

## 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 [Mitrās](#). 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 Adhithana Dharma Team*

## **Sangharakshita in seminar**

### **The Seminar on the Introduction to Edward Conze's:**

#### **"Buddhism, Its Essence and Development"**

Held At: Sukhavati Community, London Date: December 1976

Those Present: The Venerable Sangharakshita, Manjuvajra, Vajradaka, Roy Campbell, Robert Gerke, Atula, Chintamani, Andy Friends, et al.

Cassette One, Side One

Sangharakshita: All right, we're going to do this first introductory chapter of Dr Conze's Buddhism. We're going to do this particular chapter for two reasons: first of all, Dr Conze does raise and clarify certain quite basic issues that we ought to be familiar with and aware of anyway; and secondly, he does it in his own way, which is broadly acceptable, though there are one or two things that he says, or one or two of his attitudes, that can at least be questioned, or that we should at least realize aren't necessarily to be taken as axiomatic. So, inasmuch as we do make quite a bit of use of his writings in the Friends, and inasmuch as they are very valuable, it's advisable that we should be, as it were, on our guard against any exceptions to that general valuableness that might have to be made.

Also there are quite a large number of, as it were, talking points in the course of these three pages. We might not even be able to get through them though there aren't very many pages, but we'll see, just see, how it goes.

So we're going to start off this morning with the subsection on Buddhism as a Religion. So let's go through this Introduction reading round as we usually do, each person reading a paragraph. So let's have the first paragraph and then discuss it.

Text: Buddhism as a Religion

Buddhism is an Eastern form of spirituality. Its doctrine, in its basic assumptions, is identical with many other teachings all over the world, teachings which may be called 'mystical'. The essence of this philosophy of life has been explained with great force and clarity by Thomas Kempis in his Imitation of Christ. What is known as 'Buddhism' is a part of the common human heritage of wisdom, by which men have succeeded in overcoming this world, and in gaining immortality, or a deathless life. (page 11)

S: So the first thing to understand here is the problem, as it were, or at least the difficulty which Dr Conze is having in making, as it were, an initial statement about Buddhism. First of all you must realize that this book was written quite a long time ago - 1951 - or published in 1951 originally, and that's twenty-five years ago. Twenty-five years isn't really a very long time, but it is one whole [2] generation, and quite a lot of literature has been published on Buddhism since those early days. In fact there's no comparison. There was very little available in 1951, just a few years after the war. Hundreds of books on Buddhism, quite important and valuable ones, have been published since. And one may say that even twenty-five years ago people knew very much less about Buddhism in this country certainly than they do now; not

that they know all that much now, but there are degrees, even of ignorance one might say.

So Dr Conze was writing this whole book at that time in that sort of situation mainly for people who knew perhaps nothing whatever about Buddhism, and had perhaps no particular sympathy, were just perhaps approaching it from the standpoint of comparative religion, if even that. So he had to be very careful about his initial statement. In other words, he didn't want to put them off right from the beginning. He wanted to do justice to Buddhism as much as he could; at the same time he had to speak a language which was at least a little bit familiar to people.

So one must realize, especially as the book was written twenty-five years ago, that there was this extraordinary difficulty of putting things across and giving people some idea or at least some clue to what Buddhism actually is. So therefore we mustn't be surprised if he seems to make at this time perhaps rather more concessions to the Western point of view and Western outlook, and Christian outlook, than we would find it necessary or feel it necessary to make now, especially within the context of the Friends. So, with those thoughts in mind, let's just look at this whole paragraph sentence by sentence.

His initial statement is interesting: 'Buddhism is an Eastern form of spirituality'. So what do you think about this? Do you think this still holds good as an initial statement? What is spirituality? Do you see that he's trying to avoid the two extremes - of saying so much that he doesn't convey anything and saying so little that also he doesn't convey anything? 'Buddhism is an Eastern form of spirituality.' How would it strike you, for instance, if you hadn't read or known anything about Buddhism?

Roy Campbell: If I was starting to write something about Buddhism I certainly wouldn't make my very first sentence the fact that it was Eastern, because that's not the most important thing about it by any means.

S: But don't you think that that is something that people think; at least they've got that impression: that Buddhism is somehow Eastern. So he's making, as it were, a concession to that, isn't he? But you're saying that you wouldn't make that sort of concession? (Roy Campbell: Right.) Or you think that it isn't even a concession, it's a misrepresentation?

Roy Campbell: Yeah, certainly. In so far as it's Eastern in origin I certainly don't think that's important enough to be the very first thing said about it in a book. [3]

S: Right, yes ... Though presumably one would have to refer, later on at least, to the fact that it had originated in the East and had many characteristics of some forms of Eastern culture. But you wouldn't include that in the initial statement; and it is after all the very first sentence of the very first paragraph of the introduction. Anybody else feel the same way?

Voice: (...Unclear...)

S: So would you for instance say that Buddhism is a form of spirituality?

Manjuvajra: I wouldn't even use the word 'spirituality'.

S: You wouldn't? Ah ... (Laughs) What does 'spirituality' convey to you then?

Manjuvajra: A vast sort of fuzzy confusion. It's used in so many different ways.

S: But perhaps some at least of that confusion has arisen since this book was written, partly due to the publication of books not only on Buddhism but on all sorts of other things too. I suppose it's quite a hopeless task asking people what their initial statement would be. Have you ever tried it? What would be your initial statement - if you had to make an initial statement in this sort of almost staccato way?

Roy Campbell: There would be very few people reading this book that didn't already know it anyway; I mean, about being 'an Eastern form of spirituality'. I'd be very surprised ...

S: Hm, yes. They'd know it's an Eastern something, so he's seizing hold of that as a starting point and saying, well, it is Eastern, it's an Eastern form of spirituality. That's his sort of starting point.

But what about this word 'spirituality'? Do you really think it's been so debased? And if so, what is an alternative word? Is there an alternative word? Or could there be? You notice though that it is a strict logical definition? I take it that you noticed this? You know what a definition is, logically?

Voice: (...Unclear...)

S: No, no, that's still more elementary. A definition consists in the stating that a thing belongs to a certain genus and stating also the characteristics which distinguish it from other species in the same genus. So: 'Buddhism is an Eastern form of spirituality.' So 'form of spirituality' is the genus. So what particular form or kind of spirituality? An Eastern one. So you define a thing by stating the genus to which it belongs and the accidents which differentiate it [4] from other species of the same genus. So Conze has done this quite sort of strictly.

Manjuvajra: But I tend to take 'spiritual' now as meaning pertaining to those positive mental states which cover the normal realm and beyond that - so ... a 'spirituality'? I can't see how you can make a noun out of it.

S: Well, this is how I use the words 'spiritual' and 'spirituality', and I spoke about that in a lecture you might remember. So a spiritual life is a life devoted to the cultivation and development of those positive qualities or life which is oriented in the direction of those positive qualities or based or centred upon them. Whether that is how spirituality is understood by the public at large, that's a quite different matter.

