General Introduction to Sangharakshita's Seminars

Hidden Treasure

From the mid-seventies through to the mid-eighties, Urgyen Sangharakshita led many seminars on a wide range of texts for invited groups of Order members and Mitras. These seminars were highly formative for the FWBO/Triratna as Sangharakshita opened up for the still very young community what it might mean to live a life in the Dharma.

The seminars were all recorded and later transcribed. Some of these transcriptions have been carefully checked and edited and are now available in book form. However, a great deal of material has so far remained unchecked and unedited and we want to make it available to people who wish to deepen their understanding of Sangharakshita's presentation of the Dharma.

How should one approach reading a seminar transcription from so long ago? Maybe the first thing to do is to vividly imagine the context. What year is it? Who is present? We then step into a world in which Sangharakshita is directly communicating the Dharma. Sometimes he is explaining a text, at other times he is responding to questions and we can see how the emergence of Dharma teachings in this context was a collaborative process, the teaching being drawn out by the questions people asked. Sometimes those questions were less to do with the text and arose more from the contemporary situation of the emerging new Buddhist movement.

Reading through the transcripts can be a bit like working as a miner, sifting through silt and rubble to find the real jewels. Sometimes the discussion is just a bit dull. Sometimes we see Sangharakshita trying to engage with the confusion of ideas many of us brought to Buddhism, confusion which can be reflected in the texts themselves. With brilliant flashes of clarity and understanding, we see him giving teachings in response that have since become an integral part of the Triratna Dharma landscape.

Not all Sangharakshita's ways of seeing things are palatable to modern tastes and outlook. At times some of the views captured in these transcripts express attitudes and ideas Triratna has acknowledged as unhelpful and which form no part of our teaching today. In encountering all of the ideas contained in over seventeen million words of Dharma investigation and exchange, we are each challenged to test what is said in the fire of our own practice and experience; and to talk over 'knotty points' with friends and teachers to better clarify our own understanding and, where we wish to, to decide to disagree.

We hope that over the next years more seminars will be checked and edited for a wider readership. In the meantime we hope that what you find here will inspire, stimulate, encourage - and challenge you in your practice of the Dharma and in understanding more deeply the approach of Urgyen Sangharakshita.

Sangharakshita's Literary Executors and the Adhisthana Dharma Team

[Tape 13]

So it looks as though that's the sort of direction in which we may be moving. [Pause] That means people; that means workers. ? [inaudible] ? Anyway, let's leave it there. And I repeat I've only been thinking aloud, and nothing has been decided etc. etc.
All right, let's go on.

Text *"Soon after the incident concerning the Vajjians, according to the narrative, the Buddha and his companions left Rajagriha and began travelling northwards. They reached the southern shore of the Ganges at a place which at that time was called Pataligama, but which a century or so later was to be known as Pataliputra, when it became the new capital city of the expanding kingdom of Magadha; today it is Patna, the chief city of Bihar State. At this place the Buddha talked through the night with some local people who had assembled specially at the rest-house for travellers, where the Buddha was staying. These were lay-followers, who, while acknowledging the outstanding value of the Buddha's teaching, still continued their household life. In the Buddha's view, they too had an important place in the scheme of things, and it was for this reason that he undertook to instruct them in detail in the matters of social morality, pointing out to them the various advantages of moral uprightness and integrity. The morning after he had spoken with these householders, the Buddha observed that some ministers of the Magadhan state were supervising the construction of a new fortress at Pataligama. He then, it is said, uttered a prediction concerning this new stronghold. 'As far, Ananda, as Aryan people resort, as far as merchants travel, this will become the chief city, Pataliputra, a centre for the interchange of all kinds of wares. But three dangers will hang over Pataliputra, that of fire, that of water, and that of dissension among friends. The event referred to, the transfer of the royal capital of Magadha to Pataliputra, took place probably during the reign of Ajatashatru's son; the significance of the reference for our present purpose lies in the fact that the Buddha is represented as being keenly interested in a matter of this sort - the founding and growth of what was to become a great city."*

S: All right. The Buddha is represented as "being keenly interested in a matter of this sort..." Do you think that comment is justified?

_____: No.

S: No, not really. It's just a sort of passing remark.

_____: An insignificant comment.

S: Yeh. Even accepting that it was the Buddha's own comment. I mean, later on in the same Mahaparinibbana sutta, the Buddha is represented as saying, "Beautiful is such-and-such place", and "Beautiful is such and such other place; beautiful is this `chatiya'; beautiful is that shrine" - you could then say the Buddha was then taking a keen interest in art, or a keen interest in architecture, on the same basis, couldn't you? This seems just very much a passing comment, if in fact he made it at all! Scholars **usually** regard this as a later interpolation. You can probably imagine why. What they usually say is that by the time the sutta was compiled, Pataliputra had become famous, it had become a great commercial centre, and therefore this prediction was placed in the mouth of the Buddha. The Buddha couldn't possibly have known that. In other words the Buddha didn't really make a prediction, because there is no such thing as prediction, there is no such thing as foreknowledge. This is the usual scholarly position. But Trevor Ling apparently doesn't mention that because it suits him better to regard the Buddha as being "keenly interested in a matter of this sort". But, even if you take the text quite literally, at it's face value, and accept
that as a genuine comment of the Buddha, it seems no more than just a passing comment. He

seems to attach too much weight and too much significance to it.

The Buddha made passing comments on all sorts of matters, you can dig them up in the Pali suttas by the dozen. There were sort of comments on trees, and comments on `Maras', and there are comments on the different kinds of women, but you couldn't say the Buddha was keenly interested in trees, or keenly interested in `Maras', or keenly interested in women, could you? But the comments are there. All right, let's go on.

Nagabodhi: Just another thing I noticed. Talking about the lay followers who the Buddha .... instructs them in details in matters of social morality, isn't this his unfoldment of the Threefold Way? Isn't this .....

S: Dana, sila, uh ...

Nagabodhi: When he says, "A greater benefit of this contemplation when.....

S: I'm not sure.

Nagabodhi: Isn't it at that point in the sutra, and that this is, in fact, what he is talking about: not just moral integrity .....

S: I'm not sure that it does come in as early as that. But certainly, it does come in a number of times and certainly that discourse was delivered to lay people. Yes, and it is `sila' and `samadhi', and `prajna'. Not just matters of social morality, certainly.

All right, let's go on.

Text *"After crossing the Ganges, and passing through two smaller towns, the Buddha and his companions came to the city of Vaishali, the capital of the Licchavi republic. Here the Buddha accepted the invitation of Ambapali, the chief courtesan of the city, to take a meal at her house after she had heard him teaching and been gladdened by his words. The chief citizens of Licchavi, heaving of the acceptance from Ambapali herself, asked her to be so good as to give way in deference to them, so that they might entertain the Buddha. But although they offered her a large sum of money, on this occasion her favour was not to be bought. 'My lords,'she replied, 'were you to offer all Vaishali with its subject territory, I would not give up so honourable a feast! '."*

S: Mm. Any comment on this? She subsequently presented her rest house to the Order for use as a vihara, and she became a bhikkhuni. All right, let's go on.

Text*"The Buddha remained in Vaishali for some time. It was a place which he had visited several times before in his travels, and for which he seems to have had a special liking. It contained a number of splendid shrines dedicated to popular local deities, and the Buddha particularly enjoyed their beauty. 'How delightful a spot, Ananda, is Vaishali. How charming the Udena Shrine, and the Gotamaka Shrine, and the Shrine of the Seven Mangoes, and the Shrine of Many Sons, and the Sarandada Shrine, and the Chapala Shrine.' The Sutta tells that after this visit, when the time came for him to leave the city, knowing that it would be the last time he would see Vaishali before he died, the Buddha turned and took a long, full look at the city, and then continued on his journey."*

S: Any comment on that? [Pause] This is, by the way, a very, very summarised account from the Mahaparinibbana sutta. It's quite long - ABOUT 80 pages of text. It contains many, many different episodes. So this isn't a very full account. All right, let's go on - "The Village of Kushinara".

Text *THE VILLAGE OF KUSHINARA*

The place in which his entry into final nibbana occurred was a small, insignificant village called Kushinara. A little while before, it had become clear to the Buddha's companions that the end of his mortal existence was now very near; not only was he eighty years of age, but he had become physically very weak. They had asked what ceremonies would be appropriate after his death, and had been instructed that the remains of a Tathagata, or Buddha, should be treated in the same way as it was customary to treat the remains of a ***Chakravartin****, a universal emperor. They were to be wrapped in cloth, and soaked in oil, placed on a funeral pyre made of all kinds of fragrant wood, and burned; the relics were then to be enshrined in a great memorial cairn, or* ***stupa****, built at the centre of a crossroads. This was how the funeral rites of a* ***Chakravartin*** *were carried out; the memorial cairn would be built at some important crossing of routes, in a major city.*
The Buddha's companions were surprised when they realized from their master's severely weakened condition that it was in Kushinara that his life was to end. Ananda expressed their feeling:

Let not the Exalted One die in this little wattle-and-daub town, in this town in the midst of the jungle, in this branch township. For, lord, there are other great cities, such as Champa, Rajagriha, Shravasti, Shaketa, Kaushambi and Banaras. Let the Exalted One die in one of them. There there are many wealthy nobles and heads of houses, believers in the Tathagata, who will pay due honour to the remains of the Tathagata.-

Perhaps Ananda really did feel such dismay at the prospect of the Buddha's life ending in Kushinara and of the cremation of his remains having to be carried out in so remote a spot. Perhaps Buddhists of a later age were embarrassed by, or at least surprised at, the lowliness of the place where, as a matter of historical fact, the death of the Buddha had occurred. The word which is used here to describe Kushinara as a town 'in the midst of the jungle' (ujjangala) may mean what in India would be called a 'jungly' place: that is, as the commentator Buddhaghosa understood it, a lawless, heathen, pagan sort of place; or it may mean simply a barren, waste place. In either case, Ananda's objection seems to indicate that the appropriate place for the Buddha to end his life would be a great city, an urbane and civilized place, the kind of place with which he was most properly associated."

S: Hmm. Do you think that's correct?

_____: It's not what he says.

S: It's not **quite** what he says, is it? He is concerned about the remains of the Tathagata being honoured, and if there weren't many people in this out of the way jungle place, well obviously, from Ananda's point of view, that couldn't be done very properly. So again, it seems to be a question of the number of people, rather than the urban environment as such. Anyway, let's go on and finish this section.

Text*"An attempt to remove the objection and the embarrassment is made by the insertion at this point in the narrative of a tale of the ancient splendours of Kushinara in some former age when it was the capital city of a great emperor, Maha Sudassana. In those days the royal city, Kushavasti (as it was then known), 'was mighty and prosperous and full of people, crowded with men and provided with all things for food'. This description of the former glories of Kushinara is elsewhere expanded into a full-length discourse, contained in a separate Sutta, called the* ***Maha Sudassana Sutta****, and it is found also as a jataka story. The account of the city which is given in these longer versions is highly idealistic; even if no such city ever quite existed in Indian history, the description allows us to see what was obviously the Buddhist notion of an ideal city, and to this aspect of the matter we shall return later on."*

S: Yes. According to the text of the Mahaparinibbana sutta, the Buddha consoles Ananda, and he says that `Well, now, this place may be a barren jungly sort of place but in a remote period of the past there was a magnificent city here. So don't be so upset.' So what do you think the Buddha is, perhaps, really trying to say here?

Lokamitra: Teaching of impermanence.

S: Teaching of impermanence, but even more than that.

_____: The great of today will decay.

S: Yes. Even supposing he had died in a great city, would that great city have been there forever? Would it continue there forever? No, one day that great city would be laid waste. So what is the wasteland of today is the great city of tomorrow. What is the great city of today? It was the wasteland of yesterday. What was the great city of yesterday? It is the wasteland of today. These are all very relative matters. What does it really matter where you die, whether in a city or whether in a jungly place. Maybe **this** is what the Buddha was getting at, if in fact he did console Ananda, as it were, by pointing out that there had been a great city on that spot in the past. Maybe it's a subtle hint, as it were, it's a bit ironical or - all right, if he consoles Ananda by saying `Never mind, this may be a jungly place now, but it was a great city in the past', he's also saying, `Well, even supposing I was to die in a great city in the present, well, will it be a great city in the future? Maybe in the future it will be a waste, jungly place just like this one. So what does it matter where I die?

All right, let's go on to the 'Urbanity of the Buddha'.

Text *"THE URBANITY OF THE BUDDHA*

Whether appropriately or inappropriately, then, it was in this little town in the jungle that the Buddha's life ended. There his body was cremated, and the relics were divided, a portion being given to each of eight legitimate claimants: the king of Magadha, the people of Vaishali, the people of Kapilavastu, the people of Kushinara, three other tribes, and a brahman named Vethadipaka."

S: Well, for what it's worth you notice only one king gets a share. Go on.

Text *"In each of the respective towns or cities to which the relics were taken a memorial cairn was built. Over the vessel in which the remains had been collected another cairn was built, and yet another over the remaining embers. According to the tradition, therefore, ten* ***stupas****, or places where the Buddha was remembered and honoured, came into being immediately after his death. Some of these were in great cities - Rajagriha, Vaishali, and Kapilavastu - and so the dishonour which Ananda felt was incurred in the Buddha's life ending outside a great city, where no worthy memorial could be maintained, was removed."*

Vessantara: So why this brahman named Vethadipaka?

S: I don't know where he gets that name from. I don't think it occurs in the Pali. A brahman I know is mentioned who asked for a share just because he is a Brahman, and apparently, he is given a share. All right, go on then.

Text *"This brief survey of the pattern of the Buddha's life, the milieu from which he came, and the characteristic features of his public activities, shows that the setting of his life, from the first to the last days, was predominantly urban. It was a life spent in great centres where people came together to trade and to deliberate, to study and to practise their special crafts*

and industries, to discuss and to be entertained, to seek justice, to make money, or to find the truth. The appeal of his doctrines was primarily to men of an urban background. Among the things which, tradition suggests, ***might*** *be said in praise of him was that he abstained from 'village ways' (gamadhamma), a term which could also be translated 'vile conduct'. T. W. Rhys Davids suggests that the phrase means 'the practice of country folk ... the opposite of pori, urbane' Later in the same passage it is said, in fact, that the words of the Buddha are 'pleasant to the ear, reaching to the heart, urbane (pori)'. The point here seems to be that the Buddha's urbanity of speech was consistent with the rational quality of the ideas which he expressed."*

S: Do you think this is correct - `that it was a life spent in great centres where people came together to trade and to deliberate'? It's quite a bit of an overstatement. It's true he spent quite a bit of his time in the urban areas. Not usually right in the urban areas, but just outside, and within easy reach of them, accessible to people living in those urban areas; but he also spent quite a lot of his time walking from place to place. Perhaps that's another point that we ought to recollect. It's true that the Buddha spent twenty-five rainy seasons in Shravasti, but the rainy season only lasted for three to four months. What was he doing the rest of the time? He was walking from place to place, which meant mainly passing his time in the villages and forests. So Trevor Ling doesn't seem to have taken this into consideration, does he?

Perhaps - I don't know whether this is actually so - but it may well be that the Buddha spent the rainy (sic) season going from place to place with his followers, and visiting mainly villages and small townships, jungles and caves and so on, and tended to spend the <u>rainy</u> season in the urban areas. You could say that, perhaps. That would seem quite plausible, quite likely. Though that is still quite a far cry from basing himself predominantly in the urban areas. Trevor Ling says: "It was a life spent in great centres where people came together to trade and to deliberate etc." And "The appeal of his doctrines was **primarily** to men of an urban background." I think this hasn't quite been proved. It's quite true that quite a lot of his followers came from an urban background but not all of them by any means. For instance, Sariputra and Moggallana both came from villages, this is specifically stated. Ananda, himself of course came from Kapilavastu, which was a small town, a small city. And he had many followers who already were `parivajikas', who certainly weren't of an urban background. They were just wanderers who had `opted out' already.
So I think, though he has quite rightly drawn attention to the Buddha's connection with urban areas and city life, which is often overlooked, I don't think he has made out his case for the Buddha's life and work being more or less based on the urban areas. Do you see that? And also, as I mentioned, there is this question of economic support for the Buddha and a very large number of followers such as would gather around him at the time of the rainy season retreat. And clearly that number of people, if it was even simply 1,250, which is the number often mentioned, would just have to be supported in or from a big city. And as the Buddha got older and more famous, presumably, more and more people would go round with him, more and more bhikkhus would go round with him, and more and more bhikkhus would want to stay with him during the rainy season retreat, and that meant he could no longer just stop at the nearest village. He had to make arrangements to settle near a big city and spend three or four months of the rainy season **there**. [pause]

What do you think about this statement, ` it was said in praise of him that he abstained from `village ways' (gamadhamma)'?

<u>Lokamitra:</u> He's taken it the wrong way.

S: Mm?

<u>Lokamitra:</u> He's taking it the wrong way, isn't he, that ...

S: What do you mean?

Lokamitra: Well, he's says afterwards, it is a term which **could** be translated as `vile conduct', which is, presumably, what is meant by `village ways', and not keeping to towns.....

S: Yeh. Which suggests that country people were a bit crude, and a bit rough, and the spiritual person's life was characterised by a sort of genuine refinement that wasn't normally found in villages, where people's lives were rather crude, and maybe a bit animal-like, a bit brutish. [Pause]

What about it being said that the Buddha's speech was urbane (pori)? What does that suggest? It was just simply that it was rather refined. If you go to India even today, the behaviour and the manner of speech of some village people is really extraordinary. Indians who come from the towns often laugh at them! They just don't know how to speak to people. They only know how to shout and address you in a very sort of rough, crude sort of way. They just don't know any better, and even, as I said, Indians from the towns are a bit surprised at this uncouth village speech. They just stop and stare at you, or with mouth open, as I described a bit in my memoirs. A person from the towns just wouldn't behave like that. He'd be accustomed to meeting people, he'd know how to greet them. People in villages just didn't know those things. They wouldn't know how to say, "Where are you coming from? How are you? Good morning" or "good afternoon". They just wouldn't know all that. And this you can see even today. It must have been far worse in the Buddha's day. So the `gamadhamma' was the crude, clumsy, uncultured ways of people who lived in villages. They were well-meaning enough, and honest enough, but they just had no... well, no urbanity. `Urbanity' - our word `urbanity' isn't perhaps the right word. It's more like a certain degree of culture or refinement, and sensitivity to other people. Village people were just accustomed to saying : "Whoa there!" to their oxen. They hardly knew how to talk to human beings.

All right, let's conclude this section then.

Text *"Towards contemporary forms of religion, it is clear that the Buddha adopted a generally tolerant attitude, with the exception of his criticism of the brahman hereditary priesthood and the sacrificial system. Towards folk beliefs and practices, except for those which came within the scope of priestly magic, he showed the urbane man's understanding of the proper place which mythology and ritual hold in the lives of unsophisticated people. He was not a religious reformer of the iconoclastic kind. Nor was he a prophet, if by that is understood one who comes as the messenger, servant or spokesman of the deity, for to the extent that Brahma may be taken as the supreme deity for the men of the sixth century BC in north India, the Buddha's relation to him is certainly not that of a servant, but rather that of one who has superior knowledge and insight. The Buddha's insight is represented as being, not that of the dogmatist, who asserts that such and such is the case and demands men's acceptance of his assertion in faith, but rather that of the analyst. And the analysis which is offered is both logical and psychological; its appeal is in its self-authenticating quality. Urbanity of manner and speech were wholly consistent with the rationality of what was expressed. It is to an examination of the doctrines themselves that we must now turn, in order to demonstrate this consistency."*

S: Mm. What do you think of this paragraph? This estimate of the Buddha? It surely does refer to the Buddha's insight, or his "superior knowledge and insight". But did you think that he really does understand what that `superior knowledge and insight' pertained to?

_____: He still sees it as intellectual insight.

S: He does, it seems. Yes. "....the analysis which is offered is both logical and psychological; it's appeal is in its self-authenticating quality." And : "Urbanity of manner and speech were wholly consistent with the **rationality** of what was expressed." Well, what about this expression that the Buddha uses `atakavacara' which is literally `beyond logic'. Trevor Ling, interestingly enough, early on translates it as `beyond dialectic', but it is really, just `logic', `beyond logical reasoning' - or beyond **reason** you could say. And he said the truth which he had discovered, the `dhamma' which he had seen, was `atakavacara', `beyond reason', supra-rational. It seems he's quite unable to appreciate - Trevor Ling is - the sort of supra-rational and transcendental dimension of the Buddha's experience and the Buddha's teaching.

So it's very good, in a way, that he has drawn attention to the public dimension of the Buddha's life and career, but he seems to have done it unfortunately, at the expense, virtually, of everything that the Buddha really stood for and represented. It's true that: "He was not a religious reformer of the iconoclastic kind. Nor was he a prophet...." All this is very true, but he doesn't seem to have realised that the Buddha was a **Buddha**. I mean from the account that Trevor Ling gives of it, he doesn't seem to rank even as high as Shakespeare. Do you see what I mean? He seems to be almost a sort of Socratic figure.

And do you think that as regards : "folk beliefs and practices .....he showed the urbane man's understanding of the proper place which mythology and ritual hold in the lives of unsophisticated people."? Do you think this really represents the Buddha's attitude?

Nagabodhi: Well no because he was selective. He always referred to his own individual perception of what he was seeing, his own judgement. He didn't just have a kind of `stock townsman's' attitude.

S: Mm. Yes. Right! For instance, he refers to the Brahmas, well, according to Buddhist tradition the Brahmas represent higher levels of consciousness, of the kind that we would call `spiritual'. So the Buddha wasn't just sort of adopting a tolerant attitude towards the superstitions of village people - he was, as it were, recognising the existence of those beings, or the states represented by those beings, but according them their proper place in the hierarchy of conditioned existence. And distinguishing them quite clearly from the even higher level, as it were, of `Nirvana'.

So this whole attitude or **supposed** attitude of the Buddha to the unsophisticated people just does not seem to be the attitude of a Buddha, but of a sort of rather self-conscious city person who prides himself on his higher degree of sophistication and rationality. That isn't the sort of impression you get of the Buddha at all! Even the most sort of crude village superstitions and beliefs with regard to gods and spirits recognises the existence of something which can't be explained by the rational mind; which can't just be dismissed in a rationalistic sort of way. And the Buddha was quite aware of whatever truth was represented by these popular myths and beliefs and superstitions, and gave it its proper place, **but no more**. But it almost suggests - Trevor Ling almost suggests - that the Buddha had a faintly patronising attitude towards the unsophisticated people, and their beliefs and attitudes, but, again, that is not the impression that one gets from the Pali texts. [pause]

Anyway, any comment or query with regard to this whole section - "The Profile of the Buddha"? What do you feel about Trevor Ling's overall assessment of the Buddha or the picture, or profile, that he gives of him.

lokamitra: He's brought it right down to his own level.

Siddhiratna: I didn't know then but I keep getting the impression ever since we started this book. It seems to me that Trevor Ling is trying to **do** something with Buddhism, never

having met him or read very much about him, that he wants to take an Eastern idea, or philosophy like Buddhism and introduce it into the West, and perhaps his initial idea was - `How can I do this, without upsetting this so-called rational Western rationale?' And somehow to introduce Buddhism as a rational analysis. And in fact, yes, he's sort of lessening the impact of Buddhism, or Buddhism's message, if you like. At the same time he's trying to make it more palatable to the Western mind perhaps.

S: But do you think then that he, consciously himself realises that Buddhism is something **more** than all this and deliberately waters it down?

Siddhiratna: I think something like that is in operation, but I think that he hasn't understood as much as he might of the initial teaching anyway.

S: I just get the impression that there is a complete lack of sensitivity to what I can only refer to as the spiritual dimension of the Buddha's life and the Buddha's teaching. It's as though he just isn't aware of it at all! That this is just a matter of **words** for him. This is the impression that I get, even though he is quite well-meaning, and is quite, in a way, favourably impressed by Buddhism.

Siddhiratna: But he's not actually understood anything profound .....

S: It's not so much understood but **felt**, as it were, with any sort of genuine insight, or thought of Buddhism in terms of spiritual life and spiritual development, which means perhaps that he hasn't thought very seriously himself about his own development. If you are not really concerned about your own development, and are really trying to evolve, how can you begin to understand Buddhism, really? It may well be that he's trying to make something that **he** considers to be Buddhism acceptable to people in the West, but if that is the case, he seems to have represented it in such a way that what he is presenting ceases almost to be Buddhism.

_____: I was going to say that if he did understand Buddhism, then I can't understand how he can present Buddhism in this way, because it would attract the people that are interested in Buddhism, and would put off the people that are interested in what is important.

S: Yes. [Pause] If someone has a really a sort of deep interest in spiritual life, or even just the beginnings of interest in spiritual life, if they were to read this book there's nothing to sort of spark them off or inspire them, is there, really?

_____: No.

S: It's very dry! And very diluted.

