的恶德，加以矫正而令趣向善德的方法。正如戒（*sīla*）有习性、习惯之意，不论是善或恶，习惯性行为皆称为戒。然通常恶的方面称之为破戒或恶戒，单称戒时，即指善的习惯性行为。故以世俗的意义而言，戒亦可谓是道德的行为。因为 *sīla* 相当于英文的 moral 或 ethic 之故。"

[3] 水野弘元《原始佛教》(第 71 页)："正定是正确的禅定，是精神经常统一之意。但这并不一定仅意味着坐禅时之特别的精神统一，而是在日常生活中，热衷于某事而达到三昧之意。……吾人不必特别训练正定，只要热衷于某事，埋头做时，自然可得正定的状态。"

弟子被授以这套禅法时，它已经较为系统化了，可是佛陀在他的求道过程中，却是很不系统地修成了这套禅法。八正道的这前两个部分，可以被想象成一套技艺，特别是像画家所习的那些技艺，比如打草、填彩、绘景等等。就像这些技艺最后都要融汇成绘画活动这一更大的技艺一样，所有戒律和禅定的单独修炼，都会融汇成一种单一的醒觉而安静的生活方式。

可是，画师的各种能力必须和感受性，也就是一种观看世界的方式相结合。并且，与此相似地，八正道的第三部分——慧学——也要求一种全新的观察经验的方式。这种新的观察的一个方面，很简单，就是对世界作如实的观照。对佛陀来说，就是通过四圣谛和缘起来观照：以如是如是的方式，经验生灭无常，没有恒常的自我，为缺憾所苦；以如是如是的方式，爱欲不断地产生苦恼。

智慧的另外一个方面，就是养成一种从禅定的平等心境中产生的新态度，心灵的一种新习惯。现在可以置身于经验之外，看出经验中的种种危险，然后转身离开。当转瞬即逝的快乐和渴望闪现在心灵的眼睛前面时，可以观察它们，而不再追求它们。对这种感受性最简要的陈述，大概要算这条普通的戒规了，这就是僧人“不应耽着于当下，不应取著各种境界，应该随意舍弃”。或者这一段：

> “(比丘)于自心，不应妄构画，希求而创造，身心诸境界。亦不求造就，境界之毁灭。世间中万法，以不希求故，即不取著法，以不取著故，身心不焦虑，缘此是比丘，内心常寂静。”(《中部经典》，第3卷第244页)[1]

一个人既不要希求未来的经验，也不要黏着于现在的经验，而是要让它们很容易地从指缝间溜走。

[1] 此处引自巴利语《舍弥村经》，译文是译者根据本书作者的引文翻译的。

佛陀对这一点有过详细的开示。在《蛇喻经》(《中部经典》,第1卷第22种)中,佛陀曾说"筏喻法"(the Simile of the Raft)。他举例说,有一个人被大水所阻,就用水边散置的木头扎了一个木筏,然后安全地漂到了彼岸。佛陀问道,如果此人到达彼岸后,将此木筏载于头上,带着它一起赶路,那么他这么做合理吗?答案当然是不合理了。佛陀接着说,执著于戒律和禅定所创造的有益的心境,同样也是不合理的,更不用说执著于无益的心境了。[1](这当然就假设了通过习惯和修炼,有益的修行已经变成了僧人的第二天性。)这也同样适用于思想:沉溺于对过去或者未来、永恒、世界的命运等等问题的玄想和理论当中,就是使自己迷失在"邪见的稠林"(a tangle of views, a thicket of views)之中。相反,人应该凭借从止观中获得的洞见,以简单而直接的方式观照世界。这种洞见就好像艺术家观察事物的方式一样,包含了良好的修养,却又是最直接的,完全不受反思的干扰。此时,人就逗留在一种敏锐的感受中,佛陀在他对解脱境界最有诗意的一篇描写中曾经描述过这种感受。其中提到的瀑流是指生死的苦流:"我住时沉,求时溺,我如是不住不求,以渡瀑流。"(《相应部经典》,第1卷第1页)

开悟

[1] 引自巴利语《蛇喻经》,参看《南传大藏经》第444页。原文是:"诸比丘,譬如有人,步行通衢,乃见大水,横流于道,此岸危险,而多恐怖,彼岸安稳,无有恐怖,然自此岸,达诸彼岸,既无渡舟,又无桥梁。彼乃思念:'是大横流,此岸危险,而多恐怖,彼岸安稳,无有恐怖,然自此岸,达诸彼岸,既无渡舟,又无桥梁。然我唯有汇集草木枝叶,编制棹筏,依是渡筏,劳以手足,当得渡于安稳彼岸。'诸比丘,于是彼人,汇集草木枝叶,编制棹筏,依是棹筏,劳以手足,而得安全,得渡彼岸。达彼岸已,旋作是念:'此筏益我良多,我依此筏,劳以手足,安全到岸。于戏,我将以此筏,或载于头,或荷于肩,如是而行。'诸比丘,于意云何,彼人于彼筏,如是而行,为作所应作否?(诸比丘言"不也世尊")诸比丘,彼人对于彼筏,应为如何。诸比丘,缘是已渡得达彼岸之彼人者,应作如是念:'此筏益我良多,我依此筏,劳以手足,安全到岸。于戏,我将置此筏,或曳置岸上,或沉浸水中,然后始行。'诸比丘,彼人为如是故,是于彼筏,作所应作。诸比丘,我亦如是,为令度脱,令毋执著故,说筏喻法。诸比丘,由是汝等,实知筏喻故,法尚应舍,何况非法。"

这就是涅槃，“吹灭”存在中的一切欲望和忧患。[1]佛陀宣称，思索开悟者和解脱者的心境，只会招致混乱和疯狂。可是，虽有这样有用的劝说，这一类的思辨还是在后来的佛教史上扮演了重要的角色。因为在我们评价佛教是如何赢得我们的肯定的过程中，思索开悟者和解脱者的心境是必不可少的。佛典中对开悟的叙述，使人产生了这样一种印象，即一个人要么已经开悟要么未开悟，要么已经解脱要么没有解脱，从一种状态转换到另一种状态，完全是在刹那之间完成的，而且是不可逆转的。况且，导致佛教在佛陀灭后数代之间发生第一次部派分裂的问题之一，就是关于已获解脱者[2]有无退转(至少暂时的)的问题。出于同样的原因，晚期学派对开悟到底是顿还是渐的问题，也发生过争论。

这些难题指向的，就是佛典中用来描写这类不可思议的事情时所用语言的问题：为了达到叙述上的一些目的，在讲述佛陀开悟的史话时，就需要一种突然而带戏剧性的转变。如果说开悟只是一件获得确信，知道自己“所作已办”之事，那么这种突然而带戏剧性的转变也许是可能的。佛陀发现，他完成了解脱的一切要求，不再需要继续向前奋力苦斗了。可是，解脱是一件不同的事，因为我们这里正在谈的，是人的性格上的一种翻天覆地的转变。这种转变，好像不可能像佛典中描述的那样，不需要在逐渐控御了自己的行为和思想的全部领域以后就发生。在这方面，开悟需要继续被证实，在此后的经验过程中，还得表现出实际的效果。我们可以承认，佛陀是在一个月圆之夜开悟的，可是他获得解脱却是一件漫长的，需要用他的一生

[1] 水野弘元《原始佛教》(第 17—18 页)：“涅槃（梵语 Nirvâna，巴利语 Nibbana）一语，是由‘吹灭’(Nir—va) 之意而来，系指贪欲、嗔恚、愚痴等烦恼之火被吹灭的状态而言。” 巴利语《法句经》第七《阿罗汉品》第 90 颂：“道尽（生死轮回尽）无忧患，解脱于一切（五蕴），漏尽无结缚，炽盛欲火灭。”(第 15 页)

[2] 即南传佛教最高果位“阿罗汉”。

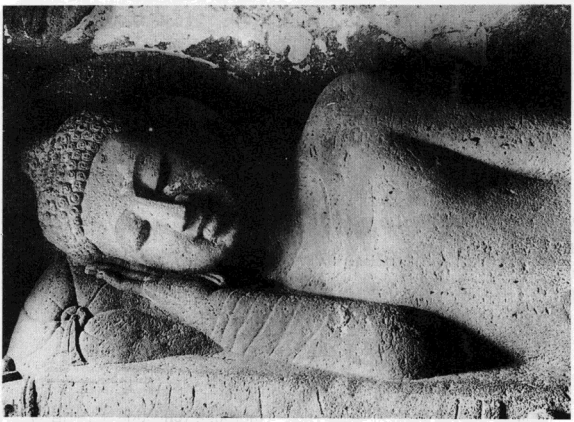

图3. 在这座渊寂的塑像里，佛陀刚刚入于般涅槃。佛灭之后归趣如何，如同世界有始无始一样，是佛陀说过的不能获得有意义回答的问题之一。涅槃之境，超过人的思议，超过生死轮回。