Manjuvajra: We have to be quite careful about using words in a technical way that have got an unclear popular meaning as well. I notice further on he uses the word 'immortality' - 'and in gaining immortality' - which seems to me a very confusing sort of statement.

S: Mmmm ... All right, any other difficulty anyone can see in this opening statement: 'Buddhism is an Eastern form of spirituality'? I mean, the statement can certainly be justified. But as an initial statement, as an opening statement? You're sort of nailing your colours to the mast, as it were. Or can anyone think of anything better?

Robert Gerke: I'm a bit sympathetic. (...Unclear...) .. he had to start somewhere in 1951 and ..

S: .. he did his best. (Laughter) And he didn't confine himself to that; he went on.

Robert Gerke: It's not that bad.

S: Well, what would it convey to you?

Robert Gerke: I've read this whole thing before, so I know it's quite good later on, so I can't really say if I just read that if I'd be inspired or not.

S: But at least it wouldn't put you off?

Robert Gerke: No, there's nothing in there that would make me want to put it down.

S: All right, let's pass on then. 'Its doctrine, in its basic assumptions, is identical with many other teachings all over the world, teachings which may be called "mystical"'. What do you think of this statement and the use here, the introduction here, of this word 'mystical'? He's put it in single inverted commas. Presumably he's aware that he's using a rather ambiguous word that different people [5] could take in different ways. But what do you think about his basic statement? Do you think that Buddhism, in 'Its doctrine, in its basic assumptions, is identical with many other teachings all over the world'? He says 'identical' .. 'teachings which may be called 'mystical''. What do you think this is? A statement of fact or just a highly questionable statement that is open to discussion?

Robert Gerke: I think 'identical' is going a bit too far.

S: 'Identical' .. I think he has gone a bit too far. You can see what he's trying to do. He's trying to reassure the reader that Buddhism isn't something totally unfamiliar. It doesn't represent something which has got no parallel in our own, that is to say Western, tradition. But perhaps he has gone a bit too far in using that word 'identical'. Because identical is identical. 'Teachings which may be called "mystical"' ... How do you understand the word 'mystical'? How would you understand it encountering it here?

Robert Gerke: Non-rational.

S: Non-rational, mmm ... (Pause)

All right, the next sentence I think throws a bit more light. 'The essence of this philosophy of life has been explained with great force and clarity by Thomas Kempis in his Imitation of Christ.' What do you think of that? Has anyone read Thomas Kempis' Imitation of Christ? Who has?

Voice: I've dipped into it.

S: You've dipped into it. I've read it many years ago; in fact it's many years ago. But why do you think he has brought this in? What sort of reader does he seem to be aiming at, almost?

Robert Gerke: The unconventional Christian.

S: The unconventional Christian. Though of course Thomas Kempis was an orthodox

Catholic. He wasn't an unconventional Christian.

Vajradaka: Is it conventional Christian reading? I got the impression it was more alternative.

S: No, it is quite conventional Christian reading in a sense. But you're probably right in thinking that the unconventional Christian would probably nowadays be more likely to be reading it than the orthodox, say, Catholic Christian, though I can't be completely sure about this.

But it's trying to adduce a parallel of sorts within our own tradition. So the person who is interested vaguely in mystical literature will probably have read Thomas Kempis, will probably have been favourably impressed by it in a non-orthodox sort of way and therefore will have some sympathy, [6] he hopes, for Buddhism if it's said that what Buddhism is all about has been stated in its essentials by Thomas Kempis in this quite well-known classic. I mean, at least, even if everybody doesn't read it, it's always included in popular editions of classics and things like that. It's included in the Everyman's Library and so on. But I doubt personally very much whether the essence of Buddhism's philosophy of life has been explained in this work, because you can see from the title it's [about] an imitation of Christ, and Christ means Christ in the fully orthodox sense.

I think there's a sort of assumption on Conze's part here, which is shared by people like say Aldous Huxley in his Perennial Philosophy, that you can take Christian writers like Thomas Kempis and you can separate the Christian doctrine from something which is, according to their way of thinking, the purely mystical element. I doubt very much whether you can do this. I think Thomas Kempis' approach is essentially Christocentric, as it's called. If he had heard that you were thinking in terms of taking away the Christian exclusiveness, of his concentration on the person of Christ in the fully orthodox sense, and getting some sort of universal message out of his book - well, he'd be horrified!

So can a work which is so essentially Christocentric - and not just taking Christ as a symbol as people very often nowadays do, but Christ in the fully orthodox sense - can a work which is so completely Christocentric and orthodox in the Christian sense, Catholic sense, be regarded as offering a clear statement of the Buddhist philosophy of life, or even the essentials of the Buddhist philosophy of life? Isn't that going rather too far, even though one might say, well, there is a certain kinship, a certain harmony even. But identity? Can you regard that as a statement in Christian terms of the Buddhist philosophy of life? Can you as it were extract a sort of non-Christian, non-sectarian message or philosophy of that sort from this very essentially Christocentric work?

I think this is at least open to discussion and cannot be assumed in the almost sort of facile way that Dr Conze seems to assume. Do you see what I'm getting at? This is very much the Aldous Huxley Perennial Philosophy generation. Perhaps he has in mind that generation, as it were.

Vajradaka: Perhaps it was a mistake that quite a lot of Buddhist philosophers made; because Suzuki in Outlines of Mahayana Buddhism indicates the same sort of attitude to some degree.

S: And then there is for instance Suzuki's book on Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist, where he writes about Meister Eckhart, who is a very extreme example and no doubt perhaps in a

sense the least Christian of all the great European mystics. But there is this sort of tendency, not only on Suzuki's part but on the part of his followers, to take some of Meister Eckhart's statements as being virtually statements about Buddhism and just ignore the Christian [7] element, though that must have been an essential part of Eckhart's whole approach.

I remember in this connection when I was at the Hampstead Buddhist Vihara we had a German bhikkhu staying with us. And some of the people who were coming along were quite keen on hearing some lectures by him instead of having me every Sunday. So I asked him if he'd mind giving [lectures]. He said he wasn't all that keen on giving lectures but anyway he'd have a go. He was a quite well-read, studious sort of person, one of two twins, both of whom had become Buddhist monks. So he gave two or three talks. So I took the opportunity of having Sunday off; I didn't go to his talks. But soon I started getting complaints about his lectures. And the main complaint was that he didn't talk about Buddhism at all, that his lectures were entirely about Meister Eckhart. And one particular person had counted that in one lecture by him there were thirty-two lengthy quotations from Meister Eckhart. And they said: 'Well, we've come along to the Vihara to hear about Buddhism, not to hear about Meister Eckhart!' But he was under this sort of impression, that in retailing Meister Eckhart he was in fact talking about Buddhism. But most of the people who came along didn't feel that they were getting what they had come for, which was the Dharma, and I agreed with them. So I asked him to cut down on the quotations from Meister Eckhart, which he rather reluctantly did.