Siddhiratna: Maybe the point is that he's dried it out too much.

Nagabodhi: I don't see where **you** get the idea he's trying to do this PR job in order to attract ..... I haven't got **anything** from it! It just seems to be a really pointless academic exercise to me .....

Siddhiratna: I've taken it from things like `drop-out' and `alternative', and words and phrases that he seemed to have used, and even `profile'.

Nagabodhi: But he's trying to make **himself** acceptable there, I think, not Buddhism!

S: But does even `dropping out' have any sort of **spiritual** significance? `Dropping out' as

such? I mean as we usually encounter it in this country today? [Pause] It might have and on the other hand it might not.

Siddhiratna: `Dropping out' it seems, as I've understood it now, is `leaving home'.

S: Yeh, which you can do for a variety of reasons.

Siddhiratna: Yes, you probably do. It's the same as when what you said about people coming along to the meditation centre: the reason they come along is probably entirely wrong to begin with.

S: Yes. But then the point is that they come in contact with, we hope, something genuinely spiritual. But, apparently, even as far as I can see, in Trevor Ling's book one doesn't! One just doesn't get the impression that Trevor Ling, himself has any sort of spiritual awareness. He doesn't really think in terms of actual, individual, spiritual development, or see Buddhism in those terms at all! I mean, the individual and his development have been blatantly left out so far! Maybe it's introduced later on but we haven't encountered any reference to that at all, so far!

Manjuvajra: Except negative things. I mean, in terms of when he's talking about personal salvation, and it's the negative.....

S: Yes. Right. Yes. But even `personal salvation' seems to refer, in a way, from his point of view, to something that we would regard as constituting individual development. That seems the sort of interest one mustn't have, according to Trevor Ling.

Lokamitra: It seems to me he certainly has some kind of feeling for Buddhism, very slight though maybe, but he's trying to rationalise it. He's trying to ... um...

Siddhiratna: Make it rational.

S: Yes. Well, in fact, he almost rationalises it away!

Lokamitra: Well he does, doesn't he, he destroys it!

S: Maybe - this is speculative, but I imagine such a situation could exist - it may be that he does feel some sort of genuine, however slight, attraction to Buddhism. After all he has gone off to Ceylon and meditated, so I've heard, but on the other hand he is an academic. He is very much impressed by academic values, academic disciplines, sociology, psychology, and all the rest of it, and perhaps has even to justify Buddhism to himself on those terms. He can't just commit himself to the spiritual as such. He has to sort of present the spiritual to himself as sociology, as rationalism, as urbanity, and all the rest of it. But in so doing he just loses, as far as this book is concerned, contact with whatever it was, originally, that really attracted him. Perhaps that is a sort of fairly charitable reading of the situation.

_____: One does get the impression that he's placing the Buddha at the pinnacle of his kind of world view.

S: Yes.

_____: ...But it's as though he can't get out of that particular.....

S: Well, he's putting the Buddha at the top of a very small hill. It would be quite interesting to meet someone like Trevor Ling or even to invite him along to somewhere like Sukhavati

when it's finished, not to give a lecture, but just to maybe stay a few days and join in the meditation, and talk with a few people. Maybe it would give him a quite different impression and feeling. He is clearly quite well-informed, and, in his own way, quite well-meaning. He's clearly not deliberately going out of his way to misrepresent anything, he just has his own limitations of understanding and experience, which he seems quite unaware of. No great depths of thought, I mean, though he's a quite fluent writer and all that.

But again, if there is anything in what you've just said, this introduces a very important point, which is: to what extent one should, as it were, `water the Dharma down' in order to make it acceptable? I mean, this is the really important point. Is there any point in doing this at all? What do you think about that? [Pause]

Siddhiratna: I suppose if somebody was doing that, what in fact should be the driving motivation is to extract essential Buddhism from Eastern ethnic culture, as it were....

S: (breaking in - both speaking at same time - words obscured). Yeh. But it's more than that!

Lokamitra: What you can't do is give parts of the Dharma which people aren't ready to receive, I suppose. You'd just turn them off. But that doesn't mean to say that you have to water it down.

Vessantara: I find it's very hard to water down my explanation of the Dharma without somehow watering down something in me and my communication, even if, perhaps the person that I'm talking to gets a more favourable impression, but... (Bhante breaking in - words lost)

S: What does it matter if he gets a more favourable impression if what he has got a more favourable impression of isn't Buddhism, or isn't the Dharma? There's also this other point that you may put off some people by presenting the Dharma forcibly and clearly,

[End of side one]

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but you will attract at least as many others by your forcible and clear presentation. I mean, do people always want just a mental and spiritual pap, eh? Is this true? Uh? [Pause]

It's got nothing to do with the level of academic education, or cultural background or anything like that! I mean, this is one of the things I found when I was going around among the ex-untouchable Buddhists - friends of mine used to say :"Oh just teach them the simplest things. Just say something about `pancasila', something like that. They're not well-educated, and they're not very intelligent. Don't try and say anything about Buddhist philosophy, it's a waste of time." I discovered that was a load of nonsense! Even when they were illiterate, and they were working in factories, if I presented myself carefully and systematically as I usually did, they could understand anything! Anything that I cared to present. So I spoke about the `pratityasamutpada', `anatmavada', the meaning of `OM MANI PADME HUM', Buddhist philosophy - they lapped it all up. They definitely understood what I was saying, and I didn't find it necessary to talk down to them, or anything like that. So provided one is genuinely trying to communicate I don't think it really matters if you give people the full blast of the Dharma, sooner or later, anyway. It doesn't mean as soon as you meet somebody you start holding forth about `annata'. You have to create the conditions, the right conditions for communication, so that something like that can come across. And just to blurt it out the first time you talk about Buddhism to somebody isn't to communicate. I see no reason why one should `pull one's punches', as it were.

Say: "No! Buddhism does not agree that material prosperity is the aim of human life". ? completely disagree with that! Not say, `Well that's all right for some people, that's also a way - we all end up in the same place eventually - all that sort of wishy-washy talk, eh! That just isn't Buddhism, that isn't anything! Maybe we haven't been sufficiently blunt and direct in some of the things that we've said in the past. We do really think that all ? social life is a waste of time. This is what we really think. We don't see any sort of merit in it at all, anything positive, so why shouldn't we say so, if that's what we think. If people disagree with us, well, that's all right. At least they'll know what it is they disagree with, and they will know what we really think about it. If we really do think that if you're not devoting yourself to your own development; if you're not making any advance in that direction, well, you're not really human! Well, if we believe that, why shouldn't we say so! "You're not leading a really human life." Say so directly to people. I mean, some people may almost be relieved to hear that. ? in some other direction.

_____: Some people get very angry.

S: Do you think so?

_____: Mm.

S: Well, all right. That's their fault. I'm not saying that you should say it in an abusive way, or in a way that suggests you are putting them down. You must watch that too. But you must be open and frank in your communication, and say what you really think, and say also, what the Dharma really is. Why shouldn't they be made angry by what you say? Aren't you made angry by what they say?

Nagabodhi: (Chuckling)

S: ..... more often than not, and they expect you to be all meek and forbearing and put up with their foolish talk, but the minute you open your mouth and say something about the Dharma, they get all angry. Look at all the twaddle that we have to listen to from various people and put up with. Are we not supposed to get angry? Are they the only ones who are allowed to get angry? (Laughter) This is what I found when I was on that last Dutch retreat, or European retreat, - not the one this year, the one last year, - there were one or two people were there - professional psychotherapists and encounter group leaders holding forth, and when I suggested that this interrupted the proceedings and so on and so forth - "Well, what about my feelings, I must express my feelings. I must say what I feel." So I said," What about my feelings, don't they count? I've not come here just to listen to all this sort of rubbish. Don't my feelings count at all? If you're just going on in this way, well, I'm just going back to England." And they were very astonished then. It never occurred to them that I might have feelings about the situation. They were just concerned with their own feelings.

So, all right, people on the spiritual path, they also have their own feelings. They also are liable to get angry when they hear things they disagree with, or don't approve of. It could only be the other people who were allowed to get angry.

Nagabodhi: It ties up with the `professionalism' syndrome, doesn't it? The customer is always right.....

S: That's true!

Nagabodhi: .... if you're not careful you slip into that kind of.....

S: Yes! If you're not careful, you'll lose another paying member. You're ten quid down in the dana bowl! (Laughter) You can't even speak your mind. Someone may not come again. So what! If they're not the right sort of person, well, it's better if he doesn't come again. [Pause] If people are looking for something other than what we are trying to give, or willing to give, well, let them go elsewhere, and let them be frankly told so. "Well, look, it doesn't seem as though Buddhism is for you. It doesn't seem as though you are really interested."

Checking recomences

[Tape 13 Side 2]

S: All right then, The New Wisdom - The Enlightenment as Humanistic Discovery.

Text.*"7 The New Wisdom*

THE ENLIGHTENMENT AS HUMANISTIC DISCOVERY

The nature of the change which took place when Gotama sat meditating under the bodhi tree on the bank of the Nairanjana river is traditionally described by saying that he became the Buddha, that is, the Awakened. In later Buddhist literature, the transition is described in terms which make it literally an earth-shaking event, but the earlier literature gives a more prosaic and analytical account, and one which makes the event described extremely difficult to fit into the categories of 'religious' or 'spiritual' experience. This was no 'inaugural vision', such as the prophets of Israel underwent. There was no sense of awe at the realization of the presence of the divine being, such as Isaiah felt; no ecstatic experience like that of Jeremiah; no voice from heaven accompanying the descent of the holy spirit as Christian tradition represents happening in the case of Jesus; no archangel as in the case of Muhammad, coming down to announce 'Thou art God's apostle', making the chosen one to fall upon his knees and tremble. The account given in a Pali Sutta called ***Discourse on the Ariyan Quest*** *is represented as being the Buddha's own version of the matter given years later to some of his disciples at Shravasti. Having described his wanderings in search of the truth, he tells them how in due course he arrived at Uruvela (the ancient name for the place that has become known as Bodh-Gaya). 'There I saw a delightful stretch of land and a lovely woodland grove, and a dear flowing river with a delightful ford, and a village for support near by.' Seeing what a suitable place this was for earnest and strenuous meditation, he sat down there.' What follows is an account of the intellectual penetration into the nature of the human situation which the Buddha then achieved, in which the notion of the individual 'self' (****atman****) is seen as the root of mankind's troubles".”*

S: All right, what does one make then of this section? He's quite clear about what the Buddha's experience was not, but he doesn't seem so clear as to what it actually was, and you notice he refers to an account of "the intellectual penetration", though there has been the reference to meditation before that, but he seems to consider that the Buddha's penetration into the nature of the human situation was of an intellectual nature. The question arises from the Buddhist point of view as to what is the difference between insight and intellectual penetration. This is something which is quite important to understand. Has anybody got any ideas about this or is it clear to anybody? When I say insight I'm referring to something like vipassana, vidarshana.

Ratnaguna: Insight without the emotional thing with it.

S: Would it be just the emotional thing?

Lokamitra: It would be insight, emotional and intellectual.

Nagabodhi: And more.

_____: Totally visionary and transforming.

S: Well that would be the effect. Put it this way, what makes the difference between the purely intellectual understanding and the direct penetration which is of the nature of vipassana?

Vessantara: The latter is a direct experience as opposed to just an understanding...

S: How does it come about then that there is this direct experience as distinct from simply an intellectual penetration?

Nagabodhi: It has to do with the level of consciousness, the nature of the consciousness.

S: Yes, the nature. Is it just that? What does that involve as it were?

Ratnaguna: It involves all of it, your whole being.

S: Yes, but in what sort of way? Well basically it involves a unification of all the energies, especially one could say the emotional energies and most of all of course the positive emotional energies. This is what makes the difference and this is why you practise what we call meditation before you try to develop insight. Because when we just try to penetrate into things intellectually, usually the mind is quite scattered. It isn't very concentrated. There are all sorts of pulls from other levels, from other aspects of the being. So meditation, from this point of view, is a sort of gradual unification of all the energies, energies even of the unconscious as well as of the conscious mind, a bringing of them all together, a heightening of them, making them more and more positive, more and more powerful, gathering all those energies into a single channel, and then putting that energy behind your efforts to understand, to penetrate, to see. So this is what makes the difference. So without meditation to back it up, intellectual understanding remains just intellectual understanding. It doesn't develop into insight or vipassana.

So this is why the usual sort of procedure is, that you spend a period practising what is called 'samatha', the calming down - this a rather misleading term in a way. It isn't just a calming down, it's only a calming down of all the unskilful states, it's a raising up of all the skilful states, all the positive potentialities of the mind, an actualization of them. It's experiencing or it's feeling emotionally very very positive, say experiencing strong mettā or strong karuna or strong mudita, and having the mind in this very sort of powerful buoyant condition and then, when the mind is in this sort of powerful and buoyant and, as it were, malleable condition, then you just direct that mind to understand and to see.

So what you get then is a quite different sort of experience, not just an intellectual understanding but an actual experience, an actual vision or an actual insight. So you can as it were just look or just try to see with that concentrated mind, or you can, just to help yourself, recall some of the teachings or doctrines of Buddhism which are in fact, as it were, intellectual or conceptual supports for the development of insight. You can for instance take a very simple one like "all conditioned things are impermanent". It's a very simple sort of doctrinal formulation. So you certainly understand it, you have an intellectual understanding of it which is quite thorough, quite comprehensive, but when you sort of call to mind this fact or this truth of all things are impermanent with a concentrated mind with all your energies behind the understanding, then the understanding is transformed into an actual insight, which is an experience, and if the insight is sufficiently powerful, sufficiently penetrating, then that

has a transforming effect upon the whole being. In other words you never lose that. Whereas the intellectual understanding is very easily lost and in any case doesn't have that sort of powerful, transforming effect.

So this is the difference that meditation, in the sense of the heightening and the concentrating and the making more positive of one's energies, this is the difference that meditation makes. It enables you to make the transition from intellectual understanding to what we may call a spiritual insight or spiritual vision, or perfect vision.

So therefore if one hasn't got any idea about meditation, if one doesn't understand the function [jet plane roars overhead obscuring some words] then it'll be quite impossible for one to understand the difference between intellectual understanding and spiritual insight. The spiritual insight would appear to you just as another kind or another degree of intellectual penetration, intellectual insight. So you see the difference.

So Trevor Ling seems quite oblivious to this difference. Presumably because he just hasn't understood the significance or the function of meditation. Meditation traditionally is usually divided into two great kinds or two great levels even - the samatha, which literally means calm, which consists in the experience of the dhyana states, the states of superconsciousness, where one's energies become progressively more unified, where one becomes emotionally more positive, and more and more, as it were, buoyant. And then vipassana where you use as it were that heightened and intensified positive consciousness to launch yourself, as it were, into reality itself in such a way that you develop a spiritual insight. So in the Theravada tradition and in the older Buddhist tradition generally, these two were kept rather as it were separated. They were two distinct practices. For instance the mettā bhavana is more like a samatha practice, the Six Element practice is more like a vipassana practice, but in the Mahayana, especially in the Vajrayana the two tend to be much more unified, so that if you do a visualisation practice you usually get, if you do it in the full manner, some practise or some experience of samatha as well as some practise or some experience of vipassana. The two have been much more unified.

But unless one understands this sort of function of meditation, unless one understands how the experience of a higher level of consciousness as it were puts much more force, much more impetus, much more thrust, behind your understanding, so that it becomes transformed into insight, you'll never understand the difference between the intellectual understanding and the spiritual insight. And this seems to be Trevor Ling's deficiency. So therefore he speaks of the "intellectual penetration into the nature of the human situation which the Buddha then achieved". Well of course it was very much more than that. Just intellectual penetration would never have been sufficient to transform him from an ordinary human being into an Enlightened human being or a Buddha. So do you see this point clearly? It is a very important point. In a way it's one of the crucial points. Had you seen things in this way or understood things in this way before?

_____: Yes.

S: Anyone who hadn't been clear about it? So in a sense meditation in the sense of samatha is not enough. This is also an important corollary. In the case of samatha, that is to say the experience of calm, the experience of the dhyana states, the hindrances are temporarily suspended, but once you come out of the meditation as it were, once you come out of the dhyana state, then they return. You are again liable to them, susceptible to them, but once you've seen through them as it were, or once you've seen into the real nature of things, through the spiritual insight of vipassana, then, depending upon the strength of the vipassana, the hindrances are permanently destroyed. The fetters are permanently broken, and then one attains the experience of Stream Entry, which means that you can't after that ever fall back.

You may not make any further progress in this life, but you'll never fall back, you'll never regress. Whereas if one has only experienced the dhyana states and only experienced samatha, then you may regress. You can go right back to the beginning, you can commit any crime or indulge in any kind of unskilful action. But once you've become a Stream Entrant, once you've passed as it were the Point of No Return, you may not make any further progress in this life, but what progress you have made can never be undone. That is as it were a permanent achievement, something on which you can build thereafter.

So if there's no meditation, then there's no insight. Though some schools did believe that you could develop what they called 'dry insight', insight without samatha, just by force of thought almost, but this was generally denied, and even those schools admitted that even that dry insight had to be based upon what they called a 'momentary experience' of samadhi or dhyana. But the general Buddhist tradition is that without meditation in the sense that I've described it, intellectual understanding cannot be transformed into spiritual insight. Meditation is the means of transforming the intellectual understanding into a spiritual insight, and this constitutes its main importance.

Vessantara: On the 'Dhyana for Beginners' seminar we went through the five basic meditation practices and there hasn't been, apart from them being done occasionally on Order Days, there's been very little emphasis on the three which we don't usually do. Clearly it's difficult to lay down general guidelines for people, but to what extent do you think those other three practices should figure in Order Members' practice at this stage?

S: Well the main point is there's not much point in trying to develop vipassana via a vipassana type practice unless there is a quite solid foundation of samatha to begin with. And also I think that usually one needs to be comparatively, as it were, secluded, because if you are really going to develop vipassana, that means certain changes are going to take place in you, certain bits and pieces of your ego, as it were, are going to be permanently dismantled or at least is going to be chipped away at, and that can be quite a devastating sort of experience. So while you are going through that, you shouldn't have to be attending to various other things. So I would suggest that unless you are very firmly established in the samatha practice and are a quite stable sort of person, you should confine the vipassana type practice either to solitary retreat or to other retreat situations, when you can be quite sure you can devote the necessary time and attention to that, and any sort of possible repercussions of that.

If you do some of the visualisation practices, especially those of which I've given some people the texts, well that does include as it were a vipassana element. But within the very sort of strongly devotional context of the visualisation practice. Sometimes you need just time to absorb whatever experience you may gain as a result of the vipassana practice, so you don't want to have to turn your attention to other things or practical matters while that process is going on. So you should be relatively free or even, if possible, completely free, at such a time. It usually means cutting off contact with other people and external activities.

All right any other point that arises here. I mean the title of the section itself is significant, isn't it - *"The Enlightenment as Humanistic Discovery*". What do you think he means by Humanistic?

_____: Ethical.

S: Sort of ethical, yes. No transcendental element. He's quite right here in saying that, "This was no 'inaugural vision', such as the prophets of Israel underwent..." etc., etc., but he does also say that it was "Extremely difficult to fit into the categories of 'religious' or 'spiritual' experience." Well religious experience seems to cover the various examples he gives, but what about spiritual experience? Could one speak of it in terms of a spiritual experience? Presumably one has to speak of it in some sort of way. Spiritual experience isn't very

adequate but it certainly does go a bit beyond this 'Enlightenment as Humanistic Discovery' at least. What about the word 'spiritual' itself? Is there any confusion about that or the way in which it's used? Is everybody clear about that? In what sense would you say that we used it? In what sense would you use it if you used it?

Lokamitra: The development of positive states, skilful mental states in preparation for insight vipassana practices.

S: Yes, except that one has to be a bit careful here. If you say spiritual mental states people could well understand that to mean simply that you felt well disposed towards other people, you weren't actually in a temper or enraged, and that you mind was moderately calm and quiet, but actually it means or can mean very very much more than that, because when you experience a dhyana state, you are in a state of as it were consolidated, heightened and intensified skilfullness. When we consider that we are in a skilful mental state, that really isn't very skilful at all is it? We're just mildly full of mettā or our minds are not too restless, or we're moderately concentrated, or reasonably happy. This is what most people would understand by the mind being in a skilful state. But if you use the word 'spiritual' in the Buddhist context, it should signify very very much more than that, that all your energies are released, that all your energies are liberated, and that you experience very intense mettā, karuna, mudita, upeksa, and that the experience is, as it were, consolidated. That there are no gaps in it, no breaks or no flaws, and that your emotional positivity is at a very high level of intensity, a very high pitch of intensity. In other words instead of just the odd skilful thought floating through your mind every few minutes, there's an uninterrupted succession of hundreds and thousands of hundreds of thousands of skilful thoughts every instant virtually. There's a whole stream of these skilful thoughts or skilful mental states. An uninterrupted stream, and this is what is meant by meditation, really, in the sense of samatha.

We don't usually think of meditation in those terms, do we, but this is what it really is. Do you see what I mean? So in the state of meditation the mind is in a very active and powerful and dynamic state but absolutely positive, at least for the time being. A stream, an uninterrupted succession of positive mental states. And inasmuch as they're all positive, well there's no conflict between them. That means that they're unified. It means the stream is flowing in one and the same direction. There's no conflict of energies. Mettā doesn't conflict with karuna does it, nor does mudita conflict with upeksa and so on. So when we use the word spiritual, we use it more in this sort of sense, not just for sort of vague or gentle goodwill or vague sense of uplift or anything like that. So when we use the term spiritually speaking to people we must be able to sort of put this across. The infinitely more powerful significance that the word spiritual has in the Buddhist vocabulary. Otherwise people think that spiritual suggests something vague and wishy-washy and perhaps even spiritualistic. In the days when I used to go around and give quite a few public lectures in different places to different groups, quite a few people thought that spiritual meant spiritualistic, in the spiritualist sense, you know what I mean? In the sense of spiritualist societies and groups using mediums and trying to communicate with the dead and receiving messages. They thought spiritual meant all that. Quite a lot of ordinary people have that sort of impression about the meaning of the word spiritual. Has anyone come across this sort of thing? Yes.

So you have to be very careful if you use this word to convey a very high degree of mental or emotional positivity of a very intense nature.

Nagabodhi: It's one of those words that we've got so used to using within the Friends that I think we've forgotten how it's usually meant outside, and it is quite a wishy-washy word outside.

S: Could anyone suggest any alternative term? We really don't have a term do we? You

could say heightened state of consciousness.

Siddhiratna: Something to do with consciousness expansion or something.

S: Yes, that is a bit better. Though consciousness expansion for some people would suggest a sort of hazy sort of drug induced state perhaps.

Siddhiratna: Consciousness raising, but that's used by other growth groups.

S: Consciousness raising is used to refer to a number of people getting together and griping about something or other. I've been reading about women getting together and having consciousness raising session and what do they do? - they express their resentment towards men, and this is referred to as raising their consciousness, which seems ridiculous. This is not what we mean by raising one's consciousness. So one has to try to convey a sense of exhilaration, emotional positivity, freedom, buoyancy, expansion, liveliness, joy, -all these sort of things. This is more of what the word `meditation' covers, and what the word `spiritual' covers. Otherwise, for most people, meditation means a dreamy state in which you drift along, not thinking of anything in particular, and `spiritual' means something vaguely uplifting or somehow connected with spooks and ghosts. So we really have to - not to just use words carefully - but make quite sure we are conveying to people what they really mean.

[End of tape 13 Tape 14]

Lokamitra: As the level of consciousness goes up one, it seems automatically sees things more in terms of relative or sees things more nearly as they really are. So it seems almost that insight arises spontaneously.

S: One could say that, because from another point of view, the insight is the vision of the `whole' person. Not a vision just of one part, or one level: not just a vision of the rational mind, but when you are completely unified and all your energies are flowing together, then you're much more of a total person. And not just on the same level you were before, but a much higher level, and what that total person sees, well, that is of the nature of insight. This is sometimes where the artistic vision comes quite close to insight in the Buddhistic sense. The artist is, at least to some extent, someone who is much more unified, and on a much higher level than the ordinary man. When I say `artist' I don't only mean the visual artist, I mean the poet or the composer and so on too.

Lokamitra: If that is the case, is there that much danger that if one continues with the practices, continues raising one's level of consciousness in the way you've mentioned, that one won't develop insight?