来完成的大事。

关于解脱的各种理论

佛陀关于解脱的概念究竟是否可信或者可行，我想这个问题的答案一定是肯定的。对于解脱结束了死和转生之苦这个主张，我们确实说不出什么有用的东西来。我们无法为这个主张作严密的论证，也拿不出什么有力的证据。但是，这个主张却和——这带有典型的佛陀的风格——另一个更加具体的主张有关系。这个主张就是，解脱在今生就可以证得。关于这个问题，佛典还留下了不少可供讨论的根据。佛陀从未主张过，在入土之前解脱可以终止生理上的痛苦。这是因为，痛苦被认为属于身体的本性(而成就了"四禅"和"四空处"的人，却可以依靠禅定来暂时缓解自己的痛苦)。佛教修行所要一步一步消除的是心理上的痛苦，还有生存中外来的和不必要的忧悲苦恼。还有，关于修行的效果，佛典给了我们一个相当清楚的观念：佛陀的僧徒"于过去无忧，未来不欣乐。现在随所得，颜色常鲜泽。"(《相应部经典》，第1卷第5页)[1]

精勤修行背后的原则，就是旨在"颜色常鲜泽"地活在当下。佛陀把这种原则称为"如理作意"(thorough reflection，巴利语为*yoniso manasikāra*)。"如理作意"者，乃是这样一种践行法门，就是对每一中道行会招致的果报作用心而又深细的思量。"诸比丘，以依正思维故，未生诸漏不生，已生诸漏捨离。"(《中部经典》，第1卷第7页)[2]实际上就是讲，任何修行于带来长远的改变之外，必得带来当下的福报。这里面当然存在着一种张力。

[1] 《杂阿含经》第36卷，第995经。这段话意为：(佛教的僧侣)对过去已经发生的事没有忧愁和悔恨，对未来还没有发生的事不存希望，他们只生活在当下之中，因此他们经常容光焕发，神采奕奕。

[2] 此处引自巴利语《一切漏经》，参看《南传大藏经》，第330页。

从一方面来说，僧侣的生活是艰苦的，他必须从事的修行，开始时都让人感到不舒服。可是在另一方面，所修诸行因为并没有被设作苦行，所以修行效果的出现不会被无限期地延迟，它们在一定时期内就会获得验证，而且还被认为有益于众生。应对繁难之事现在都成了僧侣们的第二天性，这对他们来说不是一种痛苦，而是一次静观身心经验的本性和要求的难得机会，除此之外，这种静观确实还能带来一种心智上的快感。佛经中反复叮咛说，这样一种生活不是逃避现实，而是一种神圣而英勇的职志。这种评价支持着僧侣们的修行，他们转而又受到身边同修的肯定，还从周围的社会获得对他们这种勇毅精神的赞赏。

而且，对修行法门中一门的掌握，不仅自身可以带来功德，而且也被认为可以自然而然地进一步引向纯熟。比如说，僧人如果戒律精严，做任何事就能无悔，远离悔心和焦虑。由于一个人于人于我皆能不害，他的良心清净，趋于寂静，以此为本，到时侯禅定必能成就。如是渐次纯熟，就被认为可以达到一个顶点，远离一切客尘烦恼。

从我们的观点来看，这个过程重要之处，在于它是自然的。在像佛陀这样的计划中，最难处理的问题之一就是，一方面要把欲望当成敌人，而另一方面，解脱这一最终目标偏偏又是僧人不得不欲愿向往之事。怎样才能放下这种对解脱的热切欲望呢？按照佛陀所说，人当以当下修行的所缘——比如说持守戒律——为愿望的目标，结果自然就会成就。“修行精纯，严持戒律者，无需作意，‘让我离悔’。诸比丘僧，但持戒律，自然离悔，法性如是”(《增支部经典》，第5卷第2页)。[1]当一个人一

[1] 这段话意为：对于一位修行有素、严格持守戒律的僧人来说，没有必要有意地去想，“让悔恨远离我吧”；诸比丘啊！持守戒律就可以远离悔恨，这是事物的本性所决定的。

边愿欲，一边放松身心进入修行的每一阶段时，第二个阶段就会水到渠成地准备好了。最后一个阶段的证得，完全不是靠一味地去愿欲，而是靠现在已经成为习惯的放松身心。

关于人的素质，佛陀的看法是，可以通过止观对它作有成效的研究，并且可以通过修行佛法来彻底改变它。这一观点的内在协和性是很难挑剔的，可是我们最终的评断必须建立在经验之上，建立在经验的证据之上。在今日的斯里兰卡，我曾对若干阿兰若僧[1]做过实地调查，只能提供一点自己的经验。（我发现）很多和尚明显都是身体健康，少欲知足，"颜色鲜泽"，"心无懊悔"，这一点本身就给我留下了很深的印象。可是，说得公正一些，这也许只是平静的生活带来的结果。我和这些僧人相处时间不长，而只有常年相处才能亲眼观察和理解修行佛法是如何慢慢地改变了他们的性格。

那些看上去直接从事佛法修行的僧人，一共有三个特点。第一个特点是，他们对名为"功课"的事会很有兴趣，也可以说是很执著地投入进去。所谓"功课"，就是他们每小时每分钟都在做的一些日常工作——习经、用心饮食、卫生、坐禅、经行（exercise）[2]——他们生活的全部内容就是这些。他们深思熟虑地完成着这些日常的任务，从中很明显地获得了极大的满足感。第二个特点是，有些僧人也会在一些长期的工程（比如修建林中的禅舍）中投入很大的精力，花费掉他们生命中的大量时光。

[1] "阿兰若"就是"森林"的意思，是佛教或其他教派修行禅定或修行苦行的地方。

[2] 金克木在《天竺旧事》中写道（《梵竺庐集》乙《天竺诗文》. 南昌：江西教育出版社，1999 年. 第 319 页）："在鹿野苑的斯里兰卡（吉祥楞伽）的和尚过午不食，只饮一碗牛奶，到了傍晚，诵经声一停，便出来'散步'。这大约是佛教经典（律）中往往提到的佛和弟子们的'经行'。不过缅甸的和尚并不天天走，中国的和尚从不参加。那时住在鹿野苑的贲弥老居士也遵守同样的戒律习惯，到傍晚就拿起杖来上大路。我经常陪着他走。那不是中国古人的'行散'，所以本不应当叫做'散步'。那是一言不发飞快地走路，是印度式，不是中国式。"

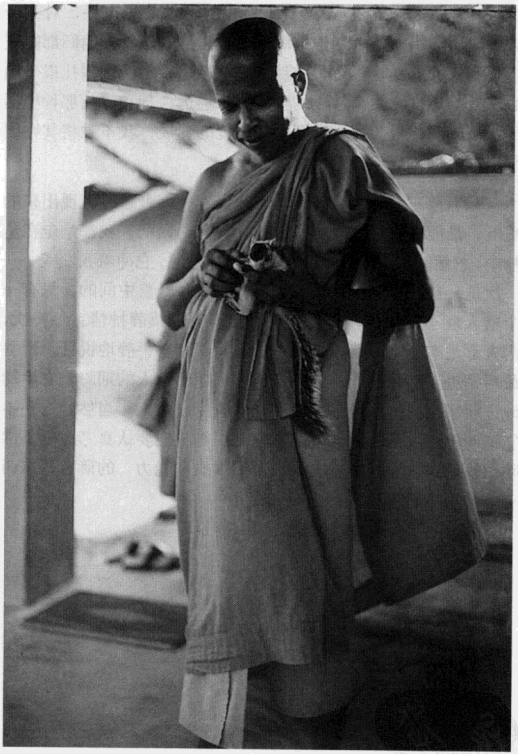

图4. 斯里兰卡的阿兰若僧与丛林中的野生动物和睦相处。他们深知一切有情〈比如这只大松鼠〉都不能逃于怖畏和困穷，所以都以慈忍对待他们。图中人物为阿兰若僧喜吉祥比丘，在拙著《吉祥楞迦岛的阿兰若僧》一书最后一章中，我讲述了他勤苦而有价值的一生。