But perhaps Conze is trying to sort of build a bridge, as it were, and just make things intelligible and try to point out some common ground but I think he's gone too far; in fact quite a bit too far as we'll see in the next sentence.

He says: 'What is known as "Buddhism" is a part of the common human heritage of wisdom, by which men have succeeded in overcoming this world, and in gaining immortality, or a deathless life.' Well, what do you make of this?

Manjuvajra: I think these are the same things: that if you interpret them from a Buddhist point of view then they can make sense; but they were originally quoted in a completely different context.

S: That's right, yes, yes.

Manjuvajra: It does seem as though Buddhism can take the form of spirituality of a particular culture and sort of understand it and accept it and use it in its own way .. (S: Yes.) .. but other forms of spirituality don't seem to be able to do that. It kind of seems to be a strong point of Buddhism - but also an area of confusion and misunderstanding.

S: Well, I have said in the past that I could expound and explain everything that I am currently saying , for instance, about the Higher Evolution of Man taking my terminology and my illustrations entirely from the New Testament. I could do that quite easily. It wouldn't be [8] difficult at all. But that doesn't mean that Buddhism and Christianity are the same, because I'd be using that terminology and those illustrations in my own way. And the New Testament is not understood in that way by Christians themselves. That is the point. I think one has to distinguish between how it is possible to interpret Christianity and how Christianity has actually been understood historically by Christians.

Vajradaka: That really negates this statement about 'the common heritage of wisdom'.

S: There is the still more fundamental question in my view of whether wisdom can be a heritage. A common heritage? What do you mean by 'a common heritage'? It seems to mean a heritage of the group. Can wisdom - and Dr Conze knows perfectly well what wisdom means - be a heritage of the group, the human group? Is that possible? Do you see what I am getting at?

Vajradaka: I don't really think that he could have believed that.

S: No, I'm not saying that he did. He's trying to make this introductory statement, but I'm being rather hard on him, in a sense quite unjustifiably, just because he is so well known and we do all read his works, and we have to be very, very much on our guard against these sort of statements which could be the basis of serious misunderstandings if one forgot that he was simply making an introductory statement in 1951. We need not speak in these sorts of terms now - nor should we. But that doesn't mean to say that we could necessarily make a better introductory statement, even now, although we could perhaps have a shot at it. It might be a very useful exercise for a study group: to say 'Would you please re-write this paragraph? Just this one paragraph, these ten or so lines.' That would be a very good exercise. And then produce all the results in your next study class and discuss them and see who had said what and how. You might find yourselves completely stuck and unable to suggest any changes.  
(Pause)

But let's look a little bit more at this idea of wisdom being part of 'the common human heritage'. This has got all sorts of implications and ramifications. Do you see what I'm getting at? What is a heritage?

Vajradaka: Something passed on.

S: Something passed on. So what is wisdom? He's using the word quite technically.

Manjuvajra: The way I think he's using it is in terms of like 'words of wisdom', that is, collections of wise sayings. But wisdom from the Buddhist point of view is an experience that grows within a particular individual.

[9]

S: Yes .. and not just any kind of experience, not even a spiritual experience, but quite definitely a transcendental experience or transcendental Insight, that is to say an insight into the true or real nature of things. This is what wisdom is in Buddhism. But can that be handed down? Can you literally think or speak in terms of handing that down as part of the common human heritage? Is it, as it were, the property of the human group? And can it be, as it were, literally handed down from generation to generation? Can it? So what actually does happen?

Manjuvajra: The means to it, the approach, can be.

S: The means to it can be. For instance, you get the Zen people speaking in terms of this sort of transmission, this handing down directly from teacher to disciple, and sometimes they talk about it in such a literalistic way it's as though he handed Enlightenment on to you or down to you along with your begging bowl. It was something almost as concrete or material as that.



But what is handed down? In what sense is it meaningful to speak in terms of a handing on, or a handing down, or even a tradition? This is what I sometimes say, or at least sometimes think - I don't always say it - that Buddhism cannot be a tradition, the Dharma, strictly speaking cannot be a tradition. It isn't something that is handed down, paradoxical as that might seem, because if you hand something down it suggests it's sort of an object which remains unchanging. So what in fact does happen if the Dharma isn't handed down? I mean, the words can be handed down, even the ideas can be handed down, but can the Dharma be handed down? So what happens when the Dharma is what we cannot help calling 'transmitted'? What actually happens? Is something handed down?

Manjuvajra: Something is reborn to continue.

S: It would perhaps be more correct to say reborn, or rediscovered, recreated.

Vajradaka: A sort of interaction.

S: A sort of interaction. I mean, the Buddha in the Diamond Sutra says quite clearly that there is nothing taught, there is nothing handed on, nothing transmitted. But we may tend to speak like this, and we can't help speaking like that, but we mustn't take such expressions literally, which after all the Zen people seem to do. Have you noticed that?

Manjuvajra: Don't you get this within the Vajrayana?

S: You do, you do. Some people there too think quite literally as if something has been handed down to them and they have got something they didn't have before. It would be more correct, again, to say that something had been awakened in them.

[10]

Manjuvajra: It's sort of drawing a distinction between the methods and the results really, isn't it? I mean, because something is passed down, in that the doctrines and practices are passed down.

S: Yes.

Manjuvajra: But we see those as distinct from the results that they produce.

S: In a sense, yes, because you start off with an experience, which is the Buddha's experience of Enlightenment, and then the Buddha tries to communicate that, or to communicate some awareness of that. He does that through words, through the Teaching, so that you understand the Teaching, you begin to get some glimmer of an idea of what the Buddha is talking about, and as a result of that you work on it yourself. You practice according to the Buddha's Teachings so that the glimmer grows and it becomes much brighter, much clearer, much stronger, and eventually it becomes your personal experience. But the Buddha hasn't, as it were, literally handed over something to you.

So that one mustn't think too literally, or at all literally, of Enlightenment being handed on or handed down from generation to generation like a sort of precious heirloom. It has to be sort of recreated or rekindled at every stage. I mean, a book can be handed down. You can give your disciple a book - that's handed over, or you can even hand over a Teaching. I mean, this

is the way it's come down. You can hand over a method, but you can't in the same sort of way hand over Enlightenment, or pass on Enlightenment, or transmit Enlightenment. You can't even take this expression of the Zen people's 'special transmission outside the scriptures' literally.

I mean, another comparison which is used is the flame. You light one lamp from another, but you don't say that this flame has passed from this lamp to that lamp; but the second lamp has been kindled in dependence on the first.

So I think that we really must beware of this sort of language, this sort of phraseology, this 'Buddhism being a part of the common human heritage of wisdom'. I mean, wisdom isn't part of the heritage of the ordinary man: he doesn't know anything about it! It isn't part of the heritage of the group; it doesn't belong to the group; it's got nothing to do with the group as such.

So this is taking as I said a very strict view. It isn't altogether fair to quarrel with him for his language, especially in view of the time at which he was writing, and the kind of people which he was trying to put things across to. But reading it nowadays we mustn't ourselves, as it were, be deceived.