S: Not necessarily, but one just mustn't confuse the two. In many traditions the distinction between what we call `samatha' and what we call `insight' in Buddhism, is not maintained. The Hindus, I found, in India, are very very vague about this. The usual understanding is that when you feel full of bliss then you've realised `God'. You're there. This is the usual way of thinking, the way the ordinary people look at things, and even people who are more well informed about religious matters. And if you're full of bliss and very cheerful and optimistic and outward-going, this is taken as a sign that you're a `god-realised' person. This is how they look at it. But Buddhism would say `No', you must apply your unified consciousness, or even your unified being, to seeing the truth. There is that further stage. And this is why the Buddha left Alara Kalama and (Abuddhagaramaputra?). They were only able to take you up to the heights of `samatha'. They were not able to help him attain insight. So what becomes of Trevor Ling's intellectual insight? Well, he had that even before he went to Alara Kalama. So one could say, very broadly speaking, from this point of view, meditation, or `samatha'

meditation is the unification of all the energies of one's being with the accompanying positive emotions and spontaneity, at higher and higher levels. And then arises the possibility of developing `vipassana', which doesn't come, as it were, automatically. You have to make, according to the Buddha's teaching, a conscious and deliberate effort to develop it. But if you make that conscious and deliberate effort on the basis of `samatha' experience, then you are almost bound to succeed, depending upon the strength of the `samatha' experience and the solidity, as it were, of that base.

So this is what makes the whole difference between the academic approach to Buddhism, and the Buddhist approach. Inasmuch as the academic as such doesn't practise meditation, he can't possibly hope to develop insight, and then what possibility has he of understanding Buddhism? At best, if he's very very conscientious and very painstaking, from the words of the Buddhist tradition, he can arrive at some correct, or more or less correct, intellectual understanding, but no more than that. And more often than not, in the absence of any insight, even his intellectual understanding, or his intellectual reconstruction of Buddhism, as far as he can read it from the texts at his disposal, is bound to be very, very faulty, and very, very imperfect, as is Trevor Ling's.

All right, let's go on to "Discovery based on Analysis", on the next page.

Text ***"DISCOVERY BASED ON ANALYSIS***

Another early Buddhist text from the same collection describes in rather more detail the process by which the Buddha became 'awakened' to the truth. This consisted first of his entry into and progress through four successively deeper stages of meditation; the emphasis here lies upon the purification of the mind which was necessary. In this way he is said to have achieved concentration, equanimity and dispassion. There then followed three further stages, one in each of the three watches of the night. First, says the Buddha, 'with the mind composed, quite purified, quite clarified, without blemish, without defilement ... I directed my mind to the knowledge and recollection of my former habitations [existences].' In the second watch of the night, 'with the mind composed ... I directed my mind to the knowledge of the passing hence and the arising of beings', that is, to the working of the law of Karma, or moral retribution. 'I comprehended that beings are mean, excellent, comely, ugly, well-destined, ill-going, according to the consequences of their deeds.' Finally, in the third watch, he discovered the four noble truths concerning the human situation. 'I understood it as it really is: suffering, the arising of suffering, the stopping of suffering, and the course leading to the stopping of suffering.' Knowing this, he says, his mind became free.

In freedom the knowledge came to be: I am freed; and I comprehended: Destroyed is birth, brought to a close is the Brahma-faring, done is what was to be done, there is no more of being thus. This was the third knowledge attained by me in the last watch of the night; ignorance was dispelled, knowledge arose, darkness was dispelled, light arose even as I abided diligent, ardent, self-resolute."

S: So here's another early Buddhist text, and here, clearly, there's a reference to meditation. But Trevor Ling doesn't seem to take it, as it were, very seriously. *"Another early Buddhist text from the same collection describes in rather more detail the process by which the Buddha became `awakened' to the truth. This consisted first of his entry into and progress through four successively deeper stages of meditation;"* - those are, of course, the four dhyanas. - "*...the emphasis here lies upon the purification of the mind which was necessary.*" This is, of course, quite true, but Trevor Ling again, doesn't seem to understand, doesn't seem to see, what exactly that purification of the mind involves. He seems to look at it in a quite ordinary sort of way. And he goes on: *"In this way he is said to have achieved concentration, equanimity and dispassion."* But that doesn't give one a very vivid idea of the sort of thing

that, as it were, actually happened. One is, as it were, passing over the four dhyanas very quickly and very superficially.

I take it everyone is familiar with the four dhyanas. These are the four super-conscious states which are illustrated by the Buddha's four comparisons, beginning with the soap powder and the water. You remember these? What is the analytical account? Do you remember that? For instance, in the first dhyana what mental factors are said to be present?

Vessantara: Discursive mental thought.

S: Well, what is that? `Discursive and? Sorry. What thought did you say?

Vessantara: Discursive mental thought.

S: They are called `vitakka vicara'. We went into this at great length, or considerable length anyway, in detail, in the course of the last study seminar on the Abidharma. `Vitakka' is more like the apprehension of an object. `Vicara' is more like the more detailed investigation of an object. So these are different kinds of mental activity. So in the first dhyana, in the first super-conscious state, you still have this kind of mental activity. Mental activity, at least of a subtle nature, is not yet altogether stilled. Also, of course, it must be remembered that before you even enter upon that first dhyana all thoughts of craving, anger, sloth and torpor, and hurry and worry, and indecision and doubt must have subsided. So that means before you even get into the first dhyana you are already in a quite highly developed mental state.

In the first dhyana, as I said, there are five mental factors: First of all the mind is still active - there are the two factors of `vitakka vicara'. Then there is `sukkha'. 'Sukkha' means `happiness'. This is, as it were, two-fold: you feel very, as it were, at ease physically. The physical body feels very much at ease, not merely that you're sitting comfortably, but it's as though all your physical energies are in a state of composure. Do you know the sort of state I mean?

Lokamitra: Poised.

S: Poised. Yes. Like when you're having a good meditation you've no difficulty about sitting. You don't only feel physically comfortable, your body feels in a state of ease and well-being. You feel physically well and, as Lokamitra said, poised. So this is included under the term `sukkha'. Also, of course, `sukkha' means `happiness' in the mental sense. So you feel sort of calm and happy, and at peace with yourself.
And then `priti'- what is `priti'? `Priti' is the intense blissful experience that sort of bubbles up, because as you become more concentrated, and your energies become unified, and as the unification of energy begins to extend from the conscious to the unconscious, all your blocked energies start being liberated. And as the blocked energies bubble up - this is experienced as something intensely pleasurable, and this is the experience of `priti', which is usually translated as `rapture' or `ecstasy' or `exhilaration', or something of this sort. And there are various degrees of intensity. So this is the fourth mental factor in the first dhyana.

And the fifth one, of course, is `citta kagata' which means `unification of the whole mind'. Sometimes it is translated as `concentration', but it's more than that. It's the coming together of all the different aspects of one's mind, all one's energies. They've started, as it were, coming together, started being unified. Hence the significance of the simile of the soap powder and the water coming together: not a drop of water too much, and at the same time not a single speck of the soap powder unsoaked in water, they are completely unified. So this is the first dhyana state.

So it's a state in which there is a certain amount of mental activity, at least with regard to the object of concentration that you are using, a state of physical ease and mental lightness and happiness, a rapturous experience due to the released energies that are bubbling up within you, and an overall experience of unification. Though I use all these words, quite ordinary words, one must understand them in a very heightened sort of sense, as applied to the first dhyana.

So then the second dhyana develops when, as you become more concentrated on the particular subject of your concentration, whether that may be breath or mantra, even the subtle mental activity dies away. There is no mental activity left. You are not thinking about or of anything in particular in the discursive sense, so you become still more unified. The experience of ease and happiness becomes intensified, the `priti' experience also becomes much more intense. That is the second dhyana.

Then what happens is: that you reach the third dhyana when `priti' begins to die away. The `priti' is a sort of `bubbling' experience - Do you know what I mean? - which you can experience on different levels. It's as though when all of your blocked energies are being released and absorbed, then the `bubbling' experience doesn't take place, that subsides. And all that you have, therefore, in the third dhyana is an experience of intense psycho-physical happiness amounting to bliss, together with an even greater degree of unification and integration of one's being - one's psycho-physical energies and so on, at an even higher level. This is the third dhyana.

Then in the fourth dhyana you have an even higher degree of unification, or integration, and `sukkha', which is comparatively gross. The experience of bliss and happiness is replaced by equanimity. So there is an experience of equanimity conjoined, as it were, with integration.

So though again I'm using the same words, or using ordinary words - they are to be understood in a very very heightened sense. For instance `equanimity' - what does one mean by `equanimity'? `Equanimity' doesn't just mean being a bit calm, a bit quiet. It's a very much more positive and powerful state. For instance one has equanimity as the fourth of the four `illimitable' states. I take it everybody is familiar with these. They are usually called `brahmaviharas' - this is what Buddhagosha calls them: first there is of course 'mettā' and then `karuna' and `mudita', and then `upeksa' or `equanimity', which appears, as I've just said, in the fourth dhyana. So what is this `equanimity'? One must be very careful to understand that `equanimity' is not a sort of unemotional state. The great danger is that you mistake `equanimity' for `indifference', or you mistake `indifference' for `equanimity'. So what is said is: first of all you practise the `mettā'. You practise `mettā', and you practise it in the usual way, and you end up by practising it towards all beings equally; towards all beings impartially, and it's by dwelling upon this impartiality of `mettā' that you make the transition to equanimity. Not by excluding the `mettā', yeh?, not by excluding feeling or emotion, but making that particular emotion equal, or the same, towards all beings. It's that which gives you your equanimity.

So equanimity, far from being separated from emotion, positive emotion, is the culmination of it. It shows that the positive emotion, whether `mettā' or `karuna' or `mudita', has reached its apogee, as it were: it's been fully developed, which means equally towards all living beings. And that gives you that equally to all living beings, gives you your equanimity. Because then you're not sort of more attached to one or less attached to another, and therefore with more mettā for one and less for another. You've equal `mettā', equal `karuna', equal `mudita' towards all, as the occasion requires. So this gives you, as it were, your emotional stability. That is your equanimity. So it's equanimity in this sort of sense that arises, or is developed in connection with the fourth dhyana, and conjoined with unification, or integration, or `citta kagata' So it's this which constitutes what Trevor Ling calls "purification

of the mind." So if you just read this sentence: "*This consisted first of his entry into and progress through four successively deeper stages of meditation; the emphasis here lies upon the purification of the mind which was necessary*." Well, that doesn't really convey the full import of what that experience of the Buddha's was, when he passed through those four dhyanas, thus achieving purification of the mind **in that sense**. So though Trevor Ling has reproduced the words, as it were, quite faithfully, he quite clearly doesn't understand what the words really signify. Do you see this? And he doesn't really understand what `purification of the mind' means. And he goes on : "*In this way he is said to have achieved concentration, equanimity, and dispassion.*", which seems a very ordinary sort of thing indeed! Because he just doesn't understand these terms in their - I won't say in a necessarily `spiritual' sense, but in their more **heightened** sense, as they do occur, or as they are experienced in the course of actual meditation. Do you see what I mean?

Nagabodhi: Yeah. I just had a sort of image of the level on which he is presenting it is almost as if students at university are encouraged to take up a little bit of meditation each morning, like TM, just to put them in a slightly clearer state of mind, to see them through the day.

S: Yes. Just a little bit of concentration, a mild euphoria, and that's meditation. Yes. So as regards the words, he's not all that wrong. He's following the text, he's following tradition, but he doesn't seem to have any feeling for what they actually mean, or any real understanding.

"There then followed three further stages, one in each of the three watches of the night. First, says the Buddha, `with mind composed...."* Well, even `composed' is not a very good word in English. I don't remember what the word is in Pali, but it is something much more like `samatha'. *".....quite purified, quite clarified without blemish, without defilement...I directed my mind to the knowledge and recollections of my former habitations (existences). In the second watch of the night, `with the mind composed....I directed my mind to the knowledge of the passing hence and the arising of beings',...."

So what do you think this represents? What do you think really happened then? Trevor Ling just passes it over: he just quotes this passage without saying anything about it, though clearly it doesn't square very well with his `Enlightenment as Humanistic Discovery'. What has humanistic discovery got to do with previous lives and `karma'? But the Buddha said according to this text, that he actually saw this, he actually experienced his own previous lives, and the fact that human beings fare in accordance with their `karma'. Now, either you accept it or you dismiss it, or you try to interpret it in some way or other if you can't take it literally. But this is what the text says, and this is what the Buddha is supposed to have related: that in the first watch of the night he saw back over the whole chain of his previous existences, back over even thousands of lives, and also that he saw numberless beings passing away and being reborn according to their deeds. He had a sort of vision! It wasn't a humanistic enlightenment. It wasn't clearly intellectual insight. Intellectual insight doesn't bring about such things, you don't see these sort of things from intellectual insight. So what is one, as it were, to make of all this, in purely humanistic terms? It becomes very difficult. If you want to put it in the most general terms, and not perhaps, refer to previous lives, or `karma' and rebirth, because the Buddha saw very clearly by way of a direct sort of spiritual experience, the conditionedness of human life, of human existence. Do you see what I mean? He really saw its contingent character. How dependent it was, that there was no freedom about it, no originality about it. It was repetitive: the same thing over and over again, sort of mechanically. This is what he saw, one may say, in principle, whether one takes the previous lives and `karma' literally or not: but this is what he saw - the sheer contingency of the human condition. Certainly not just as an intellectual insight, but as a sort of almost vision.

And then -*"Finally .... he discovered the four noble truths concerning the human situation. `I*

understood it as it really is: suffering, the arising of suffering, the stopping of suffering, and the course leading to the stopping of suffering'. In other words he saw not only the contingency of the human situation, he saw the way out of that contingency. He saw a path leading to freedom. He saw not only `the wheel', he saw not only `The Wheel of Life', the wheel of birth and death and rebirth, but he saw the spiral leading up out of that into what, later on, he called `nirvana' or `Enlightenment'. And he, himself, experienced himself going up and up that spiral and realising `nirvana'. So that then he says, "*Knowing this, his mind became free. "In freedom the knowledge came to me: I am freed; and I comprehended : Destroyed is birth ..." - `So far as I'm concerned the state of contingency is at an end' - "....brought to a close is the Brahma-faring, done is what was to be done, there is no more of being thus."* -(i.e. contingent, conditioned). *...."This was the third knowledge attained by me in the last watch of the night; ignorance was dispelled ...*" - spiritual ignorance - *..."knowledge arose,*" - spiritual knowledge -*".... darkness was dispelled,...*" - It's as though the Buddha doesn't find the conceptual terminology adequate so he falls back on symbolic terminology - `darkness was dispelled*, light arose even as I abided diligent ...*" - a very poor translation, fully aware, fully awake, "*....ardent...*" - again a very weak translation, with fully aroused fiery energy - this is more nearly the translation - "*...self-resolute..*" `poised upon myself, in a state of complete equilibrium at, at as it were, the pinnacle of my being' - that would probably be a more faithful way of putting things.

So you're very far from humanistic enlightenment;very far from intellectual insight, here. You're concerned with an actual experience of something we can only describe as a spiritual or transcendental experience. But Trevor Ling just doesn't seem to be very sensitive, or at all sensitive, to all this.

All right, let's go on.

Text *"In yet other versions of these events it was the theory of 'Conditioned Origination' **(Pratitya-Samutpada)** which the Buddha is said to have discovered during this critical night, and so became fully 'awakened' to the truth of human existence. This is a basic Buddhist doctrine which has become best known, perhaps, through its pictorial representation, particularly in Tibetan art, as the Wheel of Existence. In its verbal form it is found, with slight differences, in various places in early Buddhist literature. It is regarded as SO fundamental a truth that it is represented as being the vital discovery made by all 'Buddhas'. Its discovery by a former Buddha, Vipassi, is described in the **Mahapadana Sutta**. We are told that he was meditating in seclusion (at the point in his life story which Gotama had reached in his when he sat down on the bank of the Nairanjana river), and reflected thus: 'Verily this world has fallen upon trouble; one is born, and grows old, and dies, and falls from one state, and springs up in another. And from this suffering, moreover, no one knows of any way of escape, even from decay and death. When shall a way of escape from this suffering be made known, from decay and from death '. He then went on to seek an answer to the question: What is the antecedent cause or condition of decay and dying? The answer he reached was that birth was the antecedent cause. What then, he asked, conditions birth? The answer to this, he found, was that 'becoming' conditions birth. Similarly, the antecedent cause was sought for each link in the chain of causation: becoming was conditioned by the attitude and activity of I grasping'; grasping arose out of craving; craving out of feeling; feeling out of sense-contact out of the six-fold field of the senses ; the six-fold field of the senses arose out of the physical body, or 'name and form'; and the physical body is conditioned by, or arises out of, cognition. At this point the recession ends in the particular text; elsewhere in Buddhist literature there are two more antecedent causes: the impulses, and ignorance"*

S: No doubt this is material that we are quite familiar with. `Conditioned Origination', or `Dependent Origination', or `Conditioned Co-production'. But what does Trevor Ling call

this? Do you notice?

Nagabodhi: Yes.

S: What does he call it?

Nagabodhi: A theory.

S: A theory. And he also refers to it as a basic Buddhist doctrine. But is it really a theory? Or what do we mean by a theory?

Lokamitra: Something that hasn't been necessarily proved.

S: Yes. But we're not really concerned with a theory at all. We are concerned with the Buddha's attempt to formulate in conceptual terms something of the nature, or something of the content even, of his enlightenment, his insight, on that particular night. Not only on that particular night, but thereafter. Usually it is said that the doctrine, if you like to use that term, of conditionality is the initial formulation, in the sense that there was the Buddha, as it were, with his experience of Enlightenment as we call it, or his insight into the nature of existence, and he had to communicate something of that, so how was he to do it? Presumably he wanted to communicate it in a systematic, intelligible form, so he started off with the principle of `Conditionality'; and then he distinguished in that principle of conditionality, two kinds of conditionality: one, as it were, cyclical, the other spiral. In the cyclical type or order of conditionality there was a reaction between pairs of terms which were opposites like birth and death, or death and birth or rebirth; but in the cyclical (sic) order there was a process, not of reaction but of what we may call, - we don't have a proper word - incrementation. In other words from A you don't react to anti-A, or non-A but to A+, and from A+ to the third degree as it were. Do you see what I mean?

So these were the two orders of conditionality, the first of which is of course, represented by `The Wheel of Life', and the second by `The Path' or `The Spiral'. The first covered by the first and second Noble Truth, the second covered by the third and fourth Noble Truths. So this, as it were, conceptually formulated, was the content of the Buddha's experience, as applied to conditioned existence. So his doctrine, if you call it that, of `Dependent Origination' has the function of giving conceptual expression to the content of the Buddha's spiritual experience in such a way that people could not only have some sort of, as it were, theoretical idea about what the Buddha's experience was, but also some kind of practical basis by means of which they could realise that experience eventually for themselves. The practical basis being, in particular, that spiral type of conditionality, in other words `The Path'. Or in other words `the path of the creative mind.'

So the Buddha wasn't just concerned to enunciate a theory. He was concerned to, as it were, reveal the content of his spiritual experience- i.e. his experience of Enlightenment - in such a way as to make it possible for others to pass to that experience. In other words he wanted a conceptual formulation of his spiritual experience, which would not only give people some idea of what it was like, at least from an intellectual point of view, but which would also function on its practical side, as a basis for their realisation of that experience of Enlightenment. Do you see that? So this is what I've dealt with mainly in some of the earlier chapters of `*The Survey*'. Probably most of you know that.

So it's not a theory that we're dealing with, it's an attempt at formulation and communication. Or an attempt at a conceptual formulation of the experience of Enlightenment in such a way that, as I've said on the practical side, it could provide a basis for the realisation of that state of Enlightenment, or means of access to it, for other people. In other words this is the

Buddha's philosophy, if you like to call it that, of mind reactive and mind creative. The Buddha is, as it were, saying `Well, I see two possibilities for humanity: you can either be reactive and go round and round in a circle as you've done millions of times already, or you can just become creative and go up and up in an ascending spiral, from level to level of consciousness until you arrive at the culminating experience which we call `nirvana'. So all that the Buddha is really saying on the basis of his experience, his Enlightenment is, that there are two possibilities for humanity: to develop the reactive mind or allow the reactive mind to go on functioning or to develop the creative mind. This is what he is basically saying. And he is saying - `I have realised the creative mind at its highest level of functioning, therefore I am a Buddha; this is what I have experienced, this is what I have achieved: the culmination of the creative mind.' So he is pointing out to people these two possibilities. Unfortunately many of the Buddhist texts only speak about `Dependent Origination' in terms of the Wheel of Life, not in terms of `The Path' and `The Spiral'. But there are plenty of teachings nonetheless in the Buddhist texts about the Path, and about, in effect, the spiral, but the connection of the Path with the principle of conditionality is not always very well brought out, and certainly not in modern Buddhist teaching. In fact it hasn't been brought out in that sort of way for hundreds of years.

Lokamitra: Which text are the 12 positive links in?

S: There are two places: one is the Samyutta-Nikaya. These references are given in *`The Survey'* by the way, chapter and verse. I also found another very important quotation when I was looking the other day through some of the lectures of Dr. Beni Madhab Barua, whom I have quoted in *`The Survey'*. Do you remember? And he points out that in an exposition by Sariputta, Sariputta says that as each stage of the Path is reached, various unskilful states subside and countless skilful states come into existence. So he speaks in terms of `nissajja' on the one hand - `nissajja' means `waning' or `wasting away', of unskilful states, and `paripuri', which means the development, the full development, the efflorescence of numberless skilful mental states as the positive counterpart of that process of `nissajja' or `waning away', or `wasting away'. Do you see the significance of this? That at every step there is a waning away of the skilful (sic) and an efflorescence of the positive. And in this particular text which he quotes, Sariputta is making this very clear. So to the extent that the reactive wanes away, to that extent the creative flourishes. The two are different aspects of the same process.

So if you want to put in the very simplest and fundamental terms the content of the Buddha's realisation, - from a practical point of view that is - when he became a Buddha he saw the uselessness of going round and round in a circle. He saw the uselessness and futility of the process of the reactive mind, and he saw that for mankind, there was another possibility which he had just realised himself, and that possibility was the development of the creative mind, from lower to higher, and ever higher levels of mental positivity and emotional positivity, culminating in `Nirvana'. He saw the possibility of the higher evolution and claimed himself to have fulfilled that higher evolution. This is essentially what happened. But we don't really get much inkling of that from Trevor Ling, do we? Unfortunately. [Pause]

Nagabodhi: Reminds me of the story in which Ananda says to the Buddha that the teaching of `conditioned co-production' is very easy to understand, and the Buddha says : "Say not so, it's because people haven't grasped .....

S: Yes! If you've really grasped it you just wouldn't be rolling along in this `samsara'.

All right, let's go on.

Text *"The significance of this relentlessly pursued analysis is found when the series is*

reversed, and it is affirmed that when ignorance ceases, the impulses cease; when the impulses cease, cognition ceases; and so on, to the final stage - when birth (i.e. rebirth) ceases, then 'decay and dying, grief, lamentation, ill, sorrow and despair cease'."

S: Mm. (Breaking in) But it isn't just a process of cessation. This is the important point. In so many of the modern Theravadin expositions of Buddhism you get the impression that cessation is the last word - that everything unskilful ceases permanently and that state of cessation is `Nirvana'. But as Sariputra made clear in that text I've referred to - that every step of the path there is not only the cessation of the unskilful, but the efflorescence of the skilful, so that when you come to the state of `Nirvana' not only is there a complete cessation of the `reactive' mind but the fullest possible development of the `creative' mind as well. And that shouldn't be forgotten.

Lokamitra: Can you have one without the other? Really ?

S: You can't. You can't according to Sariputra, no, in that particular text, but so many modern Theravadin expositions and also Western accounts of Buddhism speak of `nirvana' simply in terms of cessation: simply in terms of `the blowing out of the three fires of craving, hatred and delusion', and say nothing more. So you're left with the impression that `nirvana' is a state of annihilation. And this is the popular view, isn't it? - that `nirvana' means nothing, that `nirvana' means annihilation, and that **that** is the goal of the Buddhist life. You seek to become nothing, to annihilate yourself. All right, carry on.

Text *"As D. L. Snellgrove has commented, 'Attempts have been made to discover a logical sequence of ideas from this ill-sorted list, both by early commentators and by European scholars. But no general relationship between the terms can be found which will relate in the same manner any two consecutive terms."*

S: The solution for this of course is found in the `Abidharma'. The Abidharma - I'm speaking of the Theravada `Abidhamma'- the Abidhamma Pitaka consists of seven books. I expect you all know that. The seventh book is called `Patanna'. `Patanna' means roughly `relation'. So it's the book of relations. And the `Patanna' deals with the twenty-four `paccayas'. Paccaya means also relations, or ways in which one thing can arise in dependence upon another. Do you see what I mean? In other words twenty-four different types of conditionality.