可是，(在这么做的过程中)他们却没有任何的焦虑感，对其努力工作所产出的结果，也都保持比较漠然的态度。他们都能获得相当大的成功，但对于成功却完全不感兴趣。这些扎根于内心深处的态度，距离常人的生活非常遥远，却和佛教那种生活于当下的理想极为接近。而这些态度的养成，我不难将其归因于出家修行。

只有第三个特点，就是僧人在面对林间野兽时表现出来的勇气，最能使我相信修行是有效的。有两回吧，我都是走在丛林中，忽然间和一只被惊吓的野兽迎面遭遇，它冲着我发威——一次是野猪，另一次是大象——挡在我和野兽中间的，只有一个僧人瘦小的身体，和他那种岿然不动的镇静神情。每一次，僧人都是态度坚决而不带攻击性地对着野兽平静地说话，野兽最后钻进了丛林深处。这种行为远远超出常人的期盼，它生动地证明了修习佛法可以怎样深刻地改变一个人。当然，这还不能证明佛法就是真理。可是，它却引得我们要认真考虑一下佛陀的哲学，这种哲学对人的素质的本质和能力，的确有些东西可以教给我们。

第五章

弘法和圆寂

从长远来看，佛教获得了惊人的成功。它变成了世界性的宗教，直到今天还盛行于全球人口最稠密的整个东亚和东南亚大陆地区，而且现在还在往西方传布。可是，只要我们稍微仔细看一下就会发现，佛教的成功不能简单地解释为是真理的胜利前进。佛陀在世时，以及此后的数世纪中，佛教在印度平等地与各个宗派相互竞争。直到公元第一个千年的中期，也就是佛陀圆寂十到十五世纪之后，佛教才在亚洲其余地区牢牢地站稳脚跟。然而此后不久，它却从印度本土渐渐消失。佛教史可以划分为若干时期，每一个时期都有不同的社会、经济和政治的因素在起作用。对佛教来说，这些因素经常都是外在的。所以，就算我们都承认佛法充满洞见并且切实可行，可是仅仅这些优点本身还不足以被认为是佛教历次获得成功的原动力。

然则佛教的确有其自身的特点，这些特点虽不至于积极地推动了佛教的远播，但至少使其传播变得可能了。这些特点的证据可以在以下事实中发现，就是凡在佛教传入的地区，它都能比较容易地与当地其他的宗教传统相融合。佛教在古印度和斯里兰卡与古印度教[1]共存，到了汉地和道教(Taoism)与儒教

[1] 这里作者用“古印度教”(archaic Hinduism)，是指古代的婆罗门教，以和婆罗门教经过发展和改革后形成的“印度教”(Hindusim)相区别。

(Confucianism)并存，传至中国西藏和苯教(the Bon Religion)[1]并存，在日本和神道教(Shinto)共存。佛教如今又在东方适应了马克思主义的发展，在西方和自由的人道主义以及有自由倾向的基督教相融合。在所有这些环境中，佛教徒能够一方面为了达成若干世俗、宗教或民事的目的而坚守原住民的信仰，同时又可以保持佛教对心性和人类行动的最终目标所持有的根本主张。换句话说，佛教身上很少传教型宗教所特有的那种蛮横。佛教从根本上说是宽容的、四海一家的、随遇而安的。所以，当面对自己无法控制的某类环境所造成的机遇时，它可以很好地适应。

这种随遇而安性是基于佛法中三个互相联系的特点。第一个特点是，它完全是诉诸人人共喻的人情，比如对苦与乐的感受能力，自利和利他的能力。当然，你也可以反对说，印度其他的教派，当然还有其他世界性的宗教，都体现了类似的诉诸人性的努力。第二个特点就是，在佛陀身上，这种普世主义的纲领完全是抽象的，所以它才能真正做到普世主义。我们可以在好些地方看到这种发挥作用的抽象性，比如佛陀对四禅的描述。这种描述和许多禅修体系以及各种不同的禅修目的都是一致的。在同样一种精神下，佛陀对智慧福德的看法是既不反对也不宽恕印度那时刚形成的种姓制度，他只是抽象地谈论人的行为，其用语完全和种姓的存在与否无关。不论在种姓社会之内，还是在种姓社会之外，佛教都可以生存。第三个特点是，这种抽象性在佛法中还总与一种有意保持的节制性有关，这种节制性体现在应用佛法于个人经验结

[1] “苯教”又称“苯波教”，是佛教传入前在西藏流行的一种原始宗教，最初流行于后藏阿里一带，后来向西向东传布到西藏各地。苯教崇奉天地、山林、水泽的神鬼精灵和自然物，重祭祀、跳神、占卜、禳解等仪式。佛教传入后，苯教曾与佛教长期斗争。8世纪后，由于吐蕃王室兴佛抑苯，苯教势力渐衰。苯教后来吸收了佛教部分教理，改佛经为苯经，藏传佛教也吸收了苯教的若干教理和仪轨。

构之时。对于世界上的很多问题，佛陀完全拒绝发表任何意见。因此，一方面生活在完全不同的文化当中，对世界持有完全不同观点的人，都能在佛法上达成一致意见，而另一方面，佛教徒也可以在历史发展的过程中在佛陀的教法上面增益各种完全不同的法门，这些法门来自对当地传统和环境的适应。

佛教和在家众

可是，还有一个根本的难题未能澄清。我在前面对于佛法的描述，只限于对一小部分自愿并且能够全身心地从事出家修行的僧人而说的。可是，由于佛教是被整个整个的民族所接受的，所以这就意味着，接受佛教的还有不"舍家修出家行"的在家众。佛教是如何从一种少数人的教法发展成一种面对大众的教法呢？这种精英分子的启示，有什么可以传达给世俗大众的呢？这些问题的解答表现在佛陀成道后的生涯中。

对佛陀成道前和成道时的生活最可信赖的描述，见于若干字数稀少且内容简单的经文之中。这些经文好像是佛陀在谈论亲身的经历，无论在时间上相距多远，都可以远溯到佛陀对弟子亲口所说的教法中。接受这一点，相对还是很容易的。与此相比，叙述佛陀成道后生活的最古传说(我在这里和后边所谈的都是指《律藏·大品》的开头部分说的)都是以第三人称来叙述的，这些传说明显是在佛灭后若干世纪中成形的，充满了带神话色彩的细节，因此不大可信。可是，它们至少还是传达出佛陀的个人解脱是如何演变成一种对世界民众的传教事业。

佛陀弘法事业的开端被披上一层特别神秘的外衣，包裹在传奇故事当中。当佛陀正在独享法乐(the consequences of his discoveries)的时候，他认为世间众生被无明所覆，要对他们宣

讲妙法，只会徒劳无功，不会有任何的利益。就在这时，梵天现身了。[1]如佛教传说所特有的那样，此时现身的梵天仅仅是一个跑龙套的角色，他可以起到支持人的自我转化这个中心情节的作用。[2]他请佛陀看在还有"眼中尘垢较轻的有情"的份上出来说法度人，这些有情一定能够很好地回应佛陀的法音，并且知感佛恩。佛陀慷慨地答应了梵天的劝请，出于"愍念有情"(out of compassion for creatures)，准备广传他医苦的良方。被佛教徒视作给世间冥暗带来光明的决心，就是这样产生的。

这件事的真相已不可考，可是这个传奇性的小插曲却给人带来很大的启发。首先，它指出佛陀成熟教义的一个基本特点，那就是佛法体现的主导价值不单单是解脱，还有作为第二个主导价值的慈悲，也就是对他人的关怀。在佛陀的道德严肃性中，在他倾向于使用道德词汇，并且倾向于依照心理活动对他人产生的影响来描述心识活动的习惯中，的确都寓含着慈悲。对佛陀来说，慈悲和解脱密切相关，是人性的目标和主要的情操。可是，在上述的传奇中，慈悲的意义与它和它的附随物在后来