And what about this 'succeeded in overcoming this world'? What do you think of that expression? What do you think that would convey? Do you think that it is a satisfactory expression? It echoes the New Testament of course, doesn't it? - 'Be of good cheer, for I have [11] overcome the world.' I wouldn't quarrel too much with that expression; but what about 'in gaining immortality or a deathless life'? I mean, Buddhism does speak in terms of immortality. Even nirvana is called amata sadham: the deathless state. But what do you think is the danger here of him using this term 'immortality'?

Vajradaka: Eternalist view.

S: Eternalist view, yes - that people will take it in the sense of personal immortality which traditionally Christians are so much concerned with. I mean, Buddhism as it were takes personal immortality for granted, but that's what you're trying to transcend. (Amusement)

Manjuvajra: People might even take it that you were trying to gain physical life for ever, lengthen your life ...

S: Some people might even take it in that way, especially in view of modern science fiction and all that. And perhaps what many ancient peoples were searching for was the immortal life in the science fiction sense rather than in the Buddhist sense. But what is the difference between the Buddhist idea of nirvana as the deathless state and the Christian idea of immortality? What is the difference?

Manjuvajra: I think it's deathless because it's not even birthless. You only get death if you insist on having a birth. In other words, if you get a rigid interpretation of something then that's got to die.

S: The Christian idea of immortality is the indefinite prolongation as it were in time of something which the Buddhists would regard as being essentially of a conditioned nature, a

phenomenal nature; whereas nirvana as the immortal is not only the deathless but, as you said, the birthless and does not exist within time at all. It transcends time and isn't as it were personal, isn't a personal immortality. The Christian is of course concerned with personal immortality, the unending blissful existence. Well, Buddhism would regard that as simply a heavenly existence, and terminable, and would certainly not equate that sort of immortality with the experience of nirvana. So this sort of expression would, I think, cause many people to think that Buddhism aimed at the sort of personal immortality in heaven that Christianity traditionally aims at. That would be a big misunderstanding.

So what do you think of the whole of this introductory paragraph? Do you think it does really convey something, even now, positively? And is still useful? Or not? What do you really feel dissatisfied about, do you think? If you are feeling dissatisfied.

Manjuvajra: I just think it's woolly and liable to misinterpretation and later confusion.

[12]

Vajradaka: When I first read it I just felt it was a bit irrelevant. Seemed to be talking to Victorian Christians, although it perhaps wasn't.

S: Yes, hmm, hmm. Though there is this point, which can be debated, that whether in presenting Buddhism one should necessarily aim primarily at people who are as it were religious minded. Do you see what I'm getting at? He seems to assume that you've got to get those people on your side. That these are the people that are probably going to be reading your book. the people who are interested in spirituality, who've got a sympathy, if only a sneaking sympathy for mysticism; who have probably dipped into St Thomas Kempis. It's significant that only one of all of you had even dipped into St Thomas Kempis. Clearly this opening paragraph is not directed to the person who might have dipped into, well, Marx, or dipped into Shakespeare, etc., etc. Or might have dipped into Blake. It's addressed to the person who has sympathy for spirituality and mysticism, and who has probably got a little acquaintance with St Thomas Kempis, or at least has heard of him, and has perhaps some interest in immortality. In other words, it seems to be addressed to the sort of post-Christian Christian - as if to say these are the sort of people who are most likely to be receptive to the message of Buddhism. But do you think this is correct? I'm not saying at this stage whether it's correct or incorrect, but what do you say? What do you think?

Robert Gerke: I think he should have been looking for the people who were suffering ... and maybe ..

S: Ah, mmm. Yes, that's an interesting point, because there isn't a word here about suffering, is there? I mean, for instance, you could have had an opening statement, a quite formal definition: Buddhism is a teaching which shows man the way to transcend suffering. That would have been a quite correct and orthodox opening statement and quite intelligible to anybody. I mean, I said 'transcend suffering' not escape suffering for obvious reasons, but that could have been the opening statement: Buddhism is a teaching which shows people the way to transcend suffering. But as you say there's no mention of suffering in here.

Manjuvajra: And also as we've been saying, those sort of people reading in that line probably aren't ... I mean, the general feeling I get from this is that they're probably quite well-off and they've got plenty of time to read those sorts of things, and in fact they probably wouldn't get

into Buddhism because it would upset their lifestyle too much anyway.

S: Of course, there used to be shoals of people of this sort in and around the Buddhist Society and the Hampstead Vihara in what I call 'the old days', though it's only ten or twelve years ago. And this used to be one of the things that they had against me, many of them: that I wasn't sufficiently sympathetic to Christianity and didn't stress the resemblances between Buddhism and Christianity, not to say the identity between them. And quite clearly many people just did not want to have to make a choice, didn't want to have to make up their minds. They wanted to continue their vague, fuzzy sort of ... not even sympathy, but ... what shall I say? ... it's difficult to find a word ... but they wanted to just feel sort of 'at home' with Buddhism and 'at home' with Christianity in a cosy sort of way that wasn't any conflict. You didn't have to do any thinking. It was all the same anyway. They just wanted a bit of comfort, a bit of uplift. So perhaps Dr Conze, rightly or wrongly - and it is after all '51 - had this sort of potential readership in mind. But is it really so any longer? Is this the best sort of recruiting ground as it were for future Buddhists? What do you think?

Manjuvajra: Not so far as the FWBO is concerned.

S: Do our recruits, or our potential members, to use that term, really come from among such people or not? Where do they come from nowadays? I don't know any more; I only meet them after they've been very well reconditioned (Amusement) and have shed many of their illusions and delusions. It's most of you who get them at that earlier stage.

Manjuvajra: Back in Cornwall they came from the kind of mystico-hippie area. That was one area ...

End of Side One, Side Two

Manjuvajra: ... That was one area. And the other area was, I suppose vestiges of that, but your middle-class disillusioned. They were quite successful materially. They were probably into health foods and 'natural' kitchenware and ... They found that wasn't enough either, so they'd get into Buddhism.

S: It seems also to me - though perhaps this is inevitable - that at least this opening paragraph of the book is addressed very much to people who read, who are accustomed to reading. I suppose it's inevitable that a book should be addressed to people who read! (Laughter) But do you see what I'm getting at? It's not addressed to the sort of person who doesn't normally read but who really feels the painfulness of existence pressing upon him and he's looking for a solution and one day he thinks that the solution might be in a book. It might be. So he dips into a book or two. This seems to be addressed to people who are in the habit of dipping into books, maybe even as a way of passing the time - not because they're really looking for a solution to an existential problem. There's no urgency about this at all actually - is there? - no urgency whatever.

He could have written: 'If you are suffering; if you find life unbearable; if you find life meaningless; if [14] you've even thought sometimes of committing suicide - well, look! This will show you the way out of all that. This is Buddhism.' There's nothing of that sort of approach, is there? This paragraph is not addressed to the desperate man. It's addressed - it seems to me - to the person who is comfortably browsing in his library among the classics,

and has got plenty of leisure, etc. Or do you think I'm being too hard or too harsh? You think I am? What do you think then?