[End of side one side two]

So it also applies this to the twelve `nidanas' and it points out exactly in which way or ways, a succeeding `nidana' is related to a preceding `nidana'. Some succeeding `nidanas' are related to some preceding `nidanas' by way of this or that or the other **type** of conditionality. They are not all related to their preceding `nidanas' by way of the same **kind** of conditionality, which is what Snellgrove seems to be thinking they should be; - *"but no general relationship between the terms can be found which will relate in the **same manner any two consecutive terms."*** Well, Buddhist tradition is fully aware of that! But it's interesting and it's practical, not theoretical. And the tradition is also quite well aware of exactly in what way, by way of what **type** of conditionality the succeeding is related to the preceding `nidana'. This has all been considered and well thought out or well seen centuries ago. It shows as I said in the course of the last seminar that `Abidhamma' knowledge is quite useful. [Pause]

Text *"The list is best understood as it is first presented to us, as a spontaneous searching back and back into the origins of death and rebirth."*

S: All right, fair enough. It's not a sort of scientific account as it were.

Text *"A further difficulty lies in the fact that the English translations of the various terms are in some cases little more than attempts to put a name to what, even in the original, is somewhat obscure."*

S: Yes. We went into this in the course of the last seminar - and I think also was the previous one - in connection with the term `avidya', which is the first of the twelve `nidanas' and we were discussing Guenther's rendering of `vidya' and `avidya'. What was that, by the way, do you remember? Wasn't it `appreciative understanding' for `vidya' and lack of appreciative understanding for `avidya'. Guenther's whole discussion was very helpful in fact, on this particular term. According to him `vidya' is a sort of appreciative, I would say almost `aesthetic' understanding. That is to say you are concerned with things, or you're concerned with the object, not for the sake of whatever practical utility it may have for you, but for the sake of what it is in itself. You see this? Just as when you enjoy or you admire nature, or a work of art: you're just appreciating. You're not thinking of what use you can make of them. So `vidya', according to Guenther, is this sort of appreciation, this sort of knowledge almost, this sort of experience as applied to existence as such. Do you see what I mean? You're not thinking of making use of anything, you are, as it were, just contemplating, just appreciating, just enjoying even, just as you might enjoy a work of art without thinking of how much you could get for it if you sold it, or anything of that sort.

You might remember an illustration I sometimes give from my own experience in Kalimpong once. I remember that I went out for a walk and in the course of my walk I came upon a beautiful pine tree, a really magnificent pine tree, with a very, very thick trunk, absolutely straight, going up maybe fifty, sixty feet, with beautiful green branches. So I was just looking up at this and a Nepali who I knew happened to come along, and I said to him, "Look at this beautiful tree. Isn't it magnificent?" He said, "Yes. There must be at least three cartloads of firewood there!" So that showed that he was looking at it, not appreciating it, but in terms of its utility. He didn't see the tree at all. He only saw the three cartloads of firewood. He didn't see the tree at all.

So just seeing the tree and appreciating the tree for being a tree without any sort of what you were going to do with it, or what you were going to make of it, is like the `appreciative understanding'. And the absence, the lack of the appreciative understanding is just like the attitude of that Nepali who came along and only saw the cartloads of firewood there. So on account of our, as it were, selfish, egoistic attitude, we are always trying to make use of things, to do things with things. To bend them to our own purposes. We don't see them as they are. We don't have an appreciative understanding of them. We lack that appreciative understanding. And on account of that lack of appreciative understanding we engage in all sorts of selfish, as it were, utilitarian activities, and those are the so-called `impulses' or `samskaras'. So in dependence upon this lack of appreciative understanding arise all sorts of ego-centred activities. Trying to make use of things in one way or another. And these are the first two `nidanas'.

So they need a bit of explanation. It isn't enough to translate `nidana' number one as `ignorance' and `nidana' number two as `impulses'. You have to go into it much more deeply than that. And Guenther - and this is one of his very good points - very often does this with Buddhist terms. Sometimes of course in his own verbose way, but very often he does communicate quite a lot of their real content and their real meaning.

So one can think very well of `avidya' usually translated as ignorance, as lack of `appreciative understanding', with the emphasis on the **`appreciative'**. As I said, it is almost sort of aesthetic in quality.

Nagabodhi: It presupposes `metta'.

S: Presupposes `metta', yes. So one has to be as it were much more sympathetic to the Buddhist tradition, and to these terms, before one can get out of them their real meaning. All right, let's go on then.

Text *"But although we may have to be content with an imperfect understanding of the series itself, we can at any rate perceive the nature of the Buddha's approach to the problem of the human condition. It was based on analytical reasoning; what was discovered was discovered by 'strenuous effort of the mind."*

S: But was it based on analytical reasoning? No, It was based on **insight** - spiritual insight. It was certainly discovered by a `strenuous effort of the mind', but not the **ordinary** mind - the concentrated mind, or the **uplifted** mind, the mind which had been transformed by the dhyanic experience.

Text *"But it was in the Buddhist view no 'ordinary' mind which put forth this almost super-human effort of understanding; it was essentially a mind purified, calmed, and cooled from all evil passion..."*

S: Yes. So he does get the point to some extent, but as you will see in a minute he loses it almost at once.

Text *"It would bc incorrect to say that this was merely an intellectual approach, for moral values obviously play a primary and absolutely indispensable part, too."*

S: Simply moral values? Well, it is much more than that: concentration, meditation goes far beyond the merely moral level, don't they ?

Text *"Even so, in the last resort, Buddhist wisdom is to be regarded as a discovery of the human mind; it is in no sense a revelation to Gotama given by a non-human spirit or divine being."*

S: So, in a way, what he says is quite correct, but in a way again, it's all wrong. Do you see what I mean? There's an ambiguity in his use of the expression `the human mind'. If we use that expression we cannot but think of the **ordinary** human mind, the **average** human mind. But for Buddhism the human mind includes all the dhyana states as well. Those are also within the reach of the human mind. In a sense, Enlightenment is within the reach of the human mind, but it's a **transformed** human mind. So `human' for the Buddhist tradition doesn't mean what `human' means for the Western theistic, or post theistic traditions. Do you see what I mean?

When we use the word `human' what do we really mean? At the back of our mind there is a qualification or assumption `Not God'.

_____: Rational.

S: Rational. At the back of our mind is the sort of implicit distinction between `God' and `man'. So `human' is what pertains to `man' as distinct from `God. `God' is right up there, and `man' is right down here. But we don't have the conception as the Buddhists have of the human extending and stretching as far as anything can go. Do you see what I mean? In Buddhism there is nothing beyond the reach of the human mind, but that doesn't mean because (sic) things are limited to `down here', it means that the human mind has got a stretch and a range such has not been considered possible in the West. So for the Buddhist tradition the word `human' has got a **vast** meaning, a **vast** significance, whereas in the West it's

comparatively limited. The `human' - 'man' is subordinated to `God'. But in Buddhist tradition the human mind includes everything: there is nothing, at least potentially, beyond the human mind. Not that there is no `Absolute', the human mind includes the `Absolute', potentially. So you see the difference?

So if you use the word `human' in the Western sense it just suggests, or presupposes, the merely human, the only human. But not in the Eastern traditions, not in Buddhism at any rate. So if you say " In the last resort, Buddhist wisdom is to be regarded as a discovery of the human mind...", well Buddhists would say, `Well what else should discover it but the human mind?' If the human mind can't discover it, well, who can or what can ?' It's certainly not a revelation given to Gotama, but not on the assumption that: There is a realm beyond from which revelation could have come but it didn't. No! In Buddhism there is no realm beyond the human mind. The human mind can go anywhere, but not the sort of rational human mind, but a human mind which has got a far wider, a far vaster range than anything that we can imagine. But it's still, according to Buddhism, the human mind.

So the word `human' has got an infinitely vaster connotation in Buddhism than it has in the West, or Western thought. Do you see what I mean? `Human mind' for Buddhism includes all the dhyanas, the four lower ones, the four higher ones, it includes all the supernormal powers, it includes enlightenment. All that is included potentially in the `human mind'. But we tend to think in the West of the human in the sense of `human, all too human'. So it is just the same, when in the West we say, `the Buddha was a man'. So what does that suggest to the Western person? - `Only a man', just an ordinary man, not `God', not an incarnation, not a divine being, just a man.' But when a Buddhist says - the Buddha was a human being, an enlightened human being, it suggests the Buddha was the highest conceivable form of being, nothing beyond an enlightened human being. An enlightened human being is the highest form of life in the universe according to Buddhism. Nothing beyond a Buddha, nothing beyond an enlightened human being, nothing beyond an enlightened human mind. So if it's humanism it's a sort of transcendental humanism, not a merely rationalistic humanism.

So you have to put this across too. If someone asks you whether the Buddha was God you say, `No, the Buddha was a man.' So if that person happens to believe in God then he will consider that, well, when you say that the Buddha was a man it means that the Buddha was someone vastly inferior to God, who has been created by God, and he was somehow on the level at best of Socrates. So it isn't enough to say to such a person that the Buddha was a human being, you must make it clear what Buddhism means, or what Buddhism conveys by the term `human'. And make it clear that the term `human', in the Buddhist context, has a far wider range than it has in the Western ex-Christian, or Christian context. Have any of you ever come across this sort of difficulty: communicating what is meant by the Buddha being a `human being', an enlightened human being?

Nagabodhi: I realise I have now that you are talking about it.

S: It's one of the things I've emphasised right at the beginning as far as I remember, in speaking about the Buddha. Otherwise you're left with a very sort of humanistic impression.

So even though so many people no longer really believe in God, they still think of `man' as it were, in `non-God' terms. There's no God. No, we don't believe in God but Man is inferior to Him. Do you see what I mean? This is the position, this is the attitude. 'We don't believe in God but of course God created Man; or Man is created by God'. So one must bear all this in mind when reading this sentence -"Even so, in the last resort Buddhist wisdom is to be regarded as the discovery of the human mind." Not the ordinary human mind, therefore not an ordinary wisdom. "It is in no sense a revelation to Gotama given by a non-human spirit ..." - Not that there **is** a non-human spirit that didn't happen to give him a revelation - No!

He didn't need a revelation, he was far above and beyond any non-human spirit. The non-human spirits came to him for instruction according to Buddhist teaching, what to speak of making a revelation to him! He made a revelation to them!

So it is very important to get this right: if you don't understand who the Buddha really was how can you `go for refuge'? And it's said in the Buddhist texts that if you `go for refuge' thinking that the Buddha was say, your kinsman or he belonged to the Sakyan tribe, or he was very influential with King Bimbasara, you don't really `go for refuge'. You only `go for refuge' if you understand that he was the Buddha; in other words an enlightened human being. Unless you understand **that** you don't `go for refuge': If you think the Buddha was God you don't `go for refuge'. If you think the Buddha was the ninth incarnation of Vishnu you don't `go for refuge'. You only `go for refuge' if you look at the Buddha as a human being who reached, through personal experience, the highest state that a human being is capable of, which is what we mean by `Buddha'.

If you can think of anybody else whom you believe has reached a higher state than the Buddha has reached then you don't or you can't `go for refuge' to the Buddha. You've no business to be `going for refuge' to him anyway, if you think you've found someone better.

So `going for refuge to the Buddha' means the `going for refuge' to whatever it is you can conceive of as the highest accessible state available to human beings as actually embodied in a human being, who did actually live. In other words the Buddha represents human potential fully actualised. One can say that.

So we're far beyond "a discovery of the human mind" in the ordinary sense, or in the sense that those words might reasonably be expected to convey to the average Western mind.

Lokamitra: In the East those who believe in God, various Hindus and so on: do they have the same limitations on.....

S: Oh yes. This is why I referred to - if you think of the Buddha as the ninth incarnation of Vishnu you don't `go for refuge'. This is how most Hindus think of him - `Nabamavatara', the ninth avatara of Vishnu. [Pause]

Lokamitra: It seems to me that it's also something to do with seeing things on a wider time scale almost. In the East you have the acceptance of `karma' much more widely and rebirth and you can accept that you will be in many different states during those different lives or existences or whatever, whereas here in the West one is very limited with just one life. It makes things very cramped and limited and ....

S: Well, some of the Buddhist texts: they point out that if you're a man in this life well, in many previous lives you were a woman, you must have been. Where if you were a woman in many previous lives you must have been a man. So this makes your present sex a very relative affair, just a sort of passing emphasis. So you're much less likely then to think of yourself as **a man** or **a woman**: you're somebody, you might say an individual, who in this particular life happens to be male, or happens to be female. Do you see what I mean? And therefore there isn't this degree of absoluteness attached to one's present sex. The positions might be reversed in the next life ... (someone chuckles) there's not much point in identifying yourself **too** strongly with this or that sex in the present life. In fact if you're not careful, if you identify yourself too strongly with your existing sex in this life by way of reaction you might be reborn in the opposite sex in your next life.

So it's the same thing with, or in relation to, the animals. If one does believe literally in the fact that you might have been an animal in a previous life, well, at least you feel some kinship

with the animals, don't you? You might have been a little rabbit in your last life; or you might be a bear in your next one; or a nice shaggy coated dog. It makes you feel kind towards animals, doesn't it? [Pause]

Nagabodhi: In a way if you accept rebirth, the Buddha represents, surely, more then than merely the human potential: he must represent the ..... [**S:** breaking in - Yes. Right.] .... the peak of existence....
S: Yes. The potential of all life. Right. Yes. And the Jataka stories, admittedly very popular tales, they do represent the Buddha as Bodhisattva having been born as this or that animal. And whether or not one takes that literally it does show that that potentiality of enlightenment is inherent in all forms of life. In a sense the movement of life is towards that, though in its later stages it can be achieved only by the conscious effort of the individual, but at least the movement of life is towards that kind of individual, or the emergence of that kind of individual, i.e. the individual with that kind of potential, that kind of capacity. (Pause)

So much of the discussion so far this afternoon has tended to remind us that we have to be very careful in our use of words, in communicating with people about the Dharma, because those words have for them a certain rather limited meaning in certain cases: the word `meditation', the word `concentration', the word `equanimity', the word `man', the word `human'. These have got a very limited range as ordinarily use, and when we use them in our rather special Buddhist sense they take on a much wider and even deeper meaning. So we must try to convey that wider and deeper meaning to people when we use these sort of words. Otherwise if we speak of `meditation' they may think that we just mean sitting down and having a good quiet think, or something of that sort. [Pause]

Nagabodhi: Certainly is something I've been thinking of is this whole business of transposing the Eastern terms to the West, that there really is no hurry to keep finding words and being able to present the Dharma in a nice, watertight conceptual way for Westerners because, if one can, that may even add to the illusion that it can just be understood. [**S:** Yes.] ... and in some ways the mystery .... [**S:** Ah!] ... of the ....

S: (Breaking in) What is more important is to try to get the **feeling** of what is behind the traditional words. [Pause]

I remember one old lady who used to come along to my lectures at Centre House: she enjoyed them very much. She always used to stop and thank me for the lecture on her way out, and congratulate me if she thought it was a particularly good one. But one evening she said after one particular lecture, "I have just one little point to make." So I said, "What's that?" "You put everything so clearly that we think we have understood." [Laughter] So that gave me much food for thought. These little old ladies sometimes come out with it, don't they?

All right let's go on.

Text *"There are a number of ways in which the Buddha's analysis of human existence can be set out. There is, as we have seen, the twelvefold causal chain, or circle of causes and effects. There is also the presentation of the essentials in the form of the 'four noble truths'. Again, there is a well-known and frequently used characterization of all life in terms of the 'three marks of existence' - suffering, impermanence and non-individuality. In every case the starting-point, the datum, is* ***duhkha****, the suffering, pain or grief which is the common lot of* ***all living beings.*** *For the Buddha, this is what constituted the problem to be solved; it was from here that all his thinking started and it was to the curing of this condition that all his effort was directed."*

S: Do you think it's true that when people start looking for something like the Dharma, that they are in fact searching for a way out of suffering? A way out of `dukkha'? Do you think there is an experience of `dukkha' in one form or another? And that they are looking for a way of escape from that? Refuge from that?

Siddhiratna: I should imagine there's at least two or three.

S: What do you think the other ones are, or could be ?

Siddhiratna: Well one may have been a mystical experience which you need clarifying; one maybe that you're interested in philosophical concepts and want to know more about it.

S: But, for instance, why are you interested in philosophical concepts, and want to know more about them?

Siddhiratna: Because you become aware at some point of universal questions.

S: So that awareness of a question, the fact that there is an unsolved question, as it were, that there is a question mark hanging over existence: couldn't you describe **that** as an experience of `dukkha'? You're not satisfied with not having an answer. You're not satisfied with just being confronted by a question mark to which there is as yet no answer. This is unsatisfactory. This is uncomfortable. Makes you uneasy, as it were. You want to find out why. You could look at it like that, couldn't you? The same about even the mystical experience: if it was completely satisfied, well, that would be that! But you want to know what it was; why you had it; where it fits in. So there is something still unresolved; something not quite right.

`Dukkha' doesn't necessarily mean violent physical suffering, but some experience of dis-ease, or unease, something not quite right, something that niggles you, or nags at you. And this is also `dukkha'. Even happiness is `dukkha' in the sense that the happiness may not be sufficient, you may want to reach beyond it to a further happiness, so the happiness is `dukkha'. You might be feeling quite all right: it's a lovely day, you've just got up, had a very good breakfast, nothing much to do, nothing that you've got to do, but you just feel like doing something else. You're not really happy. That's `dukkha'.

If you were completely happy you'd remain exactly where you were and not want to do anything, because your present experience would be so completely satisfying. Some people are a bit like this, on a comparatively lower level, aren't they? But they can't sustain it indefinitely: sooner or later their mood changes, and they start looking for something else.

So you could say that you look because you are looking **for** something. You're not satisfied with what you've got, or what you, at present, see. There's a sort of dissatisfaction and that dissatisfaction is `dukkha'.

Lokamitra: It needn't necessarily be a negative experience?

S: Well it need not be actually painful. In the sense of an experience of physical pain, or mental suffering even. A slight restlessness even. It may not show itself as anything more than that. But in principle it is still `dukkha'.

Siddhiratna: The translation into `unsatisfactoriness' is preferable.
S: Yes. I personally favour `unsatisfactoriness' rather than `suffering'; because you can enjoy something and be quite happy with it but still find it unsatisfactory in the sense of not completely satisfying. You say, `I quite enjoyed that! Well so what, what's next?' It's not

enough.

All right on to `The Three Marks of Existence'.

Text: *"THE THREE MARKS OF EXISTENCE*

Of the three 'marks' or characteristics of existence the first, then, is suffering; this is the most immediately obvious of the three, and possibly the one which is most readily comprehended. According to the Buddhist view, however, even this aspect of existence is not always fully apparent; men may be deluded by temporary and superficial experiences of pleasure into thinking that through the pursuit of selfish interests, pleasure can be a permanent possession."

S: Do you think people actually do, as it were, consciously think this: "...that through the pursuit of selfish interests, pleasure can be a permanent possession" Do you think they do in effect. **[VOICE:** Not consciously.] **S:** Not consciously. [Several voices at once : Yes - other comments - a lot of people do.

Siddhiratna: Does it mean not so much pleasure as some sort of security?

S: Some sort of security, yes. Maybe `security' is a better word than `possession'.

Lokamitra: Maybe their idea of pleasure just drops as they go on in life.

S: Ah, yes. They settle for less.

Lokamitra: All the time. [Someone chuckling]

S: That's rather sad, isn't it? You settle for less and less every year. Maybe it's good from time to time to look back and compare one's youthful aspirations to what you're thinking in terms of now. Very often one finds that one has settled for less, as it were.

All right, let's carry on.

Text: *"The teaching of the Buddha consisted in showing how the life of the unenlightened individual was permeated by suffering."*

S: Or pervaded by unsatisfactoriness.

Text: *"This is emphasized in the exposition of the first of the 'four noble truths', the truth concerning suffering: 'Birth is suffering (dukkha), decay is suffering, death is suffering; sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair are suffering.'"*

S: At least those things.

Text: *"This means, as a modern Buddhist writer comments, 'that all forms of existence whatsoever are unsatisfactory and subject to suffering (dukkha)'. The same writer adds that this does not refer only to actual suffering - suffering which is felt as such, but 'in consequence of the universal law of impermanency, all the phenomena of existence whatsoever, even the sublimest states of existence, are subject to change and dissolution, and hence are miserable and unsatisfactory: and that thus, without exception, they all contain in themselves the germ of suffering'."*

S: Usually, as far as I recollect, three kinds of suffering are enumerated, at least in the

Theravada tradition. The first is called `dukkha dukkha' or the unsatisfactoriness of unsatisfactoriness. That is to say if you actually cut your finger and it hurts that's unsatisfactoriness. If someone speaks harshly to you and you feel upset, well, that is unsatisfactoriness actually experienced here and now. So this is `dukkha dukkha' or the unsatisfactoriness of unsatisfactoriness. Then there is what is called `viparinama dukkha': the unsatisfactoriness of transformation. That is to say you experience happiness due to your possession of something. And you actually are happy. You enjoy the possession of that thing. You get quite a lot of pleasure from it, but in course of time, on account of the law or principle of impermanence, that thing passes away, that thing changes, or you lose that thing. And **then** you suffer. So that is called `viparinama dukkha': The suffering that comes about on account of the transformation that goes on in the object of your enjoyment - the fact that it doesn't last, or it changes into something else, or there's a law of diminishing returns where it is concerned. This is suffering by way of transformation. But the actual experience at the time is **not** unsatisfactory, as it were. It becomes so only because it cannot last, or because it changes into something else, because you can't hang on to it, you can't prolong it, or make it permanent.

And thirdly is what is called `khandha dukkha' or the intrinsic unsatisfactoriness of everything that is conditioned, everything that is to say which is not the unconditioned. There is a happiness which only the unconditioned can give; which only Enlightenment can give - ultimate happiness. So the fact that the conditioned is not the unconditioned means that the conditioned **cannot** give this happiness. So even if you enjoy conditioned happiness you are still not enjoying unconditioned happiness, so from the unconditioned point of view your happiness is unhappiness, and your satisfaction is dissatisfaction; and the satisfactoriness of what you are experiencing is unsatisfactoriness. So these three kinds of `dukkha' according to the Theravada tradition.

So that makes it clear that by `dukkha' is not meant your present actually painful experience. So it's actually painful, potentially painful, and intrinsically painful: these three kinds. Or you could say: actually unsatisfactory, potentially unsatisfactory, and intrinsically unsatisfactory. This would make the distinctions clear.

Lokamitra: With regard to 'viparinama dukkha' could you say that to the extent one enjoys something to that extent one will suffer? Or can one make any parallels?

S: It depends on the kind of person you are. If your enjoyment is associated with very strong craving and attachment, well, of course, when you lose that thing you will suffer all the more. But some people are able to enjoy things quite positively in a detached sort of way, and are quite ready to sort of let them go when they do go, and they don't suffer. But obviously one mustn't fool oneself about this. It's easy to say `Oh, all right I don't mind if I lost it; it wouldn't make much difference to me', but when you actually do lose it well, then you really do know whether you are attached or not. And more often than not you find that you are not so unattached, or detached, as you thought you were.

All right, let's go on then.

Text: *"The second mark or characteristic of existence is **anicca**, or impermanence. 'Impermanency of things is the rising, passing and changing of things, or the disappearance of things that have become or arisen. The meaning is that these things never persist in the same way, but that they are vanishing and dissolving from moment to moment. At the physical level continual flux is not difficult to discern: the human body is a continual flowing in and out of various substances; dead skin is constantly being removed and new skin forms; old cells are worn out and replaced by new cells; the waste products of the body's metabolism are disposed of in various ways. What is more, the physical pattern or structure is itself subject*

to constant, though slower, change: from infancy to childhood, through youth and adolescence to maturity, and then on into middle and old age, the physical size and shape of the components which go by the name of John Smith do not remain the same for long. According to Buddhist thought, even more impermanent are states of mind or consciousness. But this all-pervading impermanency may not always be discerned; the workings of 'commonsense' may serve to obscure it. 'The characteristic of impermanence does not become apparent because, when rise and fall are not given attention, it is concealed by continuity ... However, when continuity is disrupted by discerning rise and fall, the characteristic of impermanence becomes apparent in its true nature.'"

S: Do you see this? It should be of course in the case of the first two marks, marks of conditioned existence, unsatisfactoriness (2 or 3 words obliterated by jet plane noise) Perhaps we can say that nowadays it's easier, in a way, for us to understand the second mark than it was in former times because science can help us here; because science enables us to see things not as solids but as processes; not as fixed and unchanging but in process of constant transformation. We can probably understand that better now than ever before.

One can see that from what Trevor Ling says about old cells are worn out and replaced by new cells. Well, this was not known in the Buddha's day, as far as I know, but we know this very well now. And this is a very good illustration of what happens on the level of mind also.

All right, let's go on and conclude this section.

Text:*"Related to this second mark of existence, according to the Buddha, is the third anatta: that the idea of a permanent, unchanging ego as the basis of individual personality is a fiction. Nevertheless, it is this idea that there is a permanent ego whose interests must be served and protected, and whose power must be magnified, which ensures that suffering will continue to characterize existence.*"

S: Mm. What does one make of this idea of a permanent unchanging ego being a fiction? How real is that to one? [Voice: inaudible] Because how does one experience oneself? As an ego, in a way. Tomorrow when we come to the appropriate section we'll be going into the relationship between the ego and the individuality, or the ego and the individual -- this is quite important. But clearly it's very difficult to have an intellectual understanding of non-ego because the only understanding you can **really** have of non-ego is a spiritual insight which sees through the ego.