[1] 这里要讲的是梵天劝请佛陀说法的故事："诸比丘，如是我起斯念：'我所得斯法，甚深难见，启示甚难，以寂静、殊妙、绝虑、微妙故，唯智者之所能知。此诸众生，实深癡好于执，爱着于执，欢喜于执。然于癡好于执，爱着于执，欢喜于执此诸众生，而于斯事，谓即缘是缘生（法），欲见实难。若斯事者，谓是静止一切行，捨离一切依，灭渴爱，去贪欲，诸灭灭已，而成涅槃，斯事难见。我虽欲说法，然诸众生若莫能解，是徒使我疲劳，徒使我困惑耳。'……诸比丘，我心以如是思虑故，宁趣无为，勿趣说法。诸比丘，时有娑婆主梵天，以心知我心中所念，彼作是念：'世界实将亡，如来……心趣无为，不趣说法故。'诸比丘，是娑婆主梵天，犹如壮士，伸其屈臂，屈其伸臂顷，从梵天界灭，现于我前……偏袒一肩，向我合掌，作是言曰：'世尊！世尊当宣说法，……亦有尘垢轻者有情，不闻法故，则便衰退，彼等（若闻法）者，当了知法。'……时我知梵天恳切之愿，及愍念有情故……（同意说法）"（这里引自巴利语《圣求经》，参看《南传大藏经》第471—472页）

[2] 这句话的意思就是说，天神并不是外在于佛陀的一种力量，而是体现了每个人心中固有的那种能够改变自己的潜在力量。水野弘元《原始佛教》（第55页）："这可能是把起于佛陀心中的思想，以梵天恳请的形式表现出来。"

详细开演的教法里所具有的意义相比，还是比较狭隘的。在这里，慈悲只是佛陀身上所具有的个人特点，是他决定弘法的充分动机。而且，它之为慈悲，所针对的目标是特殊的，那就是传播佛陀出家修行的法门。

在佛陀传奇的这一部分里，很多内容都与这种慈悲的结果有关。这种慈悲的结果，就是成立了追随佛陀的僧团。佛陀(决定弘法后)不再独处，渐次云游至波罗奈城，住于仙人堕处(Isipatana)鹿野苑(the Deer Park)[1]中。他在那里遇到了开悟前的五位同修。佛陀放弃苦行后，五人以为他违背修道的初志，乃弃之而他往。[2]佛陀对五人初次说法，此即后来的《转法轮经》，其中讲到了中道和四圣谛。五人接受了佛法，成为佛陀的弟子。从那时起，很多来自沙门和苦行者团体的人都皈依了佛陀。佛陀的很多次说法，都是面对这些沙门团体。这些团体在当时流动性很大，极易从一个师傅改投到另一个师傅的门下。从历史上说，这一点还是很有可能的。可是，现在最要紧的还是建立一个崭新而持久的团体，就是由追随佛陀的徒众组成的"僧伽"[3]。这时的确可以感到，以前普遍存在的流动团体，正在各处定形成独立的有自己法规的宗教社团。

可是，佛陀的听法众十分广大，不限于宗教的专门家(the religious virtuosi)。在五比丘之后皈依佛陀的弟子，是长者子(a rich young layman)耶舍(Yasa)。耶舍一天清晨醒来，看到身边醉卧着昨夜和他一起饮酒取乐的娼女，突然心生嫌厌。他闷闷不乐地游逛到鹿野苑，在那里正好碰见了佛陀。佛陀向他开

[1] 鹿野苑是佛教圣地，属于中印度波罗奈城，在今瓦腊纳西城西北约十公里处，传为佛陀成道后最初说法(《转法轮经》)和收徒(五比丘)的地方。

[2] 传说佛陀出家时，其父净饭王多方劝阻无效，就派五名亲信随侍。五人依次为阿若憍陈如、阿说示、跋提、十力迦叶和摩诃男拘利。

[3] "僧伽"(*sangha*)是佛教名词，意译"众"、"和合众"、"和合僧"等，也就是僧团的意思，一般四个人以上就可以算作一个僧伽。

示了四圣谛法，于是耶舍舍离世间，加入佛陀和他的小僧团。耶舍是商主之子，按照旧传所记，他的四个朋友也出家成为比丘，他们都来自“波罗奈城的商主家庭”。然后又有五十“乡村童子”出家。这些人成为新僧团的核心，开始把佛法四处宣扬。因为，在佛传传奇中，佛陀曾命这些比丘“为利益安乐诸有情，以对世间的慈悲，外出遍游世间……”。可是，他们不是创建俗人教会(a church of laymen)的抗议宗福音派教徒(Protestant evangelists)，因为他们“所弘扬者，为无上圆满，至极清静，出家梵行”。

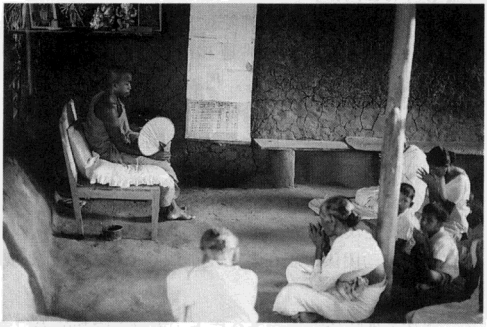

图5. 一位斯里兰卡的阿兰若僧对居士众说法。和佛陀时代的求道沙门一样，佛陀的僧徒在佛灭后两千多年，还在向他们身边的人做“法施”[1]。

这个故事的某些内容听上去是可信的。在佛教和城镇商人之间，存在着一种有择亲和势(elective affinity)[2]。商人属于复

[1] 佛教视“施舍”为积累功德的方法，“施舍”分为两种，即“财施”和“法施”。“财施”是在家众向出家众施舍财物和饮食，而“法施”则是出家众向在家众说法。

[2] 化学用语，指有选择性的亲和力。关于佛教和商人之间的关系，请参看季羡林的长篇论文《商人与佛教》(《季羡林学术论著自选集》，北京：北京师范学院出版社，1991年，第416—538页)。

杂的文雅社会的主要建立者，这些人正是佛法的主要弘化对象。可是，佛法是一种普世的福音，除了商人之外，一定还有很多人——也许是那些“乡村童子”[1]——也加入了僧团。对独身生活的强调显得尤其可信，因为它传达了整个僧团的团体精神（*esprit de corps*），而且和很多经文传达的福音也相互一致。这个福音说的是，唯一真正合理的道路就是离弃世间。可是，就算这个不能妥协的目标是僧团的最初纲领，弘法活动还是在其自身内部保留着和在家众进行深入交往的可能性。因为，当化缘弘法的僧人横穿印度以及后来横贯亚洲沿着商道传法时，他们毕竟要靠在家众提供衣食才能免于饥寒。

在家众的确出现在佛传传奇中。耶舍出家后不久，他的父亲就来找他，正好碰见了佛陀，佛陀也对他说法。做父亲的也皈依了，对佛法“获得坚固信心”，“尽形寿皈依佛”。“皈依”二字今天正式代表了在家众对佛、法、僧三宝的信奉。很有可能，在这个传奇的编纂时代或者更早的时候，皈依二字就有了类似的意义。耶舍的父亲当时就以饭食供养佛陀。在耶舍父亲家里，佛陀说动了耶舍的前妻和母亲也“皈依”了。在耶舍父亲家发生的这些事，向我们传达出佛教出家众和在家众之间关系的要旨。在家众向出家众布施食物，提供物质上的支持，出家众转而以智慧和其他的精神资粮回赠在家众。人类学家最喜欢发现基于长期礼品交换而形成的各种制度。在这种交换中，两个群体通过互赠礼品建立了一种关系，它们还通过礼品的不断交换使这种关系继续保持下去。[2]这里就是一个很好的例子。在家众一方，对出家众慷慨“财施”，这是受到鼓励的。而出家众一方，像佛经中不断说到的，以“法施”为“最上施”。两方所施的东西虽然种类不同，但是它们的施舍都不讲价钱，双方通过

[1] 参看上文提到的“五十乡村童子”。

[2] 作者这里可能是在暗指法国社会人类学家马塞尔·毛斯（Marcel Mauss,1872—1950）写的研究赠礼的人类学名著《论赠礼》。

它们建立起永久的纽带。在这种互相交换的基础上，就形成了整个佛教的团体，也就是所谓的“四众”，包括了比丘众、比丘尼众(佛陀后来允许妇女出家)、居士众和居士女众。就是依靠这整个的团体，佛教才能获得永久的成功。