Andy Friends: Well, I mean, really you can go on picking holes in something all day; it seems inevitable.

S: Well, that is true. But then we must do this. Because we're basically picking holes in our own approach. Because this is to some extent our own approach. It's very difficult to avoid this approach but we must avoid it actually.

Manjuvajra: I think - for me anyway - talking like that sort of highlights an approach ... That [if] you go out in the streets, there are lots of really awful situations, and this sort of way is never, ever going to mean anything to those people, I mean even to people who come along [to classes]. If people read this in Cornwall, it wouldn't mean anything to them.

S: So what one is trying to do is to find what should be the right initial statement, what one is going to say to people. And that depends obviously on what sort of people you are meeting and the main question for us is what is going to be our initial statement and is it going to differ from this? Because we aren't meeting these sorts of people. I mean the sort of people to whom this statement is addressed are not the sort of people who will get very deeply into Buddhism or the spiritual life. So if one makes this sort of statement one will tend to continue speaking virtually to the spiritual dilettante.

Andy Friends: The way I see it is that anyone just coming across the word 'Buddhism' in a book is going to find it grey and lifeless. But what he's doing is trying to colour it in by using dramatic words like 'overcoming the world', which if you think about it is quite powerful, and 'gaining immortality', even though that may be slightly inaccurate ... 'The deathless life' ... So he's colouring it in so people can see it.

S: Yes, this is certainly what he's trying to do. But the question is whether the colours are the right colours. They might have been the right colours to some extent then, but the question is: are they the right colours now? Or doesn't the amount of misunderstanding generated counterbalance the amount of understanding generated?

Andy Friends: It seems as though you're dealing with the imaginary figure of the man in the street. It's really hard [15] to judge how someone would take that. It makes sense to me. I think it's really good, maybe 'cause I was quite sympathetic to Christianity, so ...

S: I think the majority of people who come along nowadays are not sympathetic to Christianity, and therefore wouldn't benefit from that sort of comparison. So it boils down to what I said earlier on, about how would one rewrite the introductory paragraph? Maybe you wouldn't rewrite it very much. But maybe some people would.

Chintamani: It seems like a compromise. The thing to do surely would be to restate it in terms of itself, not in terms of something else.

S: Yes, I think in a way this is the basic point. I think in a way you don't trust Buddhism to speak for itself. You think people are not going to understand. You think essentially that Buddhism is something so Eastern that it's got to be translated into Western terms before

people can understand it. He does say something of this sort later on: that you mustn't mix up Buddhist culture with Buddhism itself. But what this whole approach seems to suggest is that if you just speak about Buddhism - 'Buddhism says this, or Buddhism says that,' - people won't understand, because it is Eastern. So therefore you have to bring in these Western parallels; that is to say, the message of Buddhism can't make a direct impact or a direct appeal so far as people in the West are concerned. But is this true? (Voice: No.) No.

Manjuvajra: I think you have to choose the right things. I don't think it would be any good talking about Buddhas and Bodhisattvas to, like, your aunts and uncles, but if you took the relevant piece of the Dharma that was concerned with their lives and the sort of thing that was going on in their lives ...

S: I think you could even talk about Buddhas and Bodhisattvas but you need not use the Sanskrit word 'Buddha' or the Sanskrit word 'Bodhisattvas'. But I'm sure you could. You'd have to talk about Buddhas and Bodhisattvas sooner or later. I mean, could you talk about Buddhism without talking about the Buddha quite quickly? (Manjuvajra: Well, no.) You couldn't really. So I think maybe it's a question of having, as it were, more confidence in the direct appeal of Buddhism itself, or the direct appeal of the Dharma, and confidence in people's capacity to respond to that without your having to translate it, as it were, into Western cultural terms for their benefit.

Vajradaka: I suppose the same could be true of talking about the higher evolution which can be very attractive to intellectuals and modern thinkers, but also perhaps you need to, kind of, (...Unclear...) this faith, as it were, in their natural feeling for the Dharma. [16]

S: This is certainly something I've found in the past. that sometimes you might think that people wouldn't be very sympathetic or they wouldn't understand very well. but nonetheless you put it across quite straightforwardly and actually there has been a very positive response. So perhaps this is the basic issue here: whether it is really necessary to as it were translate the Dharma, or to cite Western parallels, or what one thinks of as Western parallels. Perhaps the Dharma is capable of speaking for itself and more directly than one very often imagines. And perhaps you don't need this sort of approach. Perhaps this sort of approach is only intelligible only to a limited number of people with this sort of background. So maybe it means just having more faith or confidence in the Dharma itself.

Robert Gerke: I think the Four Noble Truths is just ... straight out. It's just ... you know ...

S: Well, there's something in that! (Laughter) Someone pour the tea out, please. A very weak one for me.

(Long pause while tea is served.)

S: Time is passing, isn't it? I think we need a whole week. (Pause) Another thing I notice is it's almost as though Dr Conze is trying to reassure the reader. But you could ask: Is that the right approach? Should you try to reassure the person that you're speaking to about Buddhism? It's as if you're saying: 'Well, it's OK. It's all familiar. We know it all already. It isn't anything very strange.' I can understand this motivation to some extent, but is that really a skilful thing to do?

Robert Gerke: If you come on too strong about it - telling people they've gotta change their lives - people will say ..

S: (Interrupting) But that's what some people want! This is in a way very nearly the whole point. People come along; some want to change, others don't. You say: 'Well, all right, Buddhism doesn't really demand any change. It's all more or less what we've got already in Christianity.' So you'll please the people who don't want to change, but you'll disappoint the people who do want to change. And they will go away and you'll be left with the people who don't want to change. (Laughter) Do you see what I mean? (Robert Gerke: Yeah.) So perhaps we haven't been uncompromising enough in some ways.

Atula: I suppose that all depends on what sort of motivation you've got for writing the book.

S: Mmmm .. Yes .. yes.

Vajradaka: I really feel for what you're trying to say, but I've sometimes seen just the shocked look on people's faces [17] when I've given talks and I've been very direct and I've said: 'Have you really questioned whether you want to change or not?' There's been this ...

S: (Interrupting) But if people don't want to change and they know that they don't want to change and they're not going to change - then what's the point of them coming along? Aren't you better off with the very small number of people who do want to change?

Voice: Much.

S: I mean, there is that to be considered too. If you've got a Movement which is made up mainly of people who are drifting along and don't particularly want to change, is that going to be very inspiring for those who do want to change?

I'm raising these points more as questions than as assertions, but we have to think about them quite carefully. Do we need to be so careful not to shock people or not to startle them? And not to make them think there's something in Buddhism that they don't know of already, or something that requires them to change?