Nagabodhi: You can have sort of psychological insight into non-ego. I know there are parts of me and I experience them as sort of jostling position and my normal self is in danger of being submerged or is just undergoing gradual transformation, but's that's just on a sort of mundane psychological level.

S: The core, as it were, is not touched.

Nagabodhi: I suppose not. (Laughter)

[End of Tape 14 Tape 15]

Nagabodhi: I like to think it is! (Laughter)

S: One is only softened a little at the edges as it were, or just melts slightly at the edges. The hard ice at the centre remains as it were permanently unmelted. Do you think it is very useful to speak to people in terms of non-ego, especially at the beginning? Does it mean anything to them or does it even mean anything to oneself, or is one merely repeating the set terms?

Manjuvajra: It means something to me.

S: But could you put it in a sort of positive way?

Manjuvajra: Well yes, I think it's seeing yourself as a continually changing series of mental states rather than as..... identifying with the changing mental states rather than with something underlying those mental states.

S: And what difference would that make practically seeing things in that sort of way?

Manjuvajra: That means you don't get hung up on any one particular mental state because you know it's going to change again soon.

_____: So it means you can imagine the possibility of development and growth and you don't have to worry about, 'well there is a soul, a sort of substance which has been preformed, so there's no point in trying to change.....

S: There's something ( ) as it were given, which is a datum and can't be modified.

_____: I think it has quite a useful pragmatic value in that sort of way.

S: It means the permanent possibility of change, not only just change, development.

Manjuvajra; I would see the growth in terms of becoming more and more identified with the change rather than with the.....

S: Identified with any old change? Supposing you were just changing from one unskilful state to another? You could be recognising those but would you be experiencing the truth of non-ego or putting it into operation?

Manjuvajra: Well yes, if you were really recognising the changes and the causes of the changes, you presumably wouldn't allow yourself to go into negative states and so you tend to.....

S: You'd make the transition from unskilful to skilful.

_____: Maybe you could preface it with some discussion as to group phenomena as to how you are conditioned by seeing yourself as part of a group. And you can be less of an individual because of that.

S: You mean you see yourself as something fixed, something static. The group tells you what you are and you're not allowed to change that.

_____: The way all your wants are sort of projected onto you by sort of external forces, which make you less....

S: You must want a new car. You must want to live in a nice house. You must want a job. That's more or less taken care of you hasn't it?

_____: It's also the idea that things aren't to be taken personally. Actions can be done just for the sake of themselves or.....

S: Or because the actions are required by the situation.

Lokamitra: The most dangerous aspect is that it encourages a sort of self denying view, whereas to reach the first fetter, sort of no personality view, one must be fully integrated, and if one sort is encouraged on by the idea of no ego, then it can go right against that.

S: I think it is quite a dangerous sort of language to use. I think it's much better to speak in terms of the possibility of change and transformation and point out the two alternatives, the reactive and the creative, and that one can make the transition from the one to the other.

_____: Is it better to talk about soul and no soul. Many people accept a soul and think of that as being permanent.

S: But if you speak in terms of no soul, well people usually tend to think that you're leaving out of account all the more emotional factors, or even the more spiritual factors. For many people soul covers all those. They say, well he just hasn't any soul, or there's no soul in that writing. You mean no sort of higher emotional quality, no feeling. Perhaps we have to sort of rethink the matter completely and use a quite different sort of terminology and speak much more in terms of growth and development and transformation, which of course assumes that there is nothing really fixed and unchanging, because of the positive emphasis.

Nagabodhi: I think on the whole we do.

S: I think we do, yes. I remember my days at the Hampstead Vihara when so many people used to think or speak in terms of 'getting rid of the ego'.

Nagabodhi: Or at the Summer School last year, it was really very noticeable, like walking into another world, because that is their kind of fundamental attitude to Buddhism, their fundamental terms.

S: As though the ego is a real sort of thing like a sort of.....

Nagabodhi: The enemy, the yellow peril!

S: A sort of - what shall I say - a sort of gall stone stuck inside you that has got to be got rid of. I've referred before to Christmas Humphreys' rather startling metaphor, when he described the spiritual life in a lecture as being like climbing up a mountainside and as you went, he said, you hacked off great bleeding lumps of self! You hadn't heard that one before? Well this is what you've got to do as you ascend that mountainside. Hack of great bleeding lumps of self. It sounds more like a butcher's shop then than a Summer School. He said it with a real relish. But it's much better to speak in terms of growth, change, transformation.

But why do you think people like this idea or this language of get rid of the ego and trample on the ego?

_____: It's masochistic.

S: Very likely it is, yes.

Lokamitra: It's also to some extent an excuse not to grow, it's an excuse to keep things on one level.

S: Ah, there is also that, yes.

Lokamitra: Because you need the energy of all those parts of you which you don't want to change to be able to grow.

S: Well for instance people used to say things like, for instance someone at teatime would say 'please pass me another biscuit' and someone would say 'I've just had the last one' and then they'd add, 'I suppose that must be my ego'. All sorts of remarks of that sort, sort of banded about. Or someone would say, 'Well I really liked that book, it's quite a good book, but still I mustn't say so too strongly, that might be my ego.' You heard this all the time.

Nagabodhi: In other words any kind of real presence, any energy....

S: Or Mrs. So and so says, I had quite a nice little meditation this morning but I shouldn't really say so, that might strengthen my ego, and they'd say this sort of thing again and again. It was the language of the Summer School almost. And they'd sometimes say it in a knowing sort of way with a little wink or something of that sort.

Nagabodhi: I think it goes a bit alongside the guru trip because for your part you try and keep the ego a bit under control and weak, don't feed it, and then the guru's going to come along and just knock it off for you! (Laughter) Or some meditation you get will just.... It's a very lazy kind of attitude. It's going to drop off.

Lokamitra: It's almost not taking any responsibility for the situation.

S: Yes, it's that too I'm sure.

Lokamitra: Which in the Buddhist view is totally the opposite of what it's meant to be.

S: It's also mixing up the as it were higher truth with the relative truth. (Pause) Yes it's an excuse maybe for masochism, for sitting on your own natural energies and not really making any effort or accepting any responsibility for yourself. Or you'd hear remarks like, 'Oh I don't really like her but I guess it's just my ego getting in the way.' Or they'd comment on a certain popular speaker and say, 'Oh I really do like him, he really does put things beautifully. I think he really has overcome the ego, you know my dear!'

Nagabodhi: It is used in a way that is a bit synonymous with the idea of Mara. When it's used in that rather wishy-washy negative way you could say it has the virtue of being a kind of..... it simplifies things, one recognises that the fault is with oneself and you say I don't like so and so but that's just my ego, well you could sort of go into it, why don't I like them, and delve and delve or you could just say.....

S: Within my experience that was never done. If you just said well I guess that is my ego well that completes the matter, you've said your little bit, made your confession and then you can forget all about it.

Lokamitra: Also it has the danger of, as Nagabodhi said really, of cutting off any positive motivation, it cuts off all the motivation at all.

S: Because whatever you do it's bound to be your ego isn't it. Some people even used to make that point, that you couldn't really do anything because it would just be your ego.

Lokamitra: What terms should we use instead?

S: Well no, don't use any alternative term, just speak in terms of growth and development, and switching over from the reactive to the creative mode of conditionality. That conveys

much the same thing in a very much more positive and healthy way, which is very much less open to misunderstanding. If you go around telling people they've got to get rid of their ego, that's not really very inspiring, is it? Even if you happen to believe that.

_____: You know in that first stage of the mettā bhavana, is that like sort of reinstating the ego?

S: You could say that. It's the ego or the self if you like as the actual, what shall I say?, the subject of responsibility, or the locus of responsibility. You as it were start off by accepting responsibility on behalf of yourself, and to begin with towards yourself.

Manjuvajra: Can you talk safely about transcending the ego, because then you don't actually have to get rid of it, you just have to.....

S: But it's still there. Why not just speak in terms of growth and development?

Manjuvajra: But I'm thinking now if you get someone who's been to Zen classes coming along to your class.....

S: And tell you that they're having trouble with their ego. You say we just transcend it! (Laughter) Especially if you accompany it with a rather wise sort of look pulling at your moustache. (Laughter)

Nagabodhi: Better still just hit them!

S: Or sort of cast your eyes upwards as you say it, 'transcend it' (Laughter). They'd be awfully impressed I can assure you. But the thing is do you really believe in that? Do you really believe, do you really think and feel in those terms, of transcending the ego. If you do well fair enough, answer the question in that sort of way or speak in that sort of way. If it is really meaningful to one. The best thing to do about the ego is to forget all about it.

Anyway perhaps we'd better leave it there and think in terms of supper.

Next Session

S: The Four Noble Truths.

Text: *"THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS*

The other method used by the Buddha in setting forth his analysis of the human situation was that of the four noble truths. Here again, the universal fact of suffering, or the unsatisfactoriness of life, its pain, its malaise, its inherent 'ill'-ness, is the starting-point. This is the first noble truth. The second identifies what is, so to speak, the motive power which keeps this universal suffering going, the fuel which prevents the fire from going out, and that is craving or desire. This same factor has occurred in another connection: it is one of the twelve links in the chain of conditioned origination which has already been mentioned. In that context it is seen as arising out of feeling, and in its turn giving rise to the activity of selfish 'grasping'. The third noble truth concerns cessation (nirodha), and it is that the cessation of suffering is a consequence of the cessation of craving. The word used in this connection - nirodha - is a synonym of ***nibbana*** *(in Sanskrit, nirvana), the best-known name for the goal which Buddhist teaching has in view. Nirvana is the cessation of all evil passion, and because evil passion is regarded in Buddhist thought as a kind of fever, its cessation may be thought of as a 'cooling' after fever, a recovery of health. In fact. in the Buddha's time the associated adjective* ***nibbutta*** *seems to have been an everyday term to describe one who is*

well again after an illness. it is evident from this that the original Buddhist goal, nirvana, was the restoration of healthy conditions of life ***here and now****, rather than in some remote and transcendent realm beyond this life. It will be seen that the Buddhist way is essentially a therapy. But the subject of the cure is not the individual. It would be more accurate to say that individualism is the disease for which a cure is needed. To this point we shall return later.*

The fourth noble truth was the declaration that a way existed through which the cure might be achieved; this as the way delineated by the Buddha, which consisted of morality, meditation and the attainment of wisdom. These three constituents of the Buddhist way are all essential. There is an amplified description of the way in terms of eight rather than three constituent features. In this, the single item 'morality' becomes right speech, right bodily action, and right means of livelihood.""

S: Just a few general points. One can say no doubt that the Four Noble Truths are probably the best known formulation of the Buddha's teaching, in the sense that one does come across them in all the popular manuals of Buddhism. They are almost the first thing that one does come across in connection with the actual teaching, and in many expositions of Buddhism they are given the central place, so they are on the whole very well known. If you don't know those four noble truths, then you don't really know anything about Buddhism, anything about Buddhist teaching at all. At the same time it must be said that there's very little real understanding of what the Four Noble Truths really represent at all practically, especially the fact that the Four Noble Truths generally are a more specific formulation of the general principle of conditionality, and especially of the two different kinds of conditionality or two different trends of conditionality, one of which I call the cyclic and the other the spiral. So the first and second of the Noble Truths are based on or represent the cyclical type of conditionality, or in symbolic terms, the Wheel of Life, and the second two, that is to say the cessation of suffering through the cessation of desire and the Noble Eightfold Path, these represent the spiral type of conditionality, or in terms of symbols, the Path itself.

There's also a possibility of misunderstanding inasmuch as the third Noble Truth is the truth of cessation, cessation of suffering through the cessation of desire and that cessation, that nirodha, as Trevor Ling points out, is a synonym for Nirvana, and this, if we're not careful will give the impression that Nirvana is a purely negative state. Simply the non-existence of suffering and the non-existence of desire, and not the culmination of a positive sequence. Do you see what I'm getting at? So you have to take the third and the fourth truth as it were together. The third truth represents the more negative aspect of waning out of the unskilful culminating in complete cessation of the unskilful, and the path represents the more positive side of the gradual increase of the skilful culminating in Nirvana or Enlightenment if you like conceived of as a completely spiritually or even transcendentally positive state.

So in presenting the Four Noble Truths it's very important to bring out the point that the Four Noble Truths collectively are based on the principle of conditionality. The first two on the cyclical type of conditionality, the second two on the spiral type, and that nirodha or cessation is not the last word of Buddhism. There is the cessation of the unskilful but on the other hand there is the full development and culmination of the skilful.

There is also the danger on the practical side that if you pay, as it were, too much attention or the wrong sort of attention to the third Noble Truth you will tend to think of not simply Nirvana as cessation of the unskilful but of the whole of the spiritual life as being nothing but a process of elimination of the unskilful, simply a getting rid of craving, that that's all that you have to do, you have to get rid of craving and there's as it were nothing left, no suffering, no craving. A state of sort of complete blankness, annihilation and that is Nirvana. So one has to be very careful not to give that sort of impression. Has anyone actually encountered any difficulties of this kind, either in understanding the Four Noble Truths themselves or in presenting them to others?

Manjuvajra: I've come across it not so much in classes but in school when I talk about Buddhism there, everybody had the idea that Buddhism just meant cutting yourself off from everything and going into some kind of cut off state.

S: Cut off psychological state?

Manjuvajra: No, I mean sort of cut off from all involvements with everything of this world.

S: Well there's some truth in that isn't there.

Manjuvajra@ But not as understood by these people in that particular context.

S: One must be careful not to go to the other extreme and say no, Buddhism doesn't say anything against involvement in the world. It's a question of what kind of involvement, for what reason. Was this connected with the impression that the Buddhist way of life consisted simply in the elimination of craving?

Manjuvajra: The general impression that people seem to have got was that the Buddhist way of life was sort of cessation of everything really, so that in the end you'd just sort of sit there for the rest of your life.

S: Well there is a sense in which this is true, but the truly positive side needs to be stressed and not in a sort of secular humanist way but in the traditional Buddhist way. There's no doubt that some Theravada Buddhists do present the Four Noble Truths in a very sort of bleak fashion and do give the impression that all you have to do is to devote yourself to the elimination of craving and in that way you will get rid of all suffering and then that will be that, that's Nirvana. The complete cessation of all suffering. This is the sort of Buddhism that I found prevailing at the Hampstead Buddhist Vihara when I arrived there twelve years ago. People thought or people were under the impression that all they had to do was to get rid of craving. Well it is no doubt very important to get rid of craving but that isn't the only way of looking at the spiritual life, looking at one's own personal development.

Vessantara: Presumably if one really was getting rid of craving you'd after a while have such an excess of energy that you would be getting more positive anyway. One side, if really practised must bring out the other.

S: Yes, because you can't really separate the one from the other. If you really practise the one sooner or later you will get involved with the other, and it is also noticeable that these particular people who were placing such an emphasis on getting rid of craving seemed like everybody else. They lived at home, they had jobs, they had wives and families, or husbands and families. There didn't seem to be any difference, they didn't seem to be noticeably nearer the removal of craving. But certainly they saw Buddhism in that sort of light.

What about this statement that "the Buddhist way is essentially a therapy"? Obviously that has to be taken with reservations. But here again one need not go to extremes because in the scriptures themselves the Buddha is spoken of as the Great Physician, so there is a sense in which Buddhism is a therapy. But the disease is diagnosed in a much more radical fashion. Anyway Trevor Ling is going to return to this point later on so we need not discuss it now.

I would suggest that in presenting Buddhism to people you don't start off with the Four Noble Truths. Has anyone ever tried to do this in fact, in the course of a lecture or talk, or explanation? Or has anyone **ever** spoken about the Four Noble Truths?

{VOICE: Yes.]

S: But not at the beginning?

Manjuvajra: I've done it fairly soon.

S: I think what is important is to get across the point of principle of conditionality: first of all the principle of change. You could say change implies conditionality if it is not completely random succession. So start off with change and then look at that in terms of conditionality, and then speak of the two kinds of conditionality, the cyclical and the spiral, and the two kinds of possibility that that opens to the average man - the development of the reactive mind or allowing the reactive mind to continue, and the development of the creative mind. And **then** one can bring in, if one needs to make that connection with Buddhist tradition - then one can bring in the Four Noble Truths. And point out how **they** exemplify what one has been saying so far, and not forgetting to stress the positive side of the spiritual life and of Nirvana. (Pause)

Trevor Ling does make the point that in the Buddha's time the associative adjective `nibbuta' "seems to have been an everyday term to describe one who is well again after an illness." So one could refer back to that. When you gain `nirvana' you are just well, spiritually and transcendentally speaking. The fever of passion, or the fever of craving has disappeared. So just as when you become well, when you become `nibbuta', that it's not equivalent to dying, it's only the disease which is dead, in the same way the attainment of `nirvana' is not tantamount simply to the extinction of craving - it means the restoration of the state of spiritual health at the highest possible level. Craving is dead but **you're not dead**! Or if you are dead it's only in the sense of the ego being dead, as it were. Or you are dead only to the extent **that** you identified yourself with the ego. So someone who gains Enlightenment is no more extinct than a man who recovers from a disease and is restored to health is dead. [Pause]
This connection between the three trainings as they are called, Morality, Meditation and Wisdom, and the Eightfold Path - Trevor Ling points out that "the single item 'morality' becomes right speech, right bodily action, and right means of livelihood." Is this clear in people's minds - this connection between the three trainings and the eight factors of the Eightfold Path?

For instance in the three trainings you start off with morality, or ethics, then you practice meditation, then you develop wisdom; but in the case of the Eightfold Path you start off with `right understanding'. So isn't this contradictory? One formulation says you start off with morality, with ethics, the other says you start off with `right understanding'. So how do you reconcile the two?

Vessantara: Apparently the Eightfold Path is eight-limbed, it's not a stage after another after another.

S: There is that too. Yes. It's usually presented as a series of eight steps. In a sense it is, but not quite in the ordinary way. It's more like a descending series than an ascending series.

Nagabodhi: : Well, the way I see it I suppose is that `Perfect Vision', if one puts it at the beginning of the Eightfold Path, you could also put it at the beginning of the Threefold Way in that it constitutes the motivation for undertaking the path at all. You must have had some glimpse that sets you off.

S: Well a I've pointed out elsewhere, there are two Eightfold Paths: there is what is called the **mundane** eightfold path and the **transcendental** eightfold path. Now what does **that** mean?

For instance, take it with regards to `Right View' - sammaditthi, or samyakdristi. 'Right view' means a correct intellectual understanding. This is right view, or the first step of the **mundane** eightfold path, but then there is `Perfect Vision' which means an actual spiritual insight into those matters which formerly you understood only intellectually. This is called `Perfect Vision', also samyakdristi, and this is the first step or the factor of the **transcendental** eightfold path. So if you want to combine the two you can do that.
Suppose you introduce the Eightfold Path through the three trainings, then what have you got? You've got wisdom in the sense of an intellectual understanding - that comes first. Then you've got, on the basis of that intellectual understanding a practice of morality as the first step, and then having practised morality, and attained some kind of skilful mental state, you take up the practice of meditation, `samadhi'. This is all mundane. Yes ? This corresponds to the mundane Eightfold path. Then on the basis of your mundane practice of meditation, on the basis of your `samatha' that is to say, you develop insight. That is to say, you develop `Perfect Vision', which of course pertains to the Transcendental Eightfold path. Having practised `Perfect vision' your whole mental attitude comes to be transformed, yes, in accordance with that perfect vision: that is your transcendental samadhi. And then your action also, your speech and action are transformed: that is your transcendental practice of `sila'. So you've got `prajna', `sila', `samadhi', `prajna', `sila', `samadhi'. The first three covering the mundane path, and the second three covering the transcendental path. So the Eightfold path can also be arranged in the same way. You've got sixteen members then, or sixteen successive steps instead of six.

You start off with `right understanding', and with `right resolve', as it's usually translated. And then on that basis you practise `right speech', `right bodily action', right means of livelihood'. Then you take up `right effort', `right mindfulness', `right meditation'. So that gives you your mundane eightfold path. **Then** as a result of your practice of the mundane eightfold path you develop `perfect vision' which brings you on to the transcendental Eightfold path. Then that starts, as it were, descending: the effect of that, or the influence of that starts, as it were, descending, and the whole of one's being comes to be transformed. That of course, is the path of transformation. So then you have in succession the `perfect emotion', `perfect speech', `perfect action', `perfect means of livelihood', `perfect effort', `perfect mindfulness', and `perfect meditation', by which time enlightenment has been attained in the sense that you are completely transformed.

So in this way there is a mundane series of factors, a mundane series of steps, followed by a transcendental series. Whether it's a question of the three trainings, or whether it's a question of the Eightfold path. So if you want to present the path fully in these terms you must present the two series. And this is hardly ever done, certainly never done systematically, and therefore a lot of confusion arises.

Nagabodhi: In the Eightfold Path series of lectures you yourself tended to discount the intellectual understanding and sort of replaced it with `Perfect Vision', with the visionary experience. You did seem to be discounting the validity of....

S: Not really, because I've gone into that in my *`Survey'* already. I've dealt with this in *`The Survey'*, and given a little list which equates the factors of the Eightfold Path with the factors of the Three Trainings, and pointed out the fact that placed end to end they make one continuous series. So it's to be read in the light of that.

We also have a chart, don't we ? Which has never been published.

VOICE: Have we?

S: Yes. There's a chart that Vajrakumara made on a retreat at Abhirati showing all these interconnections, about three years ago. I believe it is with Ananda. People have seen it, yes.

Nagabodhi : I think it will be good if that gets around, because .....
S: Well, this is what I've been saying for the last few years, that these charts should be produced and circulated.

Nagabodhi: (interrupting) I know, this particular teaching, because I think there are people who feel in a way under pressure: that they feel they haven't had perfect vision .....

S: Also of course this is connected with the question of the `path of regular steps'. The `path of regular steps' is that you start off with a preliminary intellectual understanding of things. On the basis of that preliminary intellectual understanding or `right view', you adopt certain ethical disciplines to help you eliminate unskilful mental states and cultivate and develop skilful ones. Having eliminated the grosser unskilful states and being in a **moderately** skilful mental state, you take up the practise of concentration and meditation. That is to say of `samatha'. Having achieved some success with `samatha', you then call to mind, as it were, your intellectual understanding and with the help of the energy derived from meditation, that is `samatha, you transform that into a spiritual insight. That spiritual insight when fully developed, or when developed to a certain point, becomes `perfect vision'. And that `perfect vision' gradually transforms all the different aspects of your being. It transforms your speech, it transforms your emotion, it transforms your speech, (your communication with others), it transforms your whole way of life, all your actions, your livelihood, so that you are now practising spontaneously those things which formerly you practised as disciplines. It transforms your whole sort of mental attitude so that you are in a state, as it were, of permanent `samadhi', and in that way Enlightenment is attained. That is the whole step by step path from beginning to end.

Vessantara: Would you mind going through the later stages of that again?

S: I telescoped a few actually. But on the basis of the `samatha' you develop `perfect vision'. You develop that `perfect vision' by calling to mind your intellectual understanding of the truth, or of the Dharma, if you like; and putting, behind that, the energy which you derived from meditation: in that way the intellectual understanding becomes transformed into spiritual insight. And when this reaches a certain point it becomes `samyak drsti' or `perfect vision' - a direct experience of the true nature of things. So this is the `path of vision'.

[End of side one side two]

So the `path of vision' having been reached you embark upon the `path of transformation', which is made up of the remaining seven factors or seven stages of the `**transcendental** eightfold path', which represents the transformation of one's entire being at all levels, and in all its aspects, in accordance with that `perfect vision'.

So first of all the entire emotional life is transformed. `Perfect vision' represents, as it were, the transformation of one's intellectual life, from intellectual understanding to spiritual vision or spiritual insight. So the second step of the transcendental Eightfold path represents the transformation of one's entire emotional nature in accordance with that vision. Then the third step will be the transformation of one's speech, or one's communication with other people; and then the transformation of one's actions. In other words one's skilful actions will become spontaneous: you will spontaneously do skilful things, or behave skilfully in the different situations and relationships of life. You won't have to behave skilfully by making an effort, and doing it as a matter of discipline. And then your means of livelihood: you will just not be able to earn your living in certain ways. According to the strict Theravada teaching you won't

be able to work at all. You'll be unable to work for gain. An Arahant is simply unable to do this: he is sort of constitutionally spiritually incapable.

So this is the basis of the Theravadin view that when you become an Arahant you **must** become a bhikkhu. This is the basis of it. Once you become an Arahant you cannot not be a bhikkhu. Even if you are not ordained if you are not a bhikkhu at the time of your gaining of Enlightenment as an Arahant, and if there were no bhikkhus around to ordain you, what will happen, according to some traditions, is you will miraculously be ordained and find yourself suddenly provided with robes and your head shaved and the bowl in your hands! (Chuckling voices) So what does this mean? What does it mean?