这样一来，佛法可以提供给在家众的，就是若干的精神资粮。可是，能够提供这些资粮的，不是只有佛教一家。资粮之一就是功德。这是一种看不见的报酬，是在家众只要靠供养出家众并聆听其说法就可以获得的。功德可以积累，保证一个人来世可以投生善处。精神上的功德积累越多，投生之处就会越好。因此，像僧人把解脱当作其崇高的精神目标一样，在家众也有相宜于他们的较低的目标，这就是所谓善趣[1]（以及希望自己最后能够托生在可以出家为僧证得解脱的环境中）。这是一个资助佛教僧团的好理由。可事实上这也是资助其他教派比如耆那教教团的一个好理由，因为这些教派有一套内容极为接近的功德观。

另外一种给予在家众的精神资粮是一种崇高的道德学说。这种学说由若干戒条组成，诸如不许说谎、不许杀人和不许偷盗，不许以邪命自活，不得增长贪、嗔、痴等有害的态度。[2]僧人严持戒律，检束身心，是人类美德的完美代表。可是，这种完美的基本原则，也可以落实到较低的生活层面上，亦即落实到适合于在家众生活的凡事必讲妥协的环境里。在这种环境中，在家众必须过他们谋生和产子的世俗生活。佛陀并没有独占这类教法，它们的新颖和流行，与当时社会生活中正在发展的各种城市化形式的相对新鲜性和广泛分布性有一定的联系。现在出现了商人，通过掌控金钱和贸易等物质工具，可以行有害他人之事。还出现了国家和军队，能够给人带来新的各种伤

[1] 所谓“善趣”(better rebirth)，比如生于国王家、生于大臣家、生于长者商人家、生于高贵种姓家等等。

[2] 这就是所谓的“居士戒”。

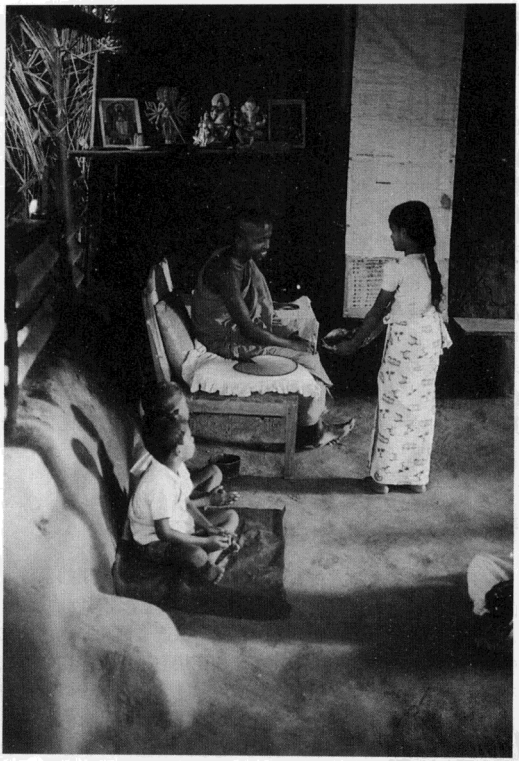

图6. 出家人说法讫，接受在家众的供养。僧人做“法施”，在家众提供衣食，从佛教僧团在古印度出现以来，僧俗之间的这种关系就一直对僧团提供着支持。

害。甚至还出现了专门以牺牲他人利益为能事的官职。而且，新兴城市中的生活要求原来没有自然的相互利益，以及相互之间没有共同传承的道德准则的各个集团，必须发明出具有最低互信度的共同生活方式。许多对新生活方式的适应，都是在和出家人无关的情况下产生的，可是却得由出家人赋予这种变化以形式，传达出它的呼声。他们体现了不害和安贫的美德(佛教僧侣甚至不能碰触金银)。他们不求任何官职。在弘法时，他们专门提倡那些美德，不管各家对其作何不同的理论解释，其实行定能使新的社会变得适于大家居住。

功德观和居士戒，不仅可以解释佛陀的成功，也可以解释沙门团体的成功。在古代印度，佛教也许很难说会显得比其他思想运动获得了更加明显的成功。单拿佛陀对在家众的教法来看，其实很多都可以在其他派别的学说里见到。可是，佛陀却综合利用了这些不同因素，使之发挥出全体大于部分总和的作用。这种综合来自佛陀倾向以践行的方式，亦即以巧匠譬喻的方式思考问题[1]，以及来自他对心理学解释的关注。

善巧

这种思维方式的关键，体现在一个他说法时常用的术语上面。这个术语就是“善巧”(*kusala*)。“善巧”这个词最初的意思，是“善于干什么”[2]，比如一个金匠善于锻造金饰品。这个词被佛陀借来，用它指禅定中的技巧。他还用它来泛指一切修持戒律和积累功德的技巧。在这个用法中，“善巧”也有道德上善的意思，就像我们说“他是个好人”，或者“那么做是对的”一样。的确，在很多种语境下面，“善巧”是恶的对立面，就像基督教中同样在善与恶之间作出界渭分明的区分一样。可是，对佛陀

[1] 引出下一节对“善巧”的论述。

[2] 参看智髻比丘的《南传字典》(*A Pali—English Glossary of Buddhist Technical Terms*. Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1994)，第 39 页。

来说，“善巧/善良”只有一种践行上的，而非玄学上的或者绝对的意味。这个术语已作废的核心意思，可以通过一种对我们来说早已不存在的意义(在古希腊人中这个意义仍然存在)传递出来：就像一个人可以擅长或者善于某种手艺一样，他也可以很会做人，这样他就可以算是善良的。[1]

通过对业的果报，特别是对业背后的态度或者说心理活动的果报进行“如理作意”，可以使这个术语变得鲜活起来。对佛陀来说，善巧有两方面的作用：一种是它的结果对自己有利，另一种则是对自己和他人同样有利。比方说向比丘施食这件事，它可以使人获得功德，而从佛教特别重视心性的观点来看，这种功德可以被看成是一种心理上的善德，一种对追求乐善好施这种善德很有助益的心境。可是，布施对于比丘来说也是善的，因为至少比丘可以借此机会得以果腹充饥。同理，修持戒律可以同时做到既能避免伤害别人，也能在自己身上培养善良/善巧的心境。我们习惯于认为，行善就是为了别人的利益而牺牲自己的利益。可是，对佛陀来说，行善既是自利也是他利。对比丘来说，重点本是放在自利上面，也就是解脱上面的，可是证得解脱的方法——即可以为人师范的戒行——却意外地获得了利他的效果。可是，这种思维方式很容易就可以掉转过来用于在家众身上：他们通过善待别人，可以达到善待自己的目的。这种推论进一步获得了如下学说的支持，这就是对别人做到善意、柔顺、真诚和无害，事实上也就是希望别人也能以同样的方式来对待自己：对别人好，才能指望别人对你好。通过如理作意和戒行的磨砺，佛教徒不论僧俗都可以在“当下和来世”获得对他们善巧的果报。

[1] 在巴利语中，“善恶”的“善”(*kusala*)字，其最初的意思是“聪慧”(clever)、“善巧”(skilful)、“擅长”(expert)，从这里衍生出“善良”(good)、“正确”(right)、“值得称赞的”(meritorious)等等意思。由于后面这种意思更多地被使用，反而使人们忘记了它最初的意思。我们中文里也有同样的问题，“善”这个词既有“善良”(比如“善心”)，也有“善于”(“善战”)的意思。

所以，佛陀对在家众宣说的教法和他关于出家众修行的想法之间有着紧密而有机的联系。但是，这种联系还不是仅仅限于戒律的层面之上。对佛教僧侣来说，修持戒律有助于禅心的培养。可是，对僧俗二众来说，某些心理技巧和态度的培养也会辗转增进戒律的修持。就是在这个关节点上，慈悲，也就是对他人的关怀，再一次引起我们的注意。这一回，慈悲成了必须靠禅定来培养的一种态度，或者一种指向他人福祉的价值。人改变他自己，不仅仅是为了解脱，也可以是出于爱。在佛典中，慈悲被分为三种：第一种是悲心(compassion proper)，可以被定义为同情他人之苦；第二种是随喜心(sympathetic joy)，就是对别人的幸事，自己也替他感到快活；第三种是慈心(loving-kindness)，这是佛教要培养的最重要的心境。佛教僧俗对慈心的培养，很好地表达在下引佛教古偈颂中：