It's true people do have to go step by step, but that can be made clear too. Change is step by step. You're not asking people to change all at once. But even that shouldn't be made a sort of let out. I feel in a way fairly strongly about this because I was involved for so many years with people who didn't want to change and I really got so fed up with it. One felt one was just expected to be a nice comfortable sort of minister-like figure, just ministering to the faithful, who just wanted to go on nibbling but didn't want to really change in any way.

Vajradaka: There seem to be two approaches: talking to the people who are already a bit disillusioned; and producing disillusionment, or at least being a catalyst for disillusionment. Perhaps you can do the two things at the same time when talking about the need for change ...

S: For instance, in psychotherapy there is a distinction between 'adjustment therapy' and ... what do they call the other one? Maybe they haven't got a proper term for it. Let's call it 'character therapy'. You know what I mean - the distinction? (Noises of agreement) Supposing you're mentally ill - neurotic or even worse than that - adjustment therapy is the therapy that

you get that enables you to come to terms with the situation and go back to work and function just like everybody else. This is adjustment therapy. Character therapy is therapy which doesn't just cure your symptoms but causes you to have a radical reappraisal of your whole life and your whole situation and maybe change your whole way of life completely, your work and everything. That's character therapy. You see the basis of the difference there?

We must be very careful that we're not an 'adjustment [18] Buddhism', because this is the function of religion usually in the world and ministers do just help people to carry on and give them some consolation to enable them to adjust.

Vajradaka: TM's like that.

S: TM's very much like that, I'm afraid. That's all right as a component if you're quite a large strong spiritual movement. It's all right having a few people like that. But basically Buddhism isn't an 'adjustment Buddhism' at all. If you like, it's a 'character Buddhism' - and more than that.

So this is really what I'm getting at and what I'm dissatisfied with somewhat in Conze. It seems to be an approach more in the nature of adjustment Buddhism than of character Buddhism, as one might call it. I'm sure it's unintentional, if it is that, on his part. But this is something that we have to beware of. You can't help as it were introducing Buddhism to people on those sort of terms to begin with. But you have to be very careful that as soon as possible you make it clear that Buddhism isn't meant just to help you along and enable you to work better and have a happier family life, etc., and to earn more. It is basically something very different from all that.

Chintamani: I suppose this would be very much the academic approach: that if wisdom is seen as concepts, then you can only illustrate concepts by way of paralleling them with other concepts; but experience, in the sense of somebody who actually practises the Dharma, would communicate itself directly.

S: Yes .. yes. Anyway, let's go on, otherwise we won't even finish this page this morning.

Text: During the last two centuries, spiritual interests have in Europe been relegated into the background by preoccupations with economic and social problems. The word 'spiritual' seems vague nowadays. It is, indeed, not easy to define. It is easier to state by what means one gets to the spiritual realm than to say what it is in itself. Three avenues of approach to the spiritual are, I think, handed down by the almost universal tradition of the sages:

to regard sensory experience as relatively unimportant;

to try to renounce what one is attached to;

to try to treat all people alike - whatever their looks, intelligence, colour, smell, education, etc.

The collective effort of the European races during the last centuries has gone into channels which by this definition are not 'spiritual'. (page 11)



S: I think the earlier sentences here are quite obvious and self-evident. That 'During the last two centuries spiritual interests have in Europe been relegated into the background by preoccupations with economic and social problems.' Anybody not agree with that? You don't think it is too sweeping? 'The word "spiritual" seems vague nowadays.' [19] Anyone disagree with that? It does seem vague, doesn't it? 'It is, indeed, not easy to define. It is easier to state by what means one gets to the spiritual realm than to say what it is in itself. Three avenues of approach to the spiritual are, I think, handed down by the almost universal tradition of the sages.'

All right, let's see what these are: 'to regard sensory experience as relatively unimportant; to try to renounce what one is attached to; to try to treat all people alike - whatever their looks, intelligence, colour, smell, education, etc.' So what do you think he is getting at here? Do you agree with this sort of summary, these three avenues of approach to the spiritual?

Manjuvajra: I think I like that. It's good

S: All right, to take them up one by one: 'To regard sensory experience as relatively unimportant.' What is meant by that? What is sensory experience to begin with?

Vajradaka: The Five Skandhas?

S: No, not quite. What does one mean by sensory experience? Well, one means experience coming through the five senses. Well, we say in the West the five senses, but in Buddhism it's always the six senses. Has everybody understood that? The sixth sense being the mind itself - which is regarded it as being simply on a par with the eye, the ear, the nose, and so on. So this is sensory experience, experience coming to one through the five or, in the case of Buddhism and in fact general Indian tradition, six senses. So 'to regard it as relatively unimportant'. So 'relatively unimportant' from what point of view? Or in what way?

Manjuvajra: It seems to me that if you regard them as unimportant that indicates that there must be something else, and most people would find that their whole existence is bound up with sensory experience. So by regarding it as unimportant it gives a strong emphasis to a kind of search for whatever else there might be.

S: Right. In other words, if you regard it [sensory experience] as relatively unimportant it suggests that there are possibilities of experience beyond the reach of the five or even six senses. So this is perhaps almost one of the first things that one has to put across to people: that is to say that the possibilities of experience go far beyond the five or even the six senses.

This is one of the reasons why in traditional Buddhist teaching the idea of the levels is so important. I referred to these levels in one or two of the lectures recently, didn't I? Levels in the sense of the dhatus: the kamadhatu, the rupadhatu, the arupadhatu; sometimes called kamavacara, rupavacara, arupavacara: the world of sensuous desire, the world of pure form, and the formless world. This is why this teaching is so important. It illustrates this very fact: [20] that our experience is not necessarily limited to the world of the physical senses and even the ordinary mind ... whereas most people, especially in modern times, assume that it is so limited.

Vajradaka: What if you wanted later on to refer to those dhatus? Where can we look? Where

can we find a reference?

S: I've mentioned them in the Survey, but not at very great length. You'd have to look at something to do with the Abhidharma. (Vajradaka: Ah.) Is this very clear in people's minds, this idea of these different levels, and also the importance of these levels in the teachings?

Manjuvajra: I am not very clear on the distinction between the pure form and the formless.

S: Well, the form spheres and formless spheres, or the different levels or subdivisions, are also meditative levels. Our ordinary everyday consciousness belongs to the kamaloka, the kamadhātu, but these higher worlds or these higher spheres, these are normally experienced in meditation. So therefore you have a sort of correlation between these spheres on the one hand, or these subdivisions of the spheres, and what are called the dhyanas, the superconscious states.

So the general difference seems to be this: that in the rupaloka, corresponding to the rupa-dhyana, there is an experience of light in different ways, in different forms, and in fact we find - to come back to this question of mysticism - in many mystical writings there are references to light, to light experiences, sometimes light is used symbolically, but sometimes it is understood quite literally, that one does see a light, not an external physical light but certainly an inner light. Or one might even see that inner light as an external physical light. But there are various kinds of light experiences. So these all belong to the form world or world of pure form. 'Pure' is a sort of paraphrase. The actual original word is simply rupa or form; but it's not a material form.