Nagabodhi: : Anyone who isn't a bhikkhu can't be an arahant so ....

S: No ! No ! It means exactly the opposite. One who is an arahant cannot not be a bhikkhu, not that you must be a bhikkhu in order to become an Arahant - if that is what you said.

Nagabodhi: : What I meant was that it would do away with the whole idea of the householder Bodhisattva or the householder [**S:** It would.] who's Enlightened, so it places the bhikkhu sangha in a very strong position, because the laity can't be .....

S: ....But **not** organisationally, because what is the significance of this saying, that if you gain arahantship as a layman and there's no Sangha around you to ordain you, you miraculously find yourself equipped with your three robes, and your bowl, and your shaven head. What does **that** mean? It means it supersedes ordination in the formal sense, doesn't it? Because that definitely requires a chapter of bhikkhus, a formal request etc., etc. So it really means that even in the absence of formal ordination willy-nilly by virtue, by sheer force of your spiritual attainment you will be leading the life of a bhikkhu. This is what it really means.

So that the life that you're leading is the direct expression of what you have experienced. So the Theravada tradition is virtually saying that the Enlightened person, if you take it literally, cannot work, cannot be anything other than a bhikkhu totally devoted to spiritual things, and economically entirely dependent upon others. This is the strict Theravadin view. The Mahayana modified that to some extent, but you can see the point of the Theravada teaching. And then the sixth stage of the `transcendental Eightfold path', which is of course the `perfect effort'. But here, of course, `effort' is no longer effort, it is the spontaneous manifestation of energy; and then `perfect mindfulness', well, you don't have to make an effort to be mindful, you are always mindful. And `perfect samadhi', which doesn't mean trying to practise meditation, but being spontaneously and naturally all the time in that infinitely positive and infinitely skilful mental state called `samadhi'. So by the time that transformation is complete then you have become Enlightened.

So I think it is quite important to trace step by step the sequence through the mundane eightfold path and the transcendental eightfold path.

Lokamitra: : You say that `the path of regular steps' starts with an intellectual understanding ...?

S: If you take the path, as it were, in its full extent. This may not be helpful to everybody. Some people will start practising by imitation, as it were, which means the path for them starts more with faith.

Lokamitra: : In a way `perfect vision': I've always taken it to be more along the lines of faith .....

S: Well this is true if by faith you don't mean simply that preliminary, provisional belief, or

acceptance. Provided you understand it as an actual experience - yes. I've said in `*The Survey'* speaking of Shin Buddhism that faith for them means wisdom - the emotional counterpart of wisdom. One mustn't think of `perfect vision' in exclusively, as it were, cognitive terms. The Indian tradition does that practically, but one need not do that.

For instance, again, I've mentioned in `*The Survey'* quoting a Japanese authority, that by faith is meant a moment of pure egolessness, and that is clearly equivalent to wisdom, isn't it? It's not just faith in the sense of belief.

Lokamitra: I suppose at the level of `perfect vision' they just go hand in hand. You wouldn't be able to .....

S: Yes. You can't, by that time, distinguish the intellectual from the emotional in that sort of split off way.

Lokamitra: : But at the mundane stage of `right view' here would be likely to be more space and one might start to ...

S: One could say that, yes.

Lokamitra: ...have faith in something higher or ... [**S;** Yes] ... or an intellectual ....

S:. conviction, that there is or must be something higher, or that it would be worthwhile trying to find out by adopting a definite mode of life.

All right let's go then.

Text:*"This insistence on morality, and the giving of specific guidance on morality, are wholly characteristic of the Buddha's teaching. Morality is not a secondary matter; in the prescription offered by the Buddha it is a* ***sine qua non****. And just as the single requirement, 'morality', was given fuller expression, in terms of the three major forms of moral conduct which have just been mentioned, so these three are also given fuller expression in other contexts. One of the most commonly used summaries of what moral living meant for Buddhists, from the earliest days, is the list of five precepts: to abstain from taking the life of any being; to abstain from stealing; from unlawful sexual intercourse; from speaking falsely; and from the use of drugs, including alcohol. These are the basic moral precepts for the whole of human society, as we shall see in connection with actual societies or civilizations of Asia which reckon themselves to be Buddhist. For members of the professional order, the Sangha, there is a more elaborate code of morality (see chapter 8, note 23) but this, with its two hundred and seventy or so rules, is also an elaboration of those same basic principles of morality, and has the same aim and intention as the five precepts."*

S: Several little points arise here. You notice that Trevor Ling refers to the `Sangha' as `the professional order'. Did you notice this? What do you think of that? What do you think he means? What do you think he's getting at?

____: Full timers?

Manjuvajra: I think he sees it in connection with a kind of academic. You take it on as a job...

Lokamitra: More serious ones.

S: Well at any rate the fulltimers. But do you see any kind of danger in this way of thinking?

Vessantara: Yes.

S: What danger do you see?

Vessantara: Well, that it becomes a profession in terms of a kind of career. Something that you follow in the same way as you can follow other professions.

S: But what is a profession in that case?

Siddhiratna: It's a way of earning a living.

S: It's a means of livelihood. But why shouldn't it be a means of livelihood?

Vessantara: It's all right if, as a by-product, you derive a livelihood from it but to view it simply as a means of livelihood is....

S: Yes. It's rather significant that in this country traditionally, we speak of the three professions, don't we? The three professions being of course the Law, the Church and the Armed Forces. The medical profession is only a latecomer. The medical business became a profession only in the last century, or towards the end of the last century. Before that it was considered barely respectable. But it is interesting that in England the Church is one of the three professions along with the Law and the Armed Forces. Do you think there is any danger in this sort of connection that we have to be aware of, within the context of `The Friends', or within the context of the Order itself?

_____: Not until we've all to be supported.

Nagabodhi: : I think the whole institution syndrome of seeing the Order, seeing the Movement as a kind of an institution, as a kind of `Mummy'. In some way ..... well, I think you notice this in little ways, some people once they're in the Order they tend to give up certain responsibilities for themselves. They become less scrupulous about certain things.

S: Such as what?

Nagabodhi: : Oh dear. [Pause] .....

Lokamitra: Tend to expect to have things laid on for them.

Nagabodhi: : Yes. Things like Order days - paying for Order days, subscribing to the Newsletter (chuckling).

S: Well one can't have it both ways. If you are given the bare minimum on which to live , well, you obviously haven't got.... and you're devoting all your time and energy to Order and FWBO affairs, well, you can't be expected to pay for other things, can you? Just like the bhikkhu in the East - he's supported. In a way, that's the whole idea, that he shouldn't have to pay for anything. So he doesn't have to work, therefore he can devote himself fully to meditation, teaching, study, whatever he wishes to do. So therefore quite logically, say the Thais, they give their bhikkhus free bus and rail passes. So if you are giving someone who is working for you fulltime, the bare minimum required to subsist, well, it is quite illogical to expect him to save out of that for his retreats and Order days, and so on and so forth, isn't it? If you pay him a salary, that's another matter. But we don't do that do we? We just give bare living expenses, which don't usually cover such things as retreats and so on, do they? So either you've got to pay a salary, and ask him out of his salary to pay for his retreats, or you give him his bare living expenses or her bare living expenses, and either pay for their retreat

expenses or allow such people always to go free.

So I think you have to be quite clear cut what you're doing: whether you're paying a salary, or whether you're just covering living expenses.

Vessantara: It's explicitly stated and clear certain Order members are only getting subsistence support and therefore can't be expected to pay for certain things. But if you have a situation where like an Order day people..... it's not stated and people just think well I'm being supported so I won't put any money in, it can lead to a lot of confusion, and a certain amount of unpleasantness even.

S: Well I think it should be clear in everybody's minds: who are those Order members who are, one, working, as it were, to use that expression, full-time for the Movement and are having their expenses covered and who therefore are not expected to pay for anything. There may be others who are receiving some help towards their living expenses but who are not working full-time for the Movement. Presumably they have got time, say, for a part-time job in addition, well, they should be expected to pay. But the criterion would seem to be those who are working full-time for the Movement and have no time, therefore, to earn other money, all of whose expenses are met, just basic living expenses, from the FWBO funds, and who therefore should not be expected to pay for anything. So this sort of category of persons should be clearly recognised. Do you see what I mean?

Lokamitra: There are very, very few of those except for Sukhavati. There are one or two outsiders.

S: It doesn't matter how few they are, but they need to be clearly identified and recognised, so that nobody else who is in another category can say `Why aren't they paying their way' sort of thing. Well they can't. That's the position. And one of the reasons why you support full-time people is so that they shouldn't have to think about raising money from other sources.

But anyway I got into this whole question from a rather different angle. What gave me food for thought in connection with this whole question of professionalism, this was a year ago was something that Vajrayogini said when I was in Holland last year. You all probably know that she has an Institute for the holding of Gestalt Therapy courses. I think everybody knows that and among other things she has special courses for training group leaders, that is group leaders in Gestalt therapy. So she was telling me that more recently there had been a trend which she found slightly disturbing, that is to say for people to apply directly for group leader courses in Gestalt therapy, wanting to become group leaders without having had any previous experience of Gestalt therapy. They wanted to go straight in and become group leaders. She said the reason why they wanted to do this was that Gestalt therapy had become quite fashionable, quite popular, people wanting to take the Gestalt therapy courses, and these also were quite profitable - to run these courses was quite profitable. So people were thinking of taking up Gestalt therapy and becoming Gestalt therapy group leaders purely as a means of livelihood, without any real interest in developing themselves: but simply to learn the Gestalt therapy techniques and operate the techniques, and in this way conduct courses and earn money, and make a living for themselves.
So this seems to me, in a way, the essence of this sort of professionalism, that you simply operate the techniques, and you get a lot of this in this sort of field, the field of group therapy, and encounter groups. There are all sorts of techniques that you can learn without changing yourself in any way, or developing yourself, which you can then proceed to operate. You can take courses, using these techniques, that is to say you can lead or conduct courses, and you can charge, and in that way you can make money. So there seems to be a lot of this sort of thing going on. And I think this is the sort of professionalism that we've got to beware of: that we just gather up a handful of techniques - we know a bit about concentration and

meditation, and communication exercises, and we become sort of professionals in the sense that we operate these techniques, maybe even as full-timers, but are not thinking so much about working on ourselves, on developing ourselves. This is the sort of professionalism that we have to be on our guard against.

I **do** know several people within the field of say psychotherapy and psychoanalysis who become very very much involved with these things and, in a way, solving other people's problems and helping other people work on themselves as an escape from their own problems, and as an evasion of their responsibility towards themselves, and to work on themselves. [Pause]

So I think it's very dubious to refer to the Sangha as a `professional' Order. It really does suggest a set of people who operate the techniques. [Pause]

Vessantara: You can see going along with that developing a kind of `career' mentality, where you're doing the `right things', so you... rather than working at a centre, say, because you really need to work at a centre, it's like building up a good sort of career track record. So you were working in the Manchester Centre for two years (someone chuckling) and then you moved to Sukhavati, and then you came to stay at Lesingham House with Bhante for a year.

S: On the other hand one mustn't overlook the fact that there well may be a structure of that kind, but it wouldn't be a career structure. In Thailand for instance you have a sort of career structure for bhikkhus with grades and emoluments and so on and so forth, and titles. It's usually linked with passing examinations in Pali. When you pass your first examination you get a title and you get an allowance of so many `barts' (?) per month. You pass another examination, the next higher, and you get another title and your allowance is increased, and in this way you go up the ecclesiastical ladder. So we just don't want anything of that sort. [Pause]

Manjuvajra: One danger that I do foresee is with us getting involved in more businesses and more kind of activities of that nature, then obviously, if you're involved with an activity it makes certain demands of you, and sometimes there's a contradiction between maybe just doing some meditation - I don't want to make the distinction too much between spiritual life and mundane life, but let me make that as a working principle for the moment - you forget the spiritual side of whatever it is you are doing because you're so involved in the mundane side of what you're doing, and you can see that this is happening. But still, because the mundane side puts lots and lots of pressures on you you can get drawn off into that.

S: Do you think this actually does happen very much?

Manjuvajra: : It certainly happened for me in Cornwall.

S: But you are in a very exceptional position of just being one, solitary Order member down there all on your own, having to do everything.

Manjuvajra: : But I would of thought it was easier for me in a lot of ways, because there's a lot of space around me. I don't mean just physically but I can sort of step back from it very easily. But whereas if you're involved working all the time within a kind of organisational structure, it's very difficult to step back, especially when people keep coming out and pulling you back into it.

Lokamitra: It's not so much stepping back as if you're involved in an organisational situation, it may be very difficult to get on with your meditation, or something, because your mind's always twirling around on things that have to be done and so on. But I do think that if you're

in a situation, if you do have a regular practice and you are in contact with other members of the Sangha, then if this does happen, you're going to come up against it sooner and later, and have to do something about it.

S: Well, it will also show itself in your work. [Voices: Yeah. Yeah.]

Lokamitra: Yeah. You lose energy and so on.

S: I think looking back at the history of `the Friends' I don't think that this has been a danger. I think the danger has actually, if there has been a danger, been rather the opposite one. The actual fact is that we've had to get people working, if I think back say, six, seven years, partly in order to get their energies out, and to get them out of a state of sloth and torpor, and general apathy. So the work and the involvement in work does have definitely a spiritual significance and value. So we shouldn't overlook that, or think **too** much in terms of work say taking you away from your meditation, because after all, how much meditation would most people do anyway? Even if they weren't working. They probably wouldn't do more than two or three hours a day, at the very most. I remember one Order member telling me in the very early days, that he was on a full-time job and worked quite hard, but he kept up his meditation and he said, thinking that he'd like a bit more time for meditation, he'd change from full-time to part-time - the same work - luckily he could do that - his boss was sympathetic and allowed him to do so - but he found that after changing from full-time work to part-time work he didn't seem to have any more time than he had before, and even though he tried to do more meditation, actually he found he didn't, or couldn't. So one must bear this in mind too: it's as much a matter of the organisation of one's time as having time.

Also there's another thing I think I'll say now, because I've been thinking of saying it for some time, though it's not directly connected with, or having relevance to what you've just been saying: that is connected with this question of danger. I notice quite often people saying, `You must be careful of such and such danger', and I've been wondering about this, and I've been trying to see what was the sort of mental attitude behind this warning against possible danger. And I came to the conclusion that it was almost always negative. Do you see what I'm getting at? For instance people would say things like, `We must be careful that we don't build up too big an organisation, because that would mean we would get away from the `spiritual' side of things.' Or they would say, `It's dangerous' - this was one we heard in the early days - `it's dangerous to meditate too much.' Or something of that sort. But the motivation behind this warning against danger seems to be an attempt to keep things down. Do you see what I'm getting at?
I wish I could think of a few more examples, because quite a few came to my notice even within the past few months. Has anyone else come up against this? Give me a few examples if you can.

Lokamitra: It's dangerous to work too hard. (Laughter)

S: Yes. It's dangerous to work too hard. But there are other examples, many of them. Yes, another one was, `It's dangerous to study too much'. If you read a couple of books someone says,`Oh, be careful there's a danger of intellectualism'. In other words this `danger' is evoked to try to sort of stop you doing something. It is sort of inhibitory. It sort of damps you down.

Lokamitra: : It's a sort of projection, isn't it? It's a projection from the person who hasn't got their energies going, or is `delicate' in a negative sense.

S: And usually it's with regard to the Movement. A favourite one is, `If we do so-and-so, or if we do such-and-such isn't there a danger that (tape blanks out) I seem to have been hearing

this sort of talk of danger much more in previous months than before, and this is why I've started thinking about what was behind it. But it seems as though usually it's just an attempt to damp things, or damp certain people down, or to stop their energies almost.

And I've had lots of instances of this sort, as I've said, in recent months therefore I've started thinking about them: the danger syndrome, `the possible danger' syndrome, to stop you, or stop somebody doing something here and now, or maybe providing the person who is making the objection, or raising the scare of possible danger, providing that person with an excuse for not taking part, or not helping.

So watch out for this and next time you hear it, just try to see what it really means, or what that person is really getting at. It's usually **possible** danger, not actual, real danger that might develop quite soon, but **possible** danger, in the remote future.

Lokamitra: It almost always, in my experience, comes down to inertia in that person who is saying it. And lack of wanting to commit themselves to something, or be involved in something.

____: I think it sort of resolves to certain individuals, doesn't it? Some people abuse the word and others don't.

S: Well sometimes there are objective dangers to which one should be quite alive, but in nine cases out of ten the sort of objection raised to things because of possible dangerous consequences is of this sort of nature and is just a wish to damp people down or stop certain people doing something which is actually quite positive. Anyway maybe that's enough on that point. Maybe it's sufficient to put you on your guard. All right, let's go on to "Individuality and the Human Malaise".

Text: *"INDIVIDUALITY AND THE HUMAN MALAISE*

In its simplest form, the intention of Buddhist morality can be said to be the undermining, erosion or withering of the idea of one's own permanent individuality. For each human being commonly feels this to be supremely important to him, and since it was this attachment of importance to individuality which, in the Buddha's view, was the root of human ***malaise****, its destruction was the essential feature in the cure of that* ***malaise****. Of the three characteristic marks of existence, suffering, impermanence, and the fictional quality of the ego, the first two are relatively easy to comprehend, even if they are not accepted; in any case, Buddhism shares them to some extent with other systems of thought. But the third, the assertion that the individual ego is a pure fiction or illusion, is one which will ordinarily be found more difficult to accept because it seems to run counter to commonsense. It is, moreover, an assertion which Buddhism does not share with any other system of the time; indeed it belongs almost wholly and uniquely to early Buddhism, at least until recent times and the development of modern psychological theory. It was the one feature of Buddhism which other Indian philosophers regarded as its characteristic* ***par excellence*** *for they labelled it the no-soul doctrine' (****nairyatmavada****)."*

S: Now what does one make of this? Trevor Ling seems to equate individuality with the ego, and the Buddha's negation of the ego as a negation of individuality, and individuality, as we saw, was considered to be an urban phenomenon. So do you see what Trevor Ling is in effect saying? He is saying that the old tribal life was completely integrated but as the result of various factors it became disintegrated, among those factors being the development of urban life, and the rise of the monarchy, and individualism developed. And the purpose of Buddhism seems to be to undo that individualism, and presumably to restore the `status quo ante': to bring back - one can't even say the individual - but to bring back that state of tribal

integration, or something like it which existed before the rise of individualism. This is, in fact, what Trevor Ling seems to be saying, isn't it?

So in a sense, he is saying that what the Buddha was trying to do was to get back to the old tribal society, or something like it, by undermining individuality which is the same as the ego. So what do you think of that? Is it true that Buddhism tries to get rid of the ego, or tries to get rid of individuality? [Pause]

____: Only in the negative sense in which those terms could be used.

Siddhiratna: Isn't that the way he is interpreting the word "individuality" - in the sense of people sort of cut off from one another in a bad sense .....

S: But he seems to believe that individuality **only** bears that bad sense. ..... Siddhiratna: Yeah. ....**S:** ....that individuality is individualism. Siddhiratna: Yeah. ....**S:** He seems to feel that the condition of the individual being separate from the integrated tribal identity - tribal consciousness - is somehow a fall or a lapse that is associated with the rise of urban life and culture, the rise of the monarchy and so on, and that the Buddha is, as it were, trying to reintegrate that primitive sense of identity with the tribe. In other words, that the Buddha's aim and object was to restore that lost sense of `participation mystique'. So where has he gone astray, do you think?

Nagabodhi: Well, he keeps switching his levels - (a) not understanding the various levels that are involved, but in his own terms switching from the sociological level to the psychological level without any understanding of the `Transcendental' level.

S: Yes. Well, he seems to me to have gone astray at the very beginning with regards to the emergence of individuality. Whatever pain and stress the emergence of individuality, or even individualism may involve, **it is a forward step**. Do you see what I mean? The development of self-consciousness is a forward step, even though it does bring its own problems, and its own pains. But what the Buddha was trying to do, you might say, was, yes, to dissolve individuality, but not because it was a step in the wrong direction, but because there was a **further step ahead** which could be taken. The Buddha wants you to go forward, not back. The individuality is to be dissolved, yes! Agreed! But not dissolved by a restoration of that primitive sense of identity with the group, but dissolved through the development of an even **higher** state of consciousness - up through the `dhyanas' for instance, to begin with. But do you see the difference?

Lokamitra: He's saying - the Buddha's saying - there's no such thing as a self, but that on the relative level one can experience a certain ..... ?

S: Well what does it mean by saying that there's no such thing as the self? The Buddha **didn't** say that in so many words! **The Buddha says there is no fixed, unchanging self,** which is quite a different thing. But what some schools thought of as an unchanging entity the Buddha saw as a process. So what we call `the soul' or `the self', or `the ego', is **not,** as we usually think it is, something fixed, something permanent, that has come to a full-stop and cannot be changed, it is something which is capable of change, capable of further development. So the dissolution of the ego means simply not allowing the ego to remain as it is, by recognising the possibility of growth and development to the next highest level, which is what the Buddha did.

So, it is not that the ego is a `**thing**' which in fact is not there, - the mistake lies in thinking of the essentially changing contents of consciousness as unchanging, and as constituting a fixed, stable ego-entity. It is not that the other schools believed in a soul and the Buddha didn't, and

said there was nothing there - No! They were both, as it were, faced by the same set of facts, but the other schools tended to see those facts in terms of stability, and identity, and changelessness - the Buddha said, "No! They are all in a process of flux." That means they can change; that means they can develop.

So on the practical side, the Buddha's teaching of `non-ego' meant that there's no reason for you to stop with yourself as you at present are in the mistaken belief that it cannot be changed - it can be changed, because there is no fixed, unchanging entity there: there's a process there; there is a flux which means that development is possible.

Trevor Ling sees the emergence of individuality, or `ego', as he call it, as a mistake, and sees the Buddha as trying to reverse the trend, to undo the sense of individuality, to get rid of the ego. But ego and individuality are not really the same thing.

[End of Tape 15 Tape 16]

The ego is only the way in which you see the self, or the individual, when you forget that the individual is changing, and is capable of further change, capable of development. So the Buddha doesn't want the individuality to merge back into the group, he wants to lead the individuality to a **higher** level of reality. There isn't a unchanging **`thing'** that has to be brought to an end or merged in something higher, it's just allowing the process of development to continue and not to stop where it is. And egotism is simply attachment to yourself as you, at present, are, instead of allowing yourself to develop, to go forward. So do you see the difference? He really has got it very, very wrong!

Lokamitra: In a way, if you think in terms of getting rid of the ego you're thinking along the wrong tracks.

S: I think you are! Yes. I think you are. If you think in terms of development and further development, then you're perfectly safe. Misunderstandings cannot arise.

Siddhiratna: Presumably with the ego, if you can think in terms of that ego being elevated - that, in fact, may be quite useful.

S: Yes - **in a manner of speaking**. Though it's not so much a question of the elevation of the ego but just a continued process of growth.

Lokamitra: I don't know what most people mean by `the ego'.

S: Exactly.

Lokamitra: Do they mean the relative self or do they mean something else?

Siddhiratna: Do you mean their **idea** of their self, their persona?

S: No. I don't think they even mean that. But the essential point is that the ego is considered to be something fixed, something that you permanently are from which you cannot possibly get away. **`That' is you!** But Buddhism denies that. Buddhism says: 'You need not be you'. That really puts it in a nutshell. (Sound of chuckling) 'You need not be you'. You need not continue to be the individual that you now are. If you think that you are bound to be everlastingly the individual that you now are, this is `ego' belief. In other words you absolutise your present state of being.
So it's not that `the ego' is a `thing' that ought not to be there. There's no such thing as the ego, there's only the ego view. There's only the false belief in ego. There's no such thing as

an ego at all. Even if you believe that there is an ego, (chuckling) you are changing all the time nonetheless - **you don't see that**. The fact that you don't see it means that you think in terms of stability and changelessness and that is your `ego' belief. So there is no such thing as an ego that you have to get rid of, there's only the wrong interpretation of experience in the form of the ego belief that you have to get rid of. So if you think in terms of getting rid of an ego that is actually there, you are completely missing the point! Because you are not tackling your wrong thinking. And this is a very fundamental point.

So to speak in terms of getting rid of the ego, or even, as I have done in some of my earlier writings, of going beyond the ego, even that isn't really very good. It's the wrong belief in the ego that's got to be dissolved. You are there - the individual is there - the individual is real - but the individual is not really an ego. That's a misreading of the facts of the situation. So this is what is meant by saying that the ego is `a fiction' - is a **conceptual** fiction. (Pause) It's a fiction because it's a false interpretation of what is actually there. But to say that the ego belief is false is not to deny that there is something there, but what is there is the individual in a process of constant change, and therefore, potentially, of development.