> “无论何众生，脆弱或坚强，含摄皆无余，长形或巨大，中形或矮小，细微或粗厚。可见或难见，远方或近处，已生或将生，愿一切众生，心中常喜乐。
>
> 无论在何方，彼此不欺瞒，互不相藐视，勿存嗔恚心，期使他人苦。
>
> 慈心对众生，发展无量心，上下普四方，尽皆无障碍，泯除憎恨心，亦无敌对意。”
>
> (《经集》，第146—148偈，第150偈)[1]

这一段文字，将佛陀所定戒律所根据的态度浓缩成了一种情操，捕捉到了伴随在消极戒条背后的积极精神。不论是在比丘的修行中，还是在在家众所守的戒条中，慈心都是绝对必要的。因为对佛教徒而言，真正重要的是心理的活动，也就是意

[1] 此处引自巴利语《经集》(*Suttanipata*，即原文中缩写的“S”)中的《慈爱经》(*Mettasutta*)。译文采自台湾“原始佛法三摩地学会”印赠的巴利语、汉语合璧本《慈爱经 · 慈爱静坐法》(2005年4月修订4版，第7页、第9页和第11页)。

图和态度，而不是所造的业本身。这种慈心是绝对不分人我的，从它里面透显出出家人那种奥林匹斯山神一般的超然态度。人应该平等对待一切，不论贵贱与亲疏。就在这种普遍的情操中，佛陀的道德推论才有其位置，因为在对慈心的规定中，修禅者应"认自己与一切同体"(《增支部经典》，第2卷第129页)。这就是说，正如我被困于苦乐之中一样，其他人也是被困于苦乐之中；正如我愿意自己好一样，我也应该愿意别人都好。在佛化的世界中，慈心再加上拔苦的悲心(compassion for suffering)，将变成超越了家庭界限的社会情操的模范，变成一种独立不倚的价值。在后期佛教学术和思想中，这些情操变得极其重要，在价值上甚至超过了占据首位的解脱。

《伽蓝经》

佛陀对在家众所说的教法，可以从《伽蓝经》(《增支部经典》第1卷，第188—193页[1])中看出其经过汇编后的全部结构。伽蓝族(Kālāmans)是在恒河文明北部边缘生活的一支部族。据《伽蓝经》说，佛陀和一群比丘云游穿过这片地区，一群伽蓝族人听说佛陀来了，就跑到罽舍子村(Kesaputta)问他一个问题："有沙门和梵志来诣伽蓝，但自称叹己所知见，而訾毁他所知见，我等闻已，便生疑惑，此沙门梵志何者为实，何者为虚？"佛陀为他们解惑说法，这次说法常被后世引用以证明佛陀不崇尚教条主义，而是鼓励个人判断。他对伽蓝人这样说："不要轻信传闻，不要轻信传统，不要轻信传说，不要轻信学问，不要只倚赖推论或推断或深思，不要倚赖对此一说或彼一说的考虑和赞同，不要因为它看上去适当而相信，不要因为出于对某个苦行者的尊敬而相信"。[2]

[1] 勒同汉译《中阿含经》里的《伽蓝经》。

[2] 此处引用巴利语《迦蓝经》，译文部分参考了上引巴利语、汉语合璧本《慈爱经·慈爱静坐法》一书末尾(第28页)所附佛陀法语"羯腊摩经"。上文第三章中"亲证的价值"一节也曾引用这段经文，文字有详略的不同。

这不是向大家提倡随意的个人妄想，因为佛陀所推介的是他自己的道德推论，这种推论缘自其善巧和如理作意。佛陀深信，如果伽蓝人也能如此推论，他们每个人都会得出佛陀的道德学说：

> “若汝等能自觉，此法不善巧，彼法善巧，此法应呵责，彼法不应呵责，此法能引苦与恶，为智者之所诃毁，彼法能引福与乐，为智者之所称赞者……若汝等能自觉此，伽蓝人，汝等应断一道，而行另一道。”[1]

他们将要得出的道德学说很直截了当。那就是伽蓝人离杀，离不予取，不邪淫，不挑他人使陷灾难。这些戒规会十分自然地从伽蓝人的经验和他们对善巧的反思中产生。

首先，我们可以从这篇经文中，推断出某种时事性(topicality)。有理由相信，伽蓝族人和他们的邻居释迦族人，也就是佛陀的族人一样，曾经拥有一种独立的寡头共和政府，在记忆可及的过去，他们曾经也是一个相对自治的部族。可是，他们现在却受制于憍萨罗国国王，而释迦族人不久也要蹈其覆辙。在经济生活方面，伽蓝族人也可能隐隐感到了远方憍萨罗国首都的牵制。政治和经济方面的这些力量，正在迫使伽蓝族人摆脱其相对简单而封闭的氏族社会，把他们带进恒河文明的复杂世界之中。这些混乱又被新的文化形式弄得更加复杂。这些新的文化形式，就体现在恒河文明的信使，也就是那些沙门苦行者相互冲突的意见当中。

当然，对杀人、妄语、偷盗等等所悬的禁戒，对伽蓝族人来说不可能是全新的。他们自己祖先的文化里，一定也有类似的禁戒。很难想象，一个社会可以不以某种形式奉行这些价值标准，至少是以打动社会成员的某种形式，还可以存活下来。然而，像古代伽蓝族人这种社会的典型特征是，这样一些价值标准不是推论出来的，而是靠传统和习俗来维系的，并且借助

[1] 译文参考了汉译《伽蓝经》。

传说和仪式来使之变得惹人注目。在新的条件下，这些遗传下来的道德传统，却丧失了它们原来无可争议的主宰地位，这就为佛陀提出一种发源于人类生命最基本条件的新式道德推论提供了契机。佛陀所提倡的戒律，并非伽蓝族人所独有，而是源自人们都处于社会之中、都过着一种共同生活、并且都能推想自己和他人的目的这样一些赤裸裸的现实。佛陀提出的这种戒律，旨在适用于所有的条件。

但是，佛陀所设想的，还不仅仅是为伽蓝人的戒律寻找新的根据。因为这些禁戒不仅是为伽蓝族人的社会而立，而是为伽蓝族人可能会接触到的所有人而立，不论其是否是伽蓝人。伽蓝人已经和其他许多民族有所牵涉。小型社会或者较大社会里的小团体的典型做法是只认自己的成员为道德团体的组成分子。可是，伽蓝人现在被邀加入一个更加广大的世界，把所有的生命，当然也包括恒河平原的人民，都纳入了自己的道德团体。佛陀倡导一种普世的道德，适应了伽蓝人被迫接受的这种更具开放性的生活。

到此程度，佛陀为在家众所说法，是建立在他的道德推论之上的。可是，在《伽蓝经》中，这种道德推论又是更深地建立在他的教法和经验之上，建立在他对人的素质的分析以及他追求自我转化的计划之上。当他对比丘众说法时，佛陀强调苦的根本——贪、嗔、痴三毒——能陷人于自害。但当他对在家众说同样的法时，他转而强调三毒不仅害己，尤其可以害人。

> “若贪生起时，如何能不害？嗔痴生起时，如何能不害？若人心被染，贪嗔痴三毒，彼人杀盗欺，如何能免除？若人心不染，贪嗔痴三毒，杀盗欺等业，如何不免除？”[1]

在这段经文中，“害”既指害人，也指害己。如同“善巧”既能利己亦能利人一样，“害”既能害己也能害人。这一点是值得强调的，因为不仅西方人还有后期的佛教宗派，都因认定佛教

[1] 这一段经文是译者自己翻译的，它的出处待考。

不关心他人的利益，或者无视社会的存在，从而想弃绝佛法，或者想对佛法作出修正。[1]不错，如果权衡一下的话，佛陀对剖析个体经验的关注确实胜过对剖析社会的关注。可是，佛法总是认定，做人就是成为一种社会性的存在。

而且，关于在家众如何改善自己，以使他的心"不被征服"，佛陀的观点认为，不能单单仰赖如理作意。一方面，佛陀假设在家众身上存在理性的能力，这种能力如果得到正确的指导，就可以对道德问题作出善巧的解决。在家众能够合计出要做什么。另一方面，这种认为在家众具有理性能力的观点，只是整个故事的一部分，因为佛陀感到在家众也能够——在其身份所及的程度上——达到自我的转变。所以，在《伽蓝经》里，佛陀建议他们修持能够培养社会情操，特别是慈爱心的禅定。在家众通过修习这种禅定，可以把慈爱心施诸一切处所和一切有情，"与一切同体，无怨无嗔"。通过这种心理训练，迟早会使慈爱心成为一种经久不变的习惯和行为的动机。[2]