Manjuvajra: How about dreams?

S: These definitely come within the kamaloka normally, except of course that you can in sleep, even in the dream state, have a sort of higher spiritual experience, which would belong to the rupaloka, or even the arupaloka, or which would even be an experience of insight. This is possible. Then in the case of the arupaloka what is the kind of experience? There is no experience of light as there is in the rupaloka. In the first of the arupa states there is only an experience of space. Now what is meant by this? It is said that one experiences 'the infinity of space'. It is very easy to say that, it's quite easy to understand it, but what does it actually mean? To experience the infinity of space?

[21]

Voice: To feel space.

S: To feel space. But what is space? (Pause) Is physical space meant here? So what is that space? What do you mean by space? Well, what is the difference between finite space and infinite space?

Manjuvajra: One is free and one is bounded.

S: Ah, one is free and one is bounded. So when you are within a finite space, what sort of experience do you have?

Manjuvajra: Restriction.

S: Restriction.

Manjuvajra: Conditioned.

S: Conditioned. So when you are in infinite space what sort of experience do you have?

Manjuvajra: Freedom.

S: Freedom. So what is meant therefore by this experience of the infinity of space?

Manjuvajra: That you've got infinite freedom.

S: That you've got infinite freedom. Because nirvana itself, which is beyond, is also infinite freedom or absolute freedom. So clearly the sort of freedom that you experience here is not the same thing as the freedom of nirvana, but it is an experience that goes beyond the rupaloka.

So what sort of experience do you think it is? It is the experience of being able to move in any direction, which means it's an experience of spontaneity. It's an experience subjectively of complete absence of restriction, complete absence of - I won't say conditioning in the strict sense, because this is still a mundane state, it's not a transcendental state. But you don't feel any of the ordinary restrictions or limitations. You feel as it were capable of expanding indefinitely in any direction. You feel the actual possibility of unlimited growth and development, not as an abstract possibility, but as something that you're actually feeling. So the experience of the infinity of space means the experience of the unrestricted potentiality of being, as it were. Do you see what I mean? So this is the first of these arupa states.

And the second one is the experience of 'the infinity of consciousness'. The word for consciousness here is vijñāna. You could translate that, as is sometimes done, as 'perception' or even 'awareness'. So usually the sort of connection is made like this: that you are aware, you are conscious, of the infinity of space. So if you are aware, if you are conscious, of something which is infinite, that awareness or that consciousness itself must be infinite. [22] It's only an infinite consciousness that can be aware of an infinite space.

So what is the difference here? It's as though here you turn more from the objective to the subjective. It's as though in the first you see, well, there is no limitation - I can expand, I am free - but in the second you, as it were, experience that freedom subjectively in a much more intense manner. It's as though when you released from prison you are very conscious, you are very aware, that you have just been released from prison. Freedom is being released from prison. But if you have been away from prison for a long time, freedom is just freedom. You don't think in terms of prison at all. Freedom is not being released from prison, freedom is just freedom. So you see the difference? So the difference between the experience of the infinity of space and the experience of the infinity of consciousness is analogous to that.

Manjuvajra: I suppose it is when you are really absorbed and almost, kind of, swimming around in it.

S: Yes, yes. It's as though you don't need to think any more in terms of unfreedom. Your freedom has ceased to be a negation of unfreedom; it's just freedom. So it's more like that.

Anyway I won't go into the other two levels. That would take us too far afield. This just illustrates the difference between the rupaloka level and the arupaloka level.

So when this statement is made: 'to regard sensory experience as relatively unimportant', it's not that there is only sensory experience, but it's relatively unimportant, not that at all. Sensory experience is relatively unimportant in view of the fact that there are whole spheres of experience to which we can have access which have got nothing to do with the physical senses or the lower mind; that the range of our experience extends far beyond what we usually consider to be possible, and through meditation, chiefly, we have access to these other, these higher realms of experience.

So it's very, very important always to make this clear: that the possibilities of human experience far transcend what those possibilities are usually considered to be. Or put it this way: our possible experience far transcends our actual experience, and that the way into that other or higher experience is meditation.

I think when Dr Conze was writing, the drug cult had not at least reached this country, had it? But, despite many disadvantages of the drug cult, at least it made or the experience of drugs has made one thing clear to a number of people: that there is another further possibility of experience beyond what we usually do experience. So it becomes much easier nowadays to talk to quite a lot of people in terms of some experience other than, higher than, what we usually know through the senses and the ordinary mind. At least one has a way in, one has an analogy here which perhaps one didn't have before. Another useful one is [23] dreams.

So 'to regard sensory experience as relatively unimportant' doesn't mean a depreciation of sensory experience. It doesn't mean a running-down of it or a dismissing of it as something evil. It simply means that you simply see that sensory experience and the experience of the lower mind just occupies a very narrow band in the total spectrum of human experience, and that one can have access to these other higher spheres through meditation and that if one wants to have a comprehensive view, as it were, even of conditioned existence, what to speak of the Unconditioned, then one has to take all these different bands of the total spectrum into consideration.

And Buddhism certainly does this, and it is quite fair to say that, probably, most spiritual traditions do this. This is not to equate them with Buddhism, because we are still here concerned with the conditioned. We haven't brought the Unconditioned in yet. But certainly there are many traditions which point out that sense experience and experience through the lower mind is only part of the total spectrum of possible human experience. This was certainly known to the ancient Greeks. It was certainly known to, say, Plato and to the Neoplatonists. It was certainly known to the Gnostics. In India it was certainly known to the Hindus, especially to the yogins. In China it was known to the Taoists. Among the Muslims it is known to the Sufis. So here there is a certain amount of common ground.

And it's known - in another way - to everybody who has taken drugs: that there are other levels, other dimensions of experience possible. And from a Buddhist point of view the main avenue, the main road if you like, to these other dimensions is meditation, and this is one of the reasons why meditation is so important. It enlarges one's perspective in this sort of way.

I mention on one of the recent seminars that one of the terms for the dhyanas - I think it is in

the Abhidharma - is 'mahagata'. 'Mahagata' means 'that which has become great, or which has expanded'. So the meditative consciousness is an expanded consciousness, a consciousness that has expanded beyond the ordinary sensory and mental levels. It doesn't negate those levels; it transcends them and, if you like, it includes them. But they are lower levels; there is no doubt about that. The meditative levels are higher in the sense that they are more integrated, more blissful, and, as it were, in a manner of speaking closer to reality. So 'to regard sensory experience as relatively unimportant'.

Manjuvajra: When you say higher and lower, what are you using as your ladder?

S: Well, as I said, more integrated and more inherently satisfactory, though from the Buddhist point of view even these higher meditative states are not ultimately satisfactory. They only give greater satisfaction. They are more luminous, more clear, more blissful, more enjoyable, [24] etc., etc.

Manjuvajra: So you can say that something has got higher value from the spiritual point of view if it's more inherently satisfactory?