So what does it mean to be egoistic? To be egoistic means to identify yourself with a sort of cross-section of the flow, and to try to maintain that - to try to arrest the flow, as it were.

Anyway, the important point to remember is that there's no such thing as the ego, there's only the individual in a state of change, and you may mistakenly think that the individual does not change; or you may identify yourself with one of those changing states, and consider it permanent, or treat it as permanent. That is egotism. Egotism is a false belief, or a false attitude, it is not a `thing'!

_____: If you say it's to be aware of the flow, does that suggest that you have no control over it, that it just sort of sucks you in?

S: No. You **are** the flow. You can direct it.

_____: So if you can arrest it, then you can also direct it.

S: You can also direct it. You can't really arrest it, you can only try to. Actually you can't, as you learn sooner or later, and then `dukkha' comes in.

_____: Does that hold for all individuals? Whether they're exposed to the dharma or not?

S: Does what hold?

_____: This flow idea.

S: Well all individuals are in a state of constant change, mentally and physically, but they don't recognise that, or they think in terms of unchanging egos, or unchanging identities, and that's the mistake. `I am this. I am that.' You may be relatively, for the time being, but not absolutely. So if you think of yourself as `this' or `that' then you refuse to recognise the possibility of change, and therefore the possibility of development. If you say, "I am a poor miserable sinner - that's me. That is what I essentially am." You don't say, "I am an individual who at present happens to be in the state of sinning" (if you use that expression) - no, you say , "I am a sinner, and that is that! That is what I am! That cannot be changed. That is my identity." Well then, you close the door to any future change, or any future development. But if you say, "I am an individual who, for the time being, is in that state", you recognise that in the future you may be, or you could be, in another kind of state. This is what Blake said when he remarked that individuals are not states, states are not individuals.

States are what individuals are in. So it wasn't that a man was good or was bad - the individual was in a state of goodness or in a state of badness, but the individual was not good, the individual was not bad.

So, once again the solution seems to be to think and to speak simply in terms of change, growth and development, and forget all about the ego. The individual and the ego are not the same, and Trevor Ling seems to identify them, doesn't he? So the facts of the case seem to be when you are a member of the group you are a sub-individual. When you break, as it were, free from the group, though possibly still remaining in relation with the group, a sort of dialectical relationship, then you are an individual, but even that is not enough. There's a further and higher stage, which is covered by the whole path of spiritual development culminating in `nirvana'. So it's not that the Buddha taught that there's an actually existent ego which has got to be got rid of. What you've got to get rid of is the false idea that you cannot develop further. That what you are now you must be forever. (Pause)

So we must be very careful interpreting this `no soul' doctrine - it is **not** that the Buddha said that there is no soul. What he said was that there is no permanent, unchanging soul. Otherwise if you tell ordinary people that, according to Buddhism, there is no soul, they think that Buddhism is simply mechanistic materialism, that Buddhism denies the whole of the mental, or psychical side of life, because `soul' covers that in ordinary parlance. So Buddhism says, yes, there is a soul but it is in a constant process of change. There is nothing in it - nothing covered by the term soul - which is not changing, and which, potentially, can develop. At present it changes in accordance with the cyclical type of conditionality. It goes from one extreme to the other - it oscillates between pairs of opposites. But you can change it, you can re-direct it. You can direct it from the cyclical to the `spiral' type of conditionality, so that it develops instead of merely changing, and grows instead of merely oscillating. [Pause]

There's an awful amount of misunderstanding of Buddhism; and an awful amount of miscomprehension among the general public just because points like this have not been made clear, or Buddhism has been presented by so many people so unintelligently without proper thought. If you go along to most Buddhist meetings: `You have got no soul' - and all that sort of thing just hurled at you. [Pause] So instead of where you thought there was a soul, where you thought there were feelings, and thoughts and so on, you're told that apparently there's just a great big blank, just a void, just an empty hole. What are you left with? Well, the body. If there's no soul, well, there's only the body left. So Buddhism is materialism. (Sound of chuckling) This is another common belief.

Siddhiratna: There's a `behaviourist' school of psychology, isn't there?, Which relegates things to the brain, or the mind is just a chemical or biological function.....

S: I don't think they even say that. They simply say that all you can observe is behaviour. You don't observe mind, you don't observe mental states, you don't observe emotions, all you observe is behaviour.

Siddhiratna: Well, I don't know that much about it, but I get the impression by saying that they relegate things like art or one thing or another down to a mechanistic thing .....

S: Well, you can observe artistic behaviour. They don't seem to accept the possibility of introspection. I'm not quite sure exactly what they say about this, but presumably they don't recognise introspection as having any value. The scientific study of psychology is concerned, as I say, only with the study of human behaviour, and you cannot infer from that behaviour any mental elements. Siddhiratna: Any life? **S:** any life? - No. I think they go as far as to say that. So psychology is the study of human behaviour. [Pause]

Anyway let's go on to `Morality, Meditation and Wisdom'.

Text*"MORALITY, MEDITATION AND WISDOM*

Since this popular notion of a permanent individual ego has so firm a hold generally, special measures are required to deal with it. These are connected with the Buddhist practice of meditation. The purpose of this, in the earliest period at least, seems to have been to enable others to follow the Buddha along the path of release from the confined consciousness of being an individual, an ego, to consciousness of a wider, fuller kind."

S: This is quite true. This is quite correct. But he doesn't seem to judge the significance of it quite correctly. As you expand your consciousness, well, you realise that there is no ego, not in the sense of seeing that something that did exist no longer exists, but simply experiencing this expansive movement and knowing for yourself from that experience, that you're not limited to, you're not tied down by, your previous state of consciousness, your previous mode of feeling.

Text *"Step by step with meditational practices aimed at the cooling down of the passions which kept the notion of the ego alive went the practice of intellectual analysis of human existence. One practised the analysis which the Buddha had set forth, even though at first it was very difficult. With continual practice, accompanied by constant moral purification, came a degree of mastery of this way of seeing things. The moral purification was of necessity impersonal, since it was the notion of individuality which was being dissolved;*

what was happening was described as the encouragement of morally good states of being (states which were, however, not confined to any one individual centre of consciousness) and the discouragement of morally unwholesome states of being. It follows that meditation, in its intention and scope, ranged over a much wider area of being than the one encapsulated within one human body."

S: Mm. What does one make of this? He seems not quite so wrong here as he was in the previous paragraphs. But as I pointed out: as you practise meditation it's not so much that you see that there is no ego, but you have the actual experience of an expanding consciousness, and an expanding self. So naturally, you don't think of yourself in terms of something fixed and unchanging. What about this idea of `impersonal'? "The moral purification was of necessity **impersonal**, since it was the notion of individuality which was being dissolved;...". What do you think of this notion of `impersonality'?

Nagabodhi: I have absolutely no idea what he means.

Siddhiratna: It seems to me he's referring to there not being a deity to bow down before, or to dissolve one's ego before.

S: No. I don't think it has any reference to that. `Impersonal' is `non-personal', non-individual, no ego. All right, take the case of the Buddha - presumably, according to Trevor Ling, having got rid of the ego - yes? - the Buddha would be in a state of complete impersonality. True? The Buddha had no ego. Looking at it from Trevor Ling's point of view, would one say that the Buddha had an ego? No! Certainly not! The Buddha had seen through the ego, had got rid of the ego, or transcended the ego. But was the Buddha impersonal? When you say someone is impersonal, what do you usually mean?

Nagabodhi: Cold.

S: Cold. You usually mean a bit alienated. But if you read the Pali scriptures - I say Pali Scriptures because there we come a bit nearer to the historical Buddha - do you get the impression of someone who was impersonal? [Pause]

Lokamitra: Not at all.

S: Do you get the impression of an individual? Would you not even say that you get a stronger impression of the Buddha's individuality than you usually get of people's individuality?

Lokamitra: Much, much stronger.

S: Yes. Well, how come, if the Buddha has got rid of his ego, that his individuality is more pronounced? Especially if `individuality' is equated with `ego'. How come that the more you get rid of your ego, the greater the impression your individuality seems to make? You shouldn't have an individuality if individuality is the same as ego. Doesn't that make nonsense of the whole equation of ego and individuality? And question the idea that there is such a thing as the ego? So could you even speak in terms of the spiritual life right up to Enlightenment or Buddhahood, in terms of becoming more and more of an individual? And it's this becoming more and more of an individual that negates the belief of an ego. Do you see what I'm getting at? If you equate `ego' and `individual', or egohood and individuality, and take egohood as something real that has to be got rid of, well, presumably when you have become a Buddha, when you have become enlightened, and there's no ego and no individuality, you shouldn't make any impression at all. But the Buddha, going on all that we know of him through the Pali scriptures, had a very strong individuality, a very powerful individuality. He created a tremendous impression. So much so that he still, as it were, is very much alive after two thousand, five hundred years. How come, if he got rid of the ego he had, or seems to have, a stronger individuality almost than anybody else? A more distinct individuality, if `strong' is not the word.

So, clearly, if we are equating ego and individuality we are very much on the wrong track. And this again suggests, there's no such thing as the ego. What we call egotism is just a state of arrested development. Our attitude, very often, is like that of a child - the child, when he's seven or eight, say, - `When I grow up I'm going to do this, I'm going to do that. I'm going to have as many trains as I like, as many model trains as I like. I'm going to spend the whole day eating sweets. Well, he projects his child-like state into the future, he can't imagine that he's going to change. He can't imagine that he's going to develop.

So this is what we tend to do, all the time. And if there is any such thing as egotism it is simply this tendency, or this attitude. So I think we need a whole lot more clear thinking on this whole subject of the ego, the self, the soul, individuality, and so on. So the Buddha is the completely developed individual you could say. This is the significance, possibly, of that phrase in the Vandana when the eight kinds of `aryans' who make up the Arya Sangha, are referred to as `atapurisa pugala'- those `four pairs of individuals, the eight persons'.

So individuality is not something to be got rid of, individuality is something to be developed. So one can't agree with Trevor Ling that the individuality that emerged allegedly in connection with the development of the cities, and the rise of the monarchy, was a bad thing that had to be got rid of, and that it was to be equated with egotism, and the whole purpose of the Buddha's life and work was to get rid of it and presumably restore Man to the state of group consciousness. It's really an absurd way of looking at the Buddha and his teaching! It's really quite nonsensical!

All right, let's go on.

Text*"More than this concerning Buddhist meditation it is not appropriate or even profitable to say in the present context. It is hoped, however, that this will give the reader sufficient understanding of the general point of view and method of early Buddhism to enable him to decide to what extent and in what sense it was a religion."*

S: How does this come into it? It seems quite irrelevant, doesn't it? Anyway, let's go on. Since it's irrelevant let's just ignore it!

Text: *"When the practice had been faithfully followed, then, there would follow, almost immediately in the case of some people, or more slowly in the case of others, that realization of the truth which the Buddha himself had first won. This was the third and final state of the Buddhist schema, after morality and meditation, and was characterized either as 'wisdom', or as the state of enlightenment, or liberation from the state of being bound to the ego-idea."*

S: Well, this is a bit more accurate - `being bound to the ego idea", not to the ego itself, but to the false idea of the ego.

Text: *"The notion of the individual ego having been dissolved, with it inevitably disappeared the whole burden of individual karma or retribution and the prospect of the continually repeated experience of the sufferings of the individual ego. This, however, was only the negative aspect of the matter, the condition of ill from which human existence needed to be cured. There was also the positive aspect, the new, wider, fuller consciousness of being which was opened up when the walls of individualism were broken down. This was the new community, and without careful examination of what this entailed, any attempt to understand early Buddhism is bound to be unsuccessful. It is because some Western descriptions of early Buddhism have left out this social dimension that they have failed to make sense. We must examine the new community which Buddhism entailed very soon, but first, however, it is appropriate to consider the nature of the Buddhist analysis in relation to other systems of thought."*

S: There seems to be a Maoist influence here. Doesn't there? Don't you think so? Do you see this? VOICE: No. **S:** Well, individualism is something to be broken down, and when you break down your individualism you just become a member of the `New Society', and you devote yourself wholeheartedly to that without thinking of any individual interests. You completely identify yourself with the masses.
Siddhiratna: I think that's contained in what he says about - there is also the prospect of a wider, new community -

S: Yes. "When the walls of individualism are broken down ...." Well, that's very true, but this was `the new community'. So he clearly sees the new community as another kind of group replacing the old tribal community. The old tribal community is no longer viable for various social, economic, and political reasons. But when you've got rid of the ego or the individuality which emerged when the old tribal unity broke down, then you reconstitute some other kind of tribal unity, and that is the `new society', the `new community'. So it's quite clear that Trevor Ling sees the Sangha, the new community, as a sort of reconstituted tribal group in which there's no individualism, no individuals. He doesn't see it as a spiritual community of individuals. Do you see the difference?

You get the same sort of difficulty with people, say, who regard childhood as the ideal state. Do you know what I mean? And who regard the development of individual consciousness as you get older as a sort of mistake, and you must return to the child-like state, which is analogous of course to that of the tribal group. It's the sort of pseudo-Wordsworthian approach. [Pause]

So Trevor Ling's sort of picture seems to be: tribal group, then individualism emerges, individualism is a mistake, undo individualism, come back to new kind of tribal group - that is the Buddhist sangha, that is the Buddhist community. The Buddhist view, at least as interpreted by me, is: say group, say tribal group, individual emerges, the individual develops individuality to the point of enlightenment, and the individual forms with other individuals a completely different kind of society, which is the spiritual community. Do you see the difference between the two? [Pause]

Siddhiratna: He's yet to say how he thinks this new group in fact, will be constituted.

S: Yes. Well, there's a whole chapter on that, which we'll come to in due course - "The New Society". [Pause]

Nagabodhi: In a way, I find it quite easy to understand how he's fallen into this trap, because it is a very kind of popular, progressive way of thinking in the West.

S: Right. What is?

Nagabodhi: That a spiritual alternative to the modern world is to transcend your individuality in order to kind of give to society. I think I find this in the Order too, sometimes - in myself and in other people - that you can slip into sort of placing the absolute unit as being the Movement, or the Order, rather than the individual, all the time.....

S: Ah! You mustn't think in terms of giving yourself to the group, or merging your individuality, or your individual needs in the group, but giving yourself **as an individual** to other individuals **as individuals**, if you think in terms of giving at all. It's not that the group, the impersonal group, that you're devoting yourself to, it is that you are concerned with, you are devoting yourself to individuals, or people who are in process of becoming individuals.

Nagabodhi: It can be very hard to keep that in mind. It's much easier to mentally give up and just think I'm working for the group!

S: Well even that is all right if you think in terms of the spiritual community, and don't forget that the spiritual community is made up of individuals. Working for the spiritual community then means doing something which will be of benefit to all the members of the spiritual community. And not to think of the spiritual community as a sort of collective entity which exists apart from the individual Order members, so that you almost end up with .... it doesn't matter even if this doesn't benefit any single individual of the Order, it's good for the Order as a whole. (chuckles) Do you see what I mean?

Siddhiratna: That's probably quite a good thing to think of - to remember that ..... as a mistake.

S: Therefore some people - some politicians - they say, `It doesn't matter what harm I do, how many millions of people die, what I'm doing is for the good of the State.' Well, isn't this, very often the attitude? [Pause] `It doesn't matter how many people are put into prison, or how many people are executed, it's all for the good of the People' - capital P. [Pause] So this is one of the reasons why I stress keeping the individual units, (for want of a better term), within the Movement reasonably small, so that there can be individual contact. We should be very careful that groups don't become too big - groups of Order members ..... [VOICE: Chapters.] **S:** I mean chapters. But we need not bother how small they are, provided that there are at least four or five people in contact with one another. But ten or twelve would seem to be almost the ideal number, really.

Lokamitra: It depends. Personally I'd like to be with a smaller group, because I'd have more contact with those people. Maybe that's just a phase. (Sound of chuckling from others)

S: Maybe it's just a phrase, eh ? (Sound of soft chuckling)
I meant that the fact that maybe it's just a phase is maybe just a phrase.

Lokamitra: Yes. [Pause]

S: But it would be very unfortunate if someone was sitting in an office somewhere concerned with the affairs of the Order, but never actually meeting an Order member.(laughter) Do you see what I mean?

Lokamitra: It is really difficult to think in terms of.....

S: Again this is one the things I'm not very happy about with regards to a large Convention. Because if there are so many people that you're going to have very minimal individual contact, it cannot but become something of a group affair. You just spend all your time rushing from person to person just saying `Hello'. You've barely time to say hello to everybody before the Convention comes to an end, as it were. [Pause]

Vessantara: It does give you the opportunity to decide which out of the large number of individuals you'd particularly like to have contact with.

S: Well, if you can tell at a quick glance. You can't always tell, can you? You need to get to know someone quite well before finally deciding you don't like them. (Sound of chuckling) [Pause]

Well, perhaps we'll close there because time is up, and go on in the afternoon to *"Early Buddhist Doctrine in the Context of the Times"*.
But are there any general points or comments with regard to what we've done this morning ? I think we've cleared up something quite important, well, two things: one about the whole sequence of steps and stages of `The Path' - mundane and transcendental, and then this `ego' business. I think this `ego' business creates a lot of confusion. I think one just must not speak in terms of getting rid of the ego. This can only be misleading and cause confusion. And just talk in terms of growth, and make it clear, if necessary, that there's no permanent, unchanging nucleus of the growth, but the process of growth takes place throughout: there's nothing that doesn't grow, nothing that doesn't change within one. Any identity is in the continuity of the process, not in the conservation of any unchanging element within it. Language compels us to speak and use `changing', but actually there is only a particular kind of change **which is you**. Not that you are unchanged, and that change is something that happens to that unchanging you: No!
You are the change, the change is you. You are the process, the process is you. There is no fixed, unchanging subject of the process.

This is why Buddhagosha says, "Rebirth takes place but no-one is reborn. Nirvana is attained but there is no-one who attains it." [Pause]

Vessantara: In a way this modern phrase like `go with the flow' is wrong in a sense?

S: Yes. Quite. Then you start making efforts to `go with the flow'.

Right, leave it there. [BREAK]

Text:*"EARLY BUDDHIST DOCTRINE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE TIMES*

One way of characterizing the Buddhist system is to say that it is a form of rationalism.

By rejecting animism and ritualism and emphasizing a rational outlook which treats reality as a causally and functionally determined system of plural synergies ***(samskaras)****, the emergence of Buddhism marks an important event in the history of Indian thought. The most distinctive feature of Buddhist ethics is its freedom from theism, which leaves room for rationalism and rules out submission to some superhuman power controlling the world-process."*

S: Well, what do you think of this? - `Buddhism is a form of rationalism'. What does one usually understand by rationalism?

VOICE: Something intellectual.

S: Something intellectual.

_____: Rationalism usually denies the emotional content, or any emotional content. [Pause]

Vessantara: It's a form of materialism usually.

S: What about, say, Eighteenth Century rationalism? [Pause]
Rationalism usually, I mean strictly speaking, means the belief that reason is the highest of all human faculties: that there's no human faculty higher than reason and that everything has, therefore, to be judged in the light of reason. And that usually implies a subordination of emotion to reason. It doesn't necessarily negate emotion altogether, but emotion is definitely subordinated to reason, and there's no higher faculty either in the form of intuition or a higher emotion, or higher insight, or of course revelation, or anything of that sort.

So the author whom Trevor Ling quotes says, "The most distinctive feature of Buddhist ethics is its freedom from theism " which is fair enough "which leaves room for rationalism and rules out submission to some superhuman power controlling the world-process". So does the fact that one is free from theism necessarily involve rationalism in the sense that I defined it? Historically speaking, in the West, it did. Because where did you derive your belief in God, your theism from? Well, usually from revelation, so if you discarded revelation, and if you discarded God, well, this was because `reason', or `rationalism' was uppermost. So the two things usually went together: the discarding of theism and the adoption of `rationalism'. Except, of course, in the case of those people who believed that the existence of God could be established by rational proof quite independently of revelation. Those people were usually called Deists.

But as regards Buddhism, the fact that you discard theism doesn't necessarily mean that you at once adopt `rationalism': that you believe that `reason' is the highest of all human faculties. This is not to say that Buddhism is irrational - later in the next paragraph Trevor Ling refers to `the rational outlook', and there is clearly some truth in this, but not `rationalism'. Buddhism is not `rationalism'. It doesn't believe that reason is the highest of all human faculties. It points to `prajna', wisdom, or `gnosis', or awareness of ultimate reality, as the highest of all human faculties.
[End of side one side two]

`Synergies' for `samskaras' is Mrs. Rhys Davids' term, by the way: `energies functioning together'.

In other words this is still really discussing Buddhism in terms of Western thought, or in terms of the history of Western thought. In the West belief in something which is superior to reason, i.e. revelation, and belief in God go together; and rejection of belief in God and `rationalism' go together. But it doesn't mean that they have to go together in the East in the case of Buddhism. Buddhism is non-theistic, but it is not `rationalism', because it envisages a whole range of human experience beyond reason, beyond the rational. [Pause]

Buddhism certainly recognises the place and the importance of reason, but at the same time, as I have said, it doesn't believe that reason is the highest of all human faculties. Reason should be used where appropriate, but in relation to ultimate truth, the use of reason is inappropriate. Reason can only observe a respectful silence. And this is why `nirvana', or the truth realised by the Buddha, or the Dharma , is said to be `atakkavaccaro' as I mentioned the other day : `beyond the reach of logic', `beyond the reach of reason'. All right, let's go on.

Text: *"The 'rational outlook' which was certainly a very marked feature of early Buddhism had, as G. S. P. Misra's words imply, two aspects. On the one hand there was the rejection of dogmatic theistic presuppositions. On the other, there was the attempt to analyse, that is to reveal, the basic data of human existence. The Buddha himself is represented as making a clear distinction between these two contrasting attitudes: 'I am,' he said, 'an analyst, not a dogmatist.' By dogmatist he meant one who made categorical statements which were to be accepted simply on the authority of the one who made them. The Buddha insisted that all propositions must be tested, including his own. The testing of these had to take the form of the living out of the disciplined life of morality, meditation and the systematic cultivation of insight. The propositions, as such, were not to become objects of attachment, any more than anything else in life, but were to be regarded simply as pointers or guides."*

S: Well that's fair enough but there is a point about the Buddha being an analyst not a dogmatist. How does one usually understand 'analyst' or 'analysis'?

_____: Rational.

Siddhiratna: Almost in the sense of laboratories.

S: Yes, but what's the general sort of characteristic of analysis?

Manjuvajra: Breaking it up into discrete units.

S: Yes. but this is not what is meant here when the Buddha said that he was an analyst - he did say this, this is true - the word in Pali is `vibhajjiyavadin'? This really means not so much `one who analyses' but `one who distinguishes'. And the context where this word is used in the original makes quite clear what sort of analysis, or what sort of distinguishing is meant. The Buddha meant that he was not one who gave categorical answers to questions which did not admit of any categorical answer: he distinguished, or he analyzed. He said, `Well, if you mean such and such then the answer is so-and-so, but if on the other hand your meaning is such-and-such, then the answer will be different. This is what **he** meant, which is quite a different thing from analysis in the sense of the reduction of the object of analysis to discrete parts. Do you see what I mean ? So the Buddha was an analyst, a `vibhajjyavadin', in **that** sense.

Manjuvajra: Can you give an example of what you mean?

S: Well, put it this way: well, suppose someone asks the Buddha, "Is there a soul?" The Buddha wouldn't say "No" , He wouldn't say "Yes', He would say, `It depends what you mean by a soul. If you mean by a soul something permanent and unchanging, then in that case

there is no soul. But if on the other hand you mean the flux of your individual psycho-physical being, then in that case there is a soul. But he could not have said `Yes there is', or `No there is not' without distinguishing. So he was one who did not give categorical answers to questions which did not really admit of a categorical answer. So the person who gave categorical answers to questions which did **not** admit of a categorical answer, that person was a dogmatist, according to the Buddha.

So the explanation which Trevor Ling gives is not quite correct. He takes `analyst' in the more popular English meaning of the term. And, "By dogmatist he meant one who made categorical statements which were to be accepted simply on the authority of the one who made them". Which isn't **quite** what the Buddha meant, but anyway, near enough. And it is true that "the Buddha insisted that all propositions must be tested, including his own". This is quite true. And that the testing took the form of "the living out of the disciplined life", etc. That too, is quite correct. [Pause]. All right, let's carry on.