这里面包含了两种重要的意涵。第一，它意味着佛陀不仅

[1] 西方人想弃绝佛法，佛教晚期宗派（指大乘佛教）想修正佛法。

[2] 这就是所谓"慈爱静坐法"，是南传上座部僧俗二众最主要的修行法门之一，请参看巴利语、汉语合璧本《慈爱经·慈爱静坐法》（第25—27页）："佛陀开示了一种静坐法，称为慈爱静坐。此方法可以增进我们内心的安详与快乐。即使到了今天，能依法修行的人也都有同样的经验，就是此法非常有效而且可以产生立竿见影的效果。慈爱，就像是一位好母亲，甘捨性命来保护她唯一的儿子一般。如果你也能培养这样的心，来对待所有的人（不分阶级、性别、种族、贫富、贵贱、亲疏等），这时你的慈爱心就培养出来了，心量就可以无限地扩伸。慈爱，最显著的特色就是没有憎恨、嗔心及恶念，所以一个人如果培养慈爱，内心会变得更好，而且整个个性也会随着转变。一个心量大的人，才容易成就清净、平等、自在、解脱等的自然流露。……虔敬受持慈爱静坐法，会让你这一生不会伤害众生，而且会帮助别人。如果你修习慈爱静坐稍稍有一点点受用，你会发现自己比以前更快乐，内心起了改变（贪、嗔、痴等习气显著减少了，面对顺、逆境缘，其心动念的幅度显著减小了），以及别人对你的改变。所以建议你能够耐心地、有规律地在每天清醒的时刻，至少静坐几分钟。并奉劝诸位大德发心，在有生之年，受持本经以慈爱心对待一切众生。你将因而体会到多么的快乐和喜悦。"

向人推介为何行为要善巧，还指出时常不听管束的人性如何可以做到行为的善巧。佛陀是一个乐观主义者，因为他相信人是可以做到善巧而合理行事的。他同时也是一个现实主义者，因为他也知道要做到合理行事，必须得在情感上获得蜕变。一个人可以明白某个行为是好而善巧的，却不能把它实现出来。对一切人身上都会有的这种弱点，佛陀是有他充分的考虑的。第二，这种自我转化的修行，从其在原则上可以被每个人做到这个意义上说，是十分简易可行的。这一点十分重要，因为大部分的人类经验，尤其是超出佛教僧团这样与世隔绝的组织范围之外的那类经验，是无法控制它们使其为自己的目标服务的。伽蓝族人不但受制于自然界的变化，也日渐受制于社会的变迁。社会的变迁，是任何人都无法掌控的，甚至是任何人都无法完全了解的。可是，这里至少有一件事还可以有效地掌控：自己的各种习惯和动机。如果不能改变世界，一个人至少可以改变他自己。不错，对于在家众来说，修行一种法门，比如慈爱静坐法，其效果必须部分地依赖于他们先得成为认同这些价值的佛教团体的一员。但是，最终的努力，还是得靠个人自己，而且这个努力的核心也是自己。不论是远行到憍萨罗国首都，还是耕种祖先的土地，伽蓝人都一样可以很好地修持慈悲心。

《伽蓝经》在内容上也许时事性太强，可是正如佛陀所演说的，这部经像其他许多对在家众所说的教法一样，对于任何身处同样困境的人来说都是同样适用的。在这里，佛陀表现得很有现代感。这是因为，如同伽蓝人被席卷进恒河文明中一样，欲在我们当今的世界之中找到一个不被拖进更加广大、更加复杂、更加迷离的社会世界(social world)的民族，实在是十分困难。佛陀因其教法的普世性，乃能诉诸对一个复杂社会的体验中所产生的种种不同的可能命数，而对这种复杂性的经历，在我们身上至少也是和古印度人相同的。从表面上看，现在的人和那时的人一样，听凭种种不同的需要和价值的摆布。可是，

他们却具有一些共同之处：他们都能感觉到苦也能感觉到乐，能够害人也能够利人。

文化相对论

这种现代性确实与我们自己某些来之不易的观点是相应的。佛陀的独创性还表现在他意识到周遭文化的种种差异性上。比方说，他在教典里还能建议不同的族群应该各守其祖先的伦理和宗教。佛陀还发现，各个民族的价值观都是相对于他们自己的历史和文化而树立的。我们今天也发觉到，在不同的价值之间存在着无法归约的差异性。我们把这种差异性称作文化相对论，它的意思是说其他的社会不能按照我们的社会来加以评判。可是，如同文化相对论不能被我们生硬地理解为人们愿意按照什么价值标准来生活都可以，或者就算没有任何价值标准也行一样，佛陀主张人们应该遵循祖先的典范(ancestral standards)，只要这些典范与伦理的善巧(moral skilfulness)相一致就行。同样地，佛陀还教导说，人类个体不应被视作是彼此孤立的存在，我们应该看到人类个体之间存在着生死攸关的联系。这又和另一种现代的观点相吻合，就是我们日渐发觉个体不应该被孤立地理解，而是应该把他理解成是深陷在社会环境之中的存在。

还有另一种现代性，是佛陀所未有的，这就是对人类事务的政治维度保持最大的关切。佛陀的说法主要划定了三个关注的领域，这些领域加起来，就构建出佛陀所认识的人世本相。这三个领域分别是：一个个体对自己身心上所发生的事件的关注，对与他人面对面的人际关系的关注，以及对一切有情福祉的关注。对这三个领域，也就是心理上的，社会上规模较小的，以及一切众生的总体，佛陀想规定出诸法实相究竟如何以及应该如何。可是，他的这些描述和规定，对于人作为各种政治团

体的成员应该如何做事、如何表现，以及政治团体应该如何组织却甚少谈及。当然，正是由于这种对政治上具体事务的相对淡漠，也许后来促成了佛法在完全不同的政治环境中得以顺利地传布。

但是，这绝不是说，佛法缺乏政治的兴趣，没有任何政治的意涵。佛陀自己的偏好，就我们所能推断的，应该是像他的释迦族人所奉行的那种带平等主义色彩的寡头政体或者共和政体。我们之所以知道这一点，是因为在一部记述佛陀涅槃前生活的传记性经文[1]里，他对僧团的组织订下了一套条规，这些条规是和拔耆族(他们实行与释迦族类似的政体)的族规一起对照列举出来的。僧团(或者说族人)处理他们的事务要完全一致，他们的决定要全体通过，他们要尊敬并且依从长老。可是，当长老的观点与经律(或者族中的传统)发生冲突时，应该依从经律。假如这些寡头集团发展起来的话，我们也许就会拥有古代印度关于民主和公民权的各种理论了，就像古希腊留给我们的那些理论一样。可是，寡头集团很可能从未成为当时印度政府的主要形式。佛陀在世时，这些集团正处于逐渐消亡的过程当中，不久以后就完全销声匿迹。佛陀大部分的经历是和各个王国打交道，没有哪个国王愿意听到任何激进的政治思想。

这样一来，佛陀如果还想谈论政治的话，他能谈的就只剩下国王了。有很多的经文流传下来，它们取得现在这样复杂的文学形式，应该是在佛陀圆寂之后，可是有些极有可能代表了佛陀本人的见解。在这些经文中，他对国王的职权有过讨论。其主要观点是，国王和其他人没有什么两样，也应遵守道德的秩序，还应考虑什么在伦理上和社会上是善巧的。当出现了信仰佛教的国王之后，这些谈话被按照字面的意思建构成一

[1] 指巴利语《大般涅槃经》。

套佛教专有的圣王论。还有其他一些启示，比如有一处似在推荐国家资本主义(state capitalism)，鼓励国王资助各种企业，使人民生活兴旺富足。还有一处像是在推荐一种君权契约论(a contract theory of the monarchy)，说的是国王之所以能被选出，是因为他最英武、最善良、最能治理人民。可是，这些启示却被置于高度讽刺、甚至幽默的场景下，通常是佛陀对着一个子虚乌有的人物(比如一个叫利齿的婆罗门)讲一则虚无缥缈的故事，结果弄得佛陀远离了他似乎想要传达的启示。这种远离效果的造成，部分是因为佛陀是一个弃世者，他从解脱的角度俯视人间，所以就算是宏大的国家政务，在他眼中也会显得愚蠢而渺小。不过，佛陀的评论是很犀利的，暗示出他一定是一位目光锐利的政治舞台的观察家。