Text: *"One of the most important characteristics of the Buddha's teaching, therefore, was the attitude of nonacceptance of traditional orthodoxy of any kind and, instead, a very marked 'intellectualism' as Max Weber called it. This differentiates Buddhism from the orthodox theistic religion of the brahmans of his day, but it does not, of course, mark off the Buddha's teaching in any distinct way from the teachings of other shramanas, who likewise rejected traditional orthodoxy. What most clearly differentiated the Buddha's teaching from theirs was his theory of the absolute impermanence of all things (anitya) and, above all, his denial of permanent individuality (anatta). The Jains, for instance, reacted very strongly to the latter aspect of the Buddha's teaching; it was, they said, a 'pernicious view'."*

S: The Jains believed in an `atman' - something permanent and unchanging, and they believed that `karma' was a sort of semi-material substance which somehow clung about the `atman', and had to be purged off by means of austerities, leaving the unchanged `atman' in its purity. But this, of course, wasn't the Buddhist point of view. The Buddhist point of view was that there was no **permanent** individuality. That individuality was something that was essentially changing all the time, either by way of the cyclical or by way of the `spiral' type of conditionality.

What about this question of `orthodoxy'? "the attitude of non-acceptance of traditional orthodoxy of any kind"?

_____: I don't think there was any orthodoxy at that time, was there?

S: In a sense there wasn't.

_____: It's consistent with his earlier claim of being an analyst.

S: Yes - and also of being a rationalist.

S: What does `orthodoxy' literally mean? Do you know? What does the word mean? It's `Orthosdoxos' which is `right belief', or `right view' even.

Vessantara: It does suggest that the Buddha didn't distinguish between doctrines. He rejected things .....

S: Just because they were traditional. But actually we don't find him doing any such thing. He examined things and accepted or rejected on their own merits. It wasn't that he made a wholesale sweep at everything orthodox. This is a sort of fashionable pseudo-intellectual or pseudo-spiritual attitude - to reject orthodoxy. Have you noticed this sort of thing? That if

you reject the orthodox you reject orthodox teaching, reject orthodox tradition, orthodox spirituality, orthodox religion, well, surely that means you are automatically spiritual, as it were; or very **highly** spiritual, as compared with those people who don't reject the orthodoxies.

I wrote some time ago an essay entitled *"The Meaning of Orthodoxy in Buddhism"* which I hope will be reprinted some day.

Siddhiratna: So in a sense the Buddha had a sort of radical attitude to traditional orthodoxy.

S: Yes. But what does `radical' mean ? What does the word `radical' mean?

Siddhiratna: To go back to the roots.

S: Or at least to go down to the root. Maybe `back to the root'. So to go to the root, not just historically but even spiritually. So going to the root would mean looking at things from a very fundamental point of view, and this, no doubt, is what the Buddha did. He wasn't concerned to reject tradition for the sake of rejecting tradition, but he looked at the existing traditions from the most radical viewpoint possible, that is to say from the viewpoint of his own Enlightenment; from the viewpoint of his own enlightened experience. [Pause]

I suppose one could speak of the tradition of the Brahmins as a `traditional orthodoxy', but it was very far from being universally, or even widely accepted. All right let's go on.

Text: *"On the other hand, the Buddha's insistence on the real possibility of human choice and freedom of action, and his opposition to fatalism differentiate his teaching from that of the Ajivakas. His rejection of asceticism, and his constant avowal of the importance of the middle way between it and hedonism mark his teaching off from that of the Jains and the Ajivakas on the one hand, and the materialists, the Lokayatas on the other."*

S: Perhaps this is the point at which we might discuss a bit about asceticism. Well, what does `ascesis' or `ascetis' literally mean? Do you know? Literally it means `training'. The word was applied also for instance, to athletes. Athletes were said to undergo an `ascesis', `a training', and that was `asceticism'.

So it is true that the Buddha condemned self-torture, self-mortification, but one has to be very careful about saying that the Buddha rejected asceticism, especially when you translate a `bhikkhu', for instance, or `sramana' as `ascetic'. Surely the Buddha didn't reject asceticism in the literal sense, in the sense of training, even a hard training, a difficult training. One can say it's true that the Buddha rejected hedonism but he did not say that pleasure should not be enjoyed when it was skilful. In the same way he rejected asceticism, but he did not say that suffering should not be undergone when the undergoing of suffering was necessary. Do you see what I mean?

So you must follow a middle way with regard to both hedonism and asceticism, in a way. It is not that all pleasure is to be avoided, nor that all suffering is to be eschewed. Nowadays things that we would consider very much a matter of asceticism the Buddha took just as a matter of course, and regarded as simply an ordinary way of living. I have mentioned before, that for instance in South India I found that practically everybody slept on the floor on a mat - that is to say a thin reed mat. Nobody had a mattress, it was just not known. It wasn't used. These people were not practising asceticism, that was simply the way that they lived. So in much the same way with the Buddha and his disciples - they didn't use a mattress, or anything like that. They didn't use a pillow. And they would not have regarded that as asceticism, though we might. That was just the normal way of living, just the simple life.

So we have to be careful when we speak about the Buddha avoiding the extreme of asceticism, because the sort of extreme asceticism that he had in mind, and which should be avoided, was a very, very extreme form of self-mortification, going to very extreme lengths indeed. So his middle way in this matter was nearer to what we would regard as an extreme. (Laughter) I used to say in India sometimes that the Jains in the Buddha's day criticised the Buddha for soft living, because he did not practise, or encourage others to practise, these very extreme forms of harsh self-mortification, but I used to say that in the course of centuries both the Buddhists and the Jains have moved away from their original positions; and that the Jains, even though they profess to be practising extreme asceticism, were actually doing no more than the Buddha did in his day, and that the Buddhist `bhikkhus', far from following the Middle Path, have now moved to the extreme of hedonism. [Pause]

Nagabodhi: If something for us seems to be an extreme, yet if we were to put ourselves into the Buddha's time, into his mind, if you like in that way, to him it may not have seemed like an extreme but to us it does. Is the Middle Way for us living in the West in the Twentieth century our idea of the `Middle Way', or is it still the Buddha's? Isn't there the danger (laughter) of ..... could it not almost become part of the adopting of a foreign cultural outlook, or trying to adopt, and simply impose upon ourselves a foreign or an alien.....

S: Well, first of all one has to bear in mind is that the Buddha lived in a sub-tropical country, so he could do with less clothing, less shelter, and so on. At the same time one must remember that the Buddha's real emphasis was on simplicity of life, an uncluttered life. And as we know only too well our lives are very far from simple. And I think it's this that we have to watch. The so-called asceticism consists in doing, in managing, making do, with as few things, and as simple things, and as ordinary things as is compatible with the leading of a decent human life and getting on with one's personal development. That is really the criterion. And usually of course we do have far more than we actually need. So if we stress the asceticism, or stress the simplicity a bit more than perhaps theoretically is necessary, I think probably it's not a bad thing. [Pause]

Maybe we need to go a bit more into the principle of `*The Middle Way*'. I think we've touched upon it a bit before, but what is behind self-mortification do you think?

_____: Has it got something to do with cooling down the passions?

S: Well, theoretically and traditionally, yes. But supposing nowadays you find people who want to mortify the flesh, and all that kind of thing, and are really hard on themselves, what do you very often find is the case?

VOICE: Guilt.

S: Guilt. Yes. And what about people who are highly hedonistic, what do you usually find there?

Nagabodhi: Total lack of self-consciousness. [Pause]

S: Or insecurity. You try, as it were, to fill the void with a pleasurable experience, which you can't do, so you have to go on from one pleasurable experience to another. You never find real satisfaction. [Pause]

_____: ..... sort of judicious asceticism ( ) entirely a bad thing?

S: More in the sense of training?

_____: In the sense of training. In the sense of sort of getting yourself used to it, giving up superfluous demands.

S: For instance observing silence is a form of positive asceticism, or fasting is a form of positive asceticism; or giving up smoking, one might say. I mean things of this sort are all mild forms of positive asceticism. Also such things enable one to study one's own mental reactions and emotional reactions, and to realise perhaps more clearly, how strongly one was attached to something or other. If you are enjoying it all the time, if it's always available, you don't always realise what a hold it has got on you. [Pause] All right, carry on with the last paragraph.

Nagabodhi: Sometimes I've heard people talking about things - they say I know how to give such-and-such up - it may be smoking or a relationship - but I feel if I did, having to adjust to that would so disturb my mind that I wouldn't be able to meditate, so I'm going to wait till next year when I'm not going to be doing this, that and the other; when I'll have the space to give it up, whatever it is. Do you think there is any value in people doing that, in order to maintain a sort of stability from which to carry on with their ordinary practice?

S: I think it depends very much whether the dependence on that particular thing or person, whatever or whoever it is, is neurotic or non-neurotic. I think it is this that needs to be ascertained. If it's a neurotic dependence, well, they ought to give it up as quickly as possible. The chances are they're not getting on with any practice anyway. But if it is just something which objectively, in a sense, you need and you're dependent on it, and it is not neurotic, well, there may be something in that line of thought.

Ratnaguna: How can you need something and it not be neurotic?

S: Well you are objectively dependent upon certain outside things. Like you are dependent upon food. You need to go on eating to get on with your practice; just so that you can continue living. But supposing you've got a neurotic addiction to chocolates: supposing you consume a large box of them every day. You can't say then that you're dependent in a sort of healthy, objective way. This is clearly a neurotic craving, that you're satisfying. So this is quite different from an objective dependence upon the food that you need for the nourishment of your body. So one could say this neurotic craving for chocolate you just have to give up as quickly as you can, but you don't have to give up your dependence on food, not if you're simply eating what is necessary to maintain you in health and strength. So it's the same with other things. [Pause]

_____: If you have a neurotic desire for chocolates, is there much point in giving up chocolate? Isn't it something else you've got to give up?

S: Oh well, of course, but then you've got to give up the chocolate to give you an opportunity of studying that.

_____: You think you should give up the chocolate rather than finding out what's causing the.....

S: I think you must be very careful not to use this excuse that you're trying to find out what causes it, and then you'll give up as a reason for just carrying on indulging yourself.

_____: If you give up the chocolates will not your neurotic desire take some other form?

S: If you allow it to it will. (Sound of chuckling) If you keep a sharp eye on it, it need not.

And you'll experience great pain and stress, and that, of course, will be an additional reason for your really trying to find the cause. If you continue to indulge in neurotic craving, probably you will look for the cause of that only half-heartedly. But if you're really suffering the pains of deprivation then you'll really make, I think, a more earnest effort, a more wholehearted effort to find out why it is that you have this strong craving. [Pause] And boxes of chocolates every day aren't good for your health anyway. [Pause]

And one might say it's an integral part of the neurosis that you can find endless reasons for not giving up whatever it is that you are neurotically attached to, or dependent on. That is part of the neurosis itself. Surely you'll have much more space, if it is a question of space, just by giving up that object of your neurotic craving. That will leave you very free indeed to turn round.

Siddhiratna: How do you think this affects things like addiction in terms of, say, alcohol and drugs and things like that?

S: You're speaking of physical addiction?

Siddhiratna: Ah! That would be one .....

S: Well, there is a difference between physical addiction and psychological addiction, if one can use that same term. Physical addiction means that your system has got used to taking in a certain substance and if you deprive your system of that substance suddenly then there will be various repercussions and even the metabolism will be disturbed, and so on. So, therefore, probably, if it's something that involves physical addiction, you have to give it up quite carefully and thoughtfully. You may be able to give it up all at once, but on the other hand you may not. You may need to give it up gradually so that you don't experience the withdrawal symptoms too strongly. But in the case of something to which you're psychologically addicted, all that you suffer are the pangs of frustration, mentally and emotionally. (Pause) All right, let's go on.

Text: *"It is not necessary to go farther in indicating the general outlines of the Buddha's teaching, and in pointing to those features of it which are indisputable and unmistakable. The main purpose has been to show, first, that the teaching of the Buddha cannot justifiably be described as religious', if by that we mean having reference to or depending on belief in any superhuman being or spirit.*

Such beliefs are not affirmed in the teaching of the Buddha, nor are they seen to be a necessary part of his scheme of thought. How is this view of life to be characterized, if not as a religion? We are left with only one possibility. In its original form Buddhism is best described as a theory of existence, an ideology, or possibly as a philosophy. But even in the simplest form known to us, it is, by its own terms of reference, not a Personal philosophy. This point is important, and calls for a little elaboration".

S: Do you think this is very satisfactory? - to say that Buddhism is "best described as a theory of existence, an ideology, or possibly as a philosophy." - rather than as a religion? [VOICE: No.]**S:** Well clearly, `religion' isn't very satisfactory, but these other descriptions don't seem any more satisfactory, if anything in certain cases, they're even **less** satisfactory. So what could it be described as, in English? Is there a word? Is there a term? We don't seem to really have anything like it, which isn't very surprising, is it?
I think we talked about this on a previous seminar, and the point was made by some people that maybe we ought to drop all attempts to describe Buddhism, or speak of it as a religion, philosophy, spiritual this-that-or-the-other, and simply refer to the Dharma.

I suggested another term which is the `sasana'. Are you familiar with that term? Sometimes it's `Buddhasasana'. It's difficult to translate `sasana' - it's more like `directive', the Buddha's directive. It's more than `advice', because it is something which is stated, which is so sort of true that you cannot but recognise the truth of it and act upon that truth. And this is the `sasana', the Buddha's `sasana'. [Pause]

So suppose somebody asks you is Buddhism a religion. What are you going to say? Perhaps you just have to distinguish. You have to make it clear first of all that it's non-theistic, so if it **is** to be classified as a religion at all, that it must be as a non-theistic religion, which, for some people, will be a contradiction in terms. And even though it's non-theistic one has to make it clear that it isn't just a form of rationalism. That it does recognise ranges of experience that are beyond the reach of the rational mind. (Pause)

I think this whole question of how we present Buddhism, or how we refer to Buddhism, is really quite important just in the context of `The Friends' themselves; because obviously one is going to ask, people are going to enquire, what it is that you're offering, what is it that you're involved in. And if you say a religion, well that gives rise to misunderstanding. If you say a philosophy that gives rise to misunderstanding, even if you say it's a way of life, that doesn't really sound very adequate. So what is one to do? What is one to say? How is one to describe it?

Lokamitra: We'll have to distinguish like the Buddha. We'll have to ask people what they mean by religion as I suppose and then go on from there.

S: Sooner or later, presumably, we'll have to find a single term that describes what we are.

Ratnaguna: I get the feeling though that even if you do get a single term it wouldn't sort of convey what it is....

S: Yes. It means you have to educate people first, as it were.
You could say it was FWBOism. But that wouldn't convey anything to them, unless you'd explained to them about non-theism, supra-rationalism, individual development, spiritual community and all the rest of it. So really we have a sort of complex, a sort of organic body of principles and practices within `The Friends' for which there is really no parallel in the West at all. [Pause]

Nagabodhi: A phrase which popped into my head while you were out was something like either `idealistic pragmatism' or `pragmatic idealism'.

S: I did some time ago coin the term `Transcendental humanism'. (Sound of chuckling) Which I think isn't **too** bad.

Ratnaguna: Sounds like something the Maharishi would say.

S: He hadn't come along when I coined this expression I think.
Humanism' excludes God, and `transcendental' excludes the purely materialistic and rationalistic approach, hence `Transcendental Humanism'. [Pause] But I really think, unfortunately, the Maharishi has pre-empted this word `Transcendental', and if their meditation is anything it's not transcendental. That is not as we use this term in Buddhism, as the English equivalent of `lokkutara', `transcending the world', hyper-cosmic, that which pertains directly to the Unconditioned, and includes the Unconditioned.

Vessantara: Transcendental Meditation would just be a samatha practice would it?

S: It would seem so. [Pause] So I think we have to realise that in the FWBO we've got on our hands something, as it were, quite undefinable, and quite unclassifiable in Western terms.

Nagabodhi: But I think we do need to find some kind of simple term, because often, I have had the experience of people asking what we are. And I find I can only answer by giving a fairly lengthy answer. I can't put it across in a couple of words even.

S: Do you think it suffices to say that we are a spiritual movement, and then go on to say what kind of spiritual movement?

Nagabodhi: Well you have to go on very quickly, because even ... (Loud laughter obscures words) ... the word `spiritual' (words indistinct) .....

S: Well every word seems to be suspect doesn't it? - `Ideology' is certainly suspect, isn't it? It suggests something very rigid and dogmatic, and `party-line'-like.

_____: I think talking about `humanism' is very misleading. It's bound to be misleading whatever word you use. You have to choose a word and then try to step the word up in a way.

S: Oh yes! Also we must say, that to describe it as `Buddhism' is misleading in view of the sort of impression that most people have about Buddhism. At once they think of something negative, ascetic, world and life-denying, possibly miserable, repressed, Oriental, and so on.

Lokamitra: Pessimistic.

S: Pessimistic. Even now, this view doesn't seem to be going - this seems to be the original impression, and it does really seem in this case as though first impressions do stick, do last the longest. Because there is a hundred times more literature available now about Buddhism than there was, say, a hundred years ago, at least a hundred times as much, several hundred times as much. But all that literature has not succeeded in obliterating, or correcting the original impression of Buddhism; or the original impression about Buddhism, has it?

Vessantara: Sometimes I think the word `Buddhism' seems to convey more - people seem to misapprehend that more than most of the other alternatives that we've got.

Lokamitra: I wonder if they do misunderstand it to that extent, because they say it's pessimistic, it's miserable and so on, nihilistic maybe, but then you say, well, what is the state of your life really? - You look at their lives, and from there you can go on and say that Buddhism shows a really optimistic point of view. It's almost a fear of looking at our lives often.

S: Yes. But there is to be considered the effect, or the possible effect, of the word `Buddhism' when someone simply sees it on a poster. [VOICE: yes.] **S:** And there isn't your sort of friendly FWBO member just standing by to explain what it really means. (Sound of chuckling)
_____: What about `Transhumanism'?

S: Transhumanism - Mmm, not bad. (someone chuckling) No. I don't think we'll find a solution. We might in the course of the next hundred years, but not this afternoon.

Siddhiratna: I think that's almost what needs to be, Bhante, this
idea of education or studying the history of Dharma in some way. I think the word 'Dharma' is sufficiently not known but vaguely in the air as it were, to be used now, and give it time to mature as it were, it could do as a substitute word to Buddhism.

S: I think also we need much more popular literature within the Friends. I think we need many more popular statements in a very succinct form of what we really are all about. Some of them just a page, some of them maybe four or five pages. I think we need a lot of literature of this sort, very simply written and without using (unclear) Buddhist terms and possibly without the word 'Buddhism', though mentioning the Buddha.

_____**:** Siddhartha Gotama?

S: Well, yes, the Buddha, well even if you mention Siddhartha Gotama that's not enough, really is it? The whole point about him is that he became the Buddha. So you'd have to bring that in somehow.

_____**:** Especially what we want is a small introduction to Buddhism like ..... Christmas Humphries has got one .... Life of the Buddha ... so that when people want to know about Buddhism they find a short book - Life of the Buddha - or something.

S: Well we have got our introduction to the FWBO written by Devamitra, that's not bad, but I think we need something more generalised as it were.

_____**:** One of the best sellers at our bookshop is Saddatissa's "The Buddha's Way", something like that.

S: No, I'm thinking of a statement of principle, what we at present stand for, with things like the development of the individual, the spiritual community, right livelihood, the extension of right livelihood into the entire economic field and things like that. Mind reactive and creative.

Nagabodhi: Do you think it's possible to do something based on the four lectures you're about to give in Brighton?

S: Possibly, possibly.

Nagabodhi: They could be edited and published quite quickly, relatively quickly.

S: I'm not very happy about lectures being printed in that way, they really need to be rewritten, and I just don't have the time to do that myself. I'd rather that someone with a fluent pen just recast my ideas in his own words. I'd much rather that somebody did, or tried to do that. Even boiled them down very much into his own words, or her own words. I'm sure there are a few people who could do that sort of thing. Otherwise the lecture is usually too diffuse. You need something more concentrated, and you need something quite well and sharply written.

Nagabodhi: But the basic material for such a treatment would be contained (words overridden as S. breaks in) .....

S: Yes, just lift the material from the lectures, yes. After all it is in a way common property. There's no copyright in the ideas, as it were. (laughter) It might be a good idea - this is another thing I've been thinking about in connection with the Convention - there could be a session, or one or two evenings, even two or three evenings, when Order members gave talks, giving their presentation of what the FWBO and the WBO were fundamentally all about. And maybe answered questions from the floor afterwards. What do you think of this sort of idea? And possibly some of the material produced in that way could be used.

[End of Tape 16]

Lokamitra: We could even do this sort of thing on Order Days.

S: Ye-e-es. That is also true, but I think in a way the bigger the venue the better.

Siddhiratna: A little earlier did you say the FWBO's position in relation to economics and sociology .....

S: No. I mentioned `right livelihood' and its extension into the whole economic field.

Maybe first of all one could make a rough list in any sort of order, of all the things one thought were of importance in the Movement, and then arrange them in a systematic way and produce either a lecture or an article about them all. Take a comprehensive view. Supposing you were trying to describe to the proverbial `man from Mars', giving he knew your language, or you knew his, who didn't know anything about religion, or philosophy, or the history of India, or the history of England, what your particular Movement was basically trying to do; what it stood for [Pause] in the most general terms. A sort of bird's eye view of the FWBO. You mustn't get bogged down in detail - Well the FWBO runs classes in meditation, and lectures once a week, well, so it does, but that doesn't tell you anything at all about it really, or very little.

Siddhiratna: There are a number of things like this aren't there ?

S: Yes, we've got this model of factual material, but in a way the factual stuff doesn't tell you really very much about the movement. It tells you very little!

Siddhiratna: So in fact you're talking about the **ideals** of the Movement rather than the .....

S: Yes. You could probably say that - the ideals. Though obviously you want to indicate some of the more important applications of those ideals, or the fields within which the ideals are applied, or exemplified. It isn't enough to say that we have meditation classes - **why** do we have meditation classes? Why is meditation important? What is it's place in personal development? What is it's place in the overall scheme of things? You want to explain all that? What **is** meditation essentially? Not simply inform your readers that you have meditation classes at all your centres. That isn't enough. [Pause]

Perhaps one needs to link the Movement up with the times, or place it within the context of the times. In the sense of asking for instance whether it is enough to be content with material improvements with regards to an increase of the standard of living, and is this the true object of human life? Or is there some other aim, some other ideal, and what **is** that? And how does one look at that? How does one even justify that? One has got to look at it within a very, very broad context, so that people who've never heard of spiritual life, never given a thought to spiritual life, don't care at all about meditation, even if they have heard about it, can understand, at least very broadly, what the Movement is all about. But I don't think we've got any sort of very general statement of this kind, have we? I might try and work on one myself, but I must confess that my mind is not very much on these things, but on certain other things. I feel perhaps I can leave things like this sort to at least some Order members. Some Order members at least ought to be quite capable of bringing out some general statement of ideals and principles, written in an attractive sort of manner.

Nagabodhi: Have you seen Ananda's little thing that he's just brought out, or we're just about to bring out as a publicity handout for FWBO, Surrey? [**S:** No.] It's quite good. [**S:** Good.] I thought he would have shown it to you. [**S:** In prose?] (laughter) Yes. It's really

quite good. [**S:** How many pages?] Oh just back and front of a folded sheet.

S: I think he is very good at things like that because he has been around long enough and he does try to sort of digest things, and not just trot out the customary phrases and terms.

All right let's carry on then. Anyway he ends up by saying, "even in the simplest form known to us, it is by its own terms of reference not a personal philosophy". Well this is very misleading because above all Buddhism is concerned with the development of the individual, whatever personal might mean. No individual, no spiritual community. Anyway this statement provides Trevor Ling with a means of transition to his next section "Early Buddhism as a Psycho-Social Philosophy".

Text: *"EARLY BUDDHISM AS A PSYCHO-SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY*

The Buddha, it was acknowledged in the early Buddhist tradition, was a shramana. The nearest equivalent which modern English can give us is, perhaps, 'philosopher', although this is not altogether satisfactory, as the basic meaning of the word, which its usage preserves, is 'one who strives, or labours hard'. Karl Marx observed that 'The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to change it" and one imagines that the Buddha would have agreed with the observation."

S: Do you think this is correct? Do you think the Buddha would have agreed with that?

VOICE: With half.

S: With half of that. Mm. Which one?

Manjuvajra: Both halves but only half way between.

S: Well, the Buddha in a way does `interpret the world': he presents a vision of existence, a vision of human existence, and he does exhort man to change, not merely to change, but to develop, but to develop in a fashion that far transcends Karl Marx's wildest dreams! (sound of chuckling)

Siddhiratna Isn't that the point with Marx? He didn't - he curtailed his own wild dreams, and that he wasn't `utopian' at all. He didn't think in terms of creating an ideal world.

S: Well, in a way, he did, or rather he believed that an ideal world would inevitably come into existence, but he doesn't seem, except in his very early years, to have considered the individual as such. And he doesn't seem to have thought in terms of development of the individual. Though he certainly was aware, particularly in his earlier days, of the fact that in modern society, especially under modern industrial conditions, the individual human being tends to be alienated. He was certainly thinking on those lines in his earlier years, though that line of thought seems to have got lost in the morass of economics.

Siddhiratna: It's almost as if Karl Marx gets bumped up to a degree that even Karl Marx wouldn't have agreed that he should have been in some ways.