鉴于以往日之教行于当今之世每每令我们失望的经验，我们很有理由怀疑，任何一位往日的大师[1]，是否今天仍对我们保有其说服力和相关性。就佛陀来说，人们还可以继续驳斥说，他的佛法并非普世的，因为它建立在某些宇宙观(比如轮回说)之上，而西方人是不会接受这些宇宙观的。可是，正如我在前面努力说明的，佛陀哲学关心的事已经足以使其对人人合用，已足以把他带进西方的历史之中，西方人唯一还要做的——非常适当地——就是，为了最终接纳佛陀，他们必须扩展对其自身历史的看法，超越狭隘的先入之见。佛陀最关心人的身心基础，以此为本人类才能达到自我的转变。这样的艺能(mastery)，我们决不能错失。佛法适应了一个充满不同派别政治哲学和宗教的世界，可是就在这个世界当中，如果我们还想共同生活在一起的话，就必须有一些基本价值观来指导人际关系。很难看出有什么理由说，佛法与我们无关。

[1] 此书最初是作为牛津“Past Masters”丛书的一种出版，所以有这句话和原来丛书的名字相呼应。

佛陀圆寂的史话，在一卷很长的经文里(《长部经典》第2卷第16经[1])有过描述。若剔除其中空想的成分，这卷经文可以说是描绘了一个老人最后的生命旅途。佛陀在病痛的折磨下[2]一路北上，走了几百英里。陪伴他的只有他的常随侍者阿难(Ānanda)。阿难这个人虽然对人友爱，可是就像经文里刻画的那样，他做事却笨手笨脚。最后，佛陀因食物中毒病倒，停歇在无名小村拘尸那揭罗。

阿难知道佛寿将尽，“入于住所，手把门闩，涕泣而立”[3]。佛陀唤阿难至前，作如是语曰：

> “勿悲勿哭。我岂未曾为是言耶，凡恩爱者，必得分离……汝以身、语、意，慈心欢喜心，诚心利益心，久侍如来，无有保留。阿难，汝所为甚善，宜事精进，必速得解脱。”[4]

[1] 巴利语《大般涅槃经》(汉译《游行经》)。
[2] 《游行经》：“于后夏安居中，佛身疾生，举躯皆痛。”
[3] 《南传大藏经》，第213页。
[4] 《南传大藏经》，第214页，译者对引文作了一定的改写。

关于引文的注释

简称

本书所引佛典，均来自巴利圣典学会校勘的上座部三藏。大写字母指来自何部经典，罗马数字指来自该部经典第几卷，阿拉伯数字指来自该卷第几页。所以，M II 91就是指，引自《中部经典》第2卷第91页。若我引用整部佛典，则会标出该经的号码，比如M I no.15，就是指《中部经典》第1卷第15种全经。我使用了以下的简称：

D　*Dīgha Nikāya*（长部经典）

M　*Majjhima Nikāya*（中部经典）

A　*Anguttara Nikāya*（增支部经典）

S　*Saṃyutta Nikāya*（相应部经典）

此外，文句尚有引用《无问自说》（*Udāna*；简称 U）和《最胜义光》（*Paramatthajotikā*；简称 P）者，皆为巴利圣典学会本。还有《大林间奥义书》（*Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad*；简称 B）和《唱赞奥义书》（*Chāndogya Upaniṣad*；简称 C）均注出引自何分何书何节，这样不拘任何版本，大家一翻即得。

译文和术语

佛典译文基本上都是我自己翻译的。想查证引文上下文的朋友，会发现巴利圣典学会英译本都按照巴利语原本编了号，这样大致可以翻捡到相应的段落。当然，如果能查巴利语原本，就更容易找到。只要稍做尝试就能学会查找。

术语部分，除去我已经注出使用梵语的地方之外，均用巴利语。

巴利语发音法

为了免于在念巴利语时出现令人尴尬的错误，请谨记以下规则：c 等于英文里的 *ch*，因此 *cetanā*（思）的发音，大致为 chay-tuh-naa；复音后面的 *h*，在发音上只表示多出一点气，如英语中的 pi*th*ead，dog*h*ouse。若按巴利语正确发音，则 Buddha 一字里的两个 *d*，都是要发音的。这种情况，类似于意大利语的双辅音。所以，Buddha 大致应该念成 Buddhuh，而非 Booduh。

以拉丁字母转写梵语和巴利语，有些在字母上下加了特殊的发音符号，有这些符号的字母，其发音法略如下示：

ā　*ah*

ś　介于 s 和 *sh* 之间

ñ　读如 *ny*，如 ca*ny*on。

ṭ ḷ ṇ　不像在英语中仅需让舌头碰到齿背，这里还需进一步朝上腭方向回收

ṣ　读如 *sh*

ṃ　读如 *ng*

推荐书目

关于佛教，英文出版物已经很多，有些专业性很强，有些又容易误人子弟，还有一些则甚佳。以下的建议，旨在使读者诸君对佛陀、佛法和佛教史获得比较广泛的了解。

在佛传方面，我推荐燃灯智比丘的《佛陀传》(佛教刊行会，康提城，1972年)。此书的切入点与拙著完全不同。该书可从斯里兰卡康提城佛教刊行会本部请购。作者完全依据其巴利原典的精确译文，来讲述佛陀的史话。此书无比细腻简洁，或为今日巴利佛典最佳导论。此外尚有迈克尔·派伊(Michael Pye)的《佛陀》(达科沃斯出版社，1979年)一书，着眼点与燃灯智比丘之书又复不同。他的佛传写得颇为生动，兼采史话与神话，告诉我们早期佛教僧团是如何看待佛陀的。以上两书，对拙著中描绘的佛陀，会提供有益的补充。

若欲了解佛法，最好的著作仍为罗祜罗长老(Walpola Rahula)的《什么是佛教》(格登·弗雷泽出版社，1967年)。此书乃由一修持佛法的比丘写出，写得既明白晓畅，又兼护教者的热情。尼耶也颇腻迦长老(Nyanaponika Thera)就禅观的修持，也写过一本同样明白晓畅的《佛法禅要》(利德尔出版社，1969年)。以上两书全依上座部传统写出。

欲知佛教哲学和佛教史的广大精微，较全面的导论书自

以理查德·鲁宾逊(Richard Robinson)和威拉德·L. 约翰逊(Willard L. Johnson)的《佛教导读》(狄金生出版社，1982年)最为相宜。读此书后，大家可寻海因茨·贝狄特(Heinz Bechert)和理查德·贡布里希(Richard Gombrich)合编的一巨册《佛教世界》(泰晤士与赫德森出版社，1983年)来读。此书为一论文汇编，依次详述每一佛化国家中佛教和僧团。虽然所收文字都以一般读者为对象，但每篇文章均可代表相关学科领域最新之学术成果。[1]

精读上举诸种著作之外，若能辅以佛典原文的熟读，自然最佳。佛典原文可参亨利·C. 沃伦(Henry C. Warren)的《巴利佛典选读》(雅典娜神殿出版社，1963年重印本)，或斯蒂芬·拜尔(Stephen Beyer)近期所出的《佛法经验谈：原典与释义》(狄金生出版社，1974年)。

前述著作多附有有用的书目，使读者可以对自己所爱好的题目，依之作进一步的研究。鄙人的兴趣，乃在当今佛化国家中实际修持的佛法。关于这个问题，霍姆斯·韦尔奇(Holmes Welch)的《1900至1950年间中国佛教之修持》(哈佛大学出版社，1967年)有透彻的研究。我对佛教的了解，乃基于我在斯里兰卡数年的田野考察，这个经历我已经写进了《吉祥楞伽岛的阿兰若僧》(牛津大学出版社，1983年)一书中。我的书主要是谈禅僧的，至于我所未能谈到的斯里兰卡民间佛教的种种信仰和仪轨，大家可以从理查理·贡布里希的《教诫与行持》(牛津大学出版社，1971年)一书中获得补充。

[1] 此书第五章是有关斯里兰卡佛教的（"'They will be Lords upon the Island': Buddhism in Sri Lanka"），就由本书作者负责撰写。