S: Well, it won't be more inherently satisfactory. It's a contradiction in terms, because everything in conditioned existence is inherently unsatisfactory. It is only that you realize the inherent unsatisfactoriness after a longer interval, in the case of the so-called higher experiences.

Manjuvajra: Ah, right. Wouldn't they be worse then, from a spiritual point of view?

S: In a sense, yes, in a sense.

Manjuvajra: From a transcendental point of view.

S: From a transcendental point of view. But you have to, as it were, go through those higher experiences to get beyond. They're as it were your launching pad. It's only those experiences that can enable you to muster the concentrated energy that is needed to develop Insight. And it's only Insight which is going to give you access to the Unconditioned.

I'm just going outside for a minute, then we'll go on to number two ...

End of Side Two Cassette Two, Side One

S: All right, number two: 'to try to renounce what one is attached to'. Well, there's two questions arise here of importance. One is: What is meant by 'attachment'? And why should one try to renounce what one is attached to? Or even: What is meant by renunciation? So, first of all, what does one mean by being attached to something? What is attachment? Does anybody know?

Manjuvajra: I know what it is in my own experience.

S: So how would you describe it?

Manjuvajra: Sticky.

Atula: It depends ...

S: Well, that's as it were a synonym. To be attached to something is to stick to something, or it sticks to you. But what is actually happening? What sort of things? And why?

Chintamani: You identify with something outside of yourself and become unhappy when you are parted from it.

S: Ah. It seems to suggest identification; because what is less separable from you than yourself? You can't separate [25] from yourself. But if you're attached to something it means that you have in a way identified with it, or you regard it as part of you, and therefore as yours. So would that definition apply to your experience of attachment? Or perhaps we've used the word rather loosely. So, if you say someone is attached to food, attached to eating, well, surely one must make a distinction between just eating - you need to eat to live, after all - and being attached to eating. So, when you're attached to eating, what is happening? What makes the difference? It usually means that eating has become more than just eating. Eating has got some other value, some sort of symbolic value for you.

Manjuvajra: It seems like a sort of space filler.

S: Yes, but when do you feel the need of something to fill a space?

Chintamani: You're looking for an emotional crutch of some sort.

S: An emotional crutch, yes. But you're looking for something to fill a space when you feel a space, that is to say when you feel empty. Yes? So what is happening when you feel empty? It's as though there is a big hole in you, so you look for something outside you to fill that hole. In other words, you identify with that thing because you've made it part of you, or you think that you've made it part of you by using it to fill up that hole in you. So, in the case of food, if you were attached to food, it would mean that you regarded food not just as food but as that sort of space-filler, that sort of hole-filler in you. In other words, you identify with food, or rather with the symbolic value that food has come to have for you, and that would be your attachment to food. You are attached to it because it has become part of you or what it represented has become part of you. So to be attached to something is to treat something as yours, or even to treat something as you, because you've identified with it and therefore can no longer do without it, as it were. This is attachment.

What is the Buddhist word for attachment? Do you know? It's upadana. You get it in the six nidanas of the Wheel of Life. First comes the thirst, the craving, and then, as a result of that, upadana: the clinging, the attachment. The thirst is that feeling of emptiness. I overheard someone saying in the common room a few weeks ago: 'I feel just like a hungry ghost'. It's that sort of feeling. You know what a hungry ghost is, don't you? You feel all empty and you have to be filled. So, if attachment is that.

Perhaps there is one other point to be mentioned here. In a sense objectively we are incomplete; there are big holes, as it were, in our being. But what is the way to deal with that situation?

Vajradaka: To focus our energies inwards, rather than constantly going out to pull in, which is

what grasping is.

[26]

S: So, if it is said to try to renounce what one is attached to, what is it really basically saying? [It's saying] develop yourself by growing from within rather than trying to supplement yourself, and supplement your deficiencies, by taking in from outside. This is what it is really saying.

But one can of course clearly here distinguish between being attached to something in this sort of way and having an objective need for something; though the line of demarcation is very difficult to see sometimes. It's very easy to deceive oneself. You need food, but do you need sweets? Well, you might; some people might. They might need sugar or glucose or whatever it is. So this is a very important practical problem: to draw the line between what one needs and what one is attached to, or what one regularly uses because one needs it and what one is attached to. Different people may draw that line at different points, objectively speaking.

Manjuvajra: If you are experiencing the emptiness and you know that you usually go to a particular thing to fill it, if you just sort of hold with that emptiness, will it sort of fill itself, or does it require a particular effort in a certain direction?

S: I think that if one is reasonably healthy human being, it will fill itself. But, in the case of some people, they are what we popularly call 'neurotic' and the feeling of hunger and craving is so strong that it will just get stronger and stronger and they may not be able to stand it indefinitely.

Manjuvajra: And what can they do?

S: Well, it depends very much on the sort of thing that they crave for, or are attached to. There are all sorts of general remedies: for instance the company of spiritual friends, people who can talk to them about positive things to take their mind off their craving. Or they can reflect on the inherent unsatisfactoriness of that particular object that they're attached to, even were they to be able to possess it indefinitely.

But everybody is subjected to craving and attachment in some way or other. It's a sort of universal - I won't say 'problem', certainly difficulty. But essentially it means that one is looking outside oneself for something that one should be developing from within. You can't develop food from within, so you have to be objectively dependent on food and you're not necessarily attached to food just because you are eating food; though even that you have to watch.

And you may be dependent for your actual development on certain external conditions - well, you need not be attached to those. Sometimes people indulge in all sorts of superficial criticisms and say if you want to meditate you mustn't be attached to your silence and you mustn't be attached to your insistence that there should be no interruptions, etc., etc. Otherwise they say: 'Well, what's the use? You are attached to your meditation just like I'm [27] attached to my wine, women and song. What's the difference between you and me?' Well, this shows a complete misunderstanding and confusion of thought. You are not attached. You just need those conditions quite objectively to do what you want to do - which

is meditate.

So, 'to try to renounce what one is attached to': this is quite a difficult thing, but essentially it means to grow, to develop from within, instead of supplementing one's deficiencies from without and being quite clear about what you need and what you are simply attached to; and being prepared to consider that other people may need things which in your case are just attachments. (Pause)

All right. Thirdly: 'to try to treat all people alike - whatever their looks, intelligence, colour, smell, education, etc.' So why do you think this is important: to try to treat all people alike? What is meant by treating all people alike? How can you treat all people alike? Are all people alike?

Chintamani: It's a bit vague, isn't it?

S: Yes, in a way it is. So what do you mean? What could the author have meant by saying 'to treat all people alike'? In what way do you treat them all alike?

Voice: By developing metta.

S: Yes. What kind of way of treating people all alike is that? It's a psychological attitude. That doesn't mean for instance you give everybody the same food or the same clothes, etc., or even the same attention. But you have the same metta towards all. This is basically what it means, I would have thought.

But what is the value of that, what is the significance or importance of that, from the spiritual point of view: that you treat all people alike? What's the result so far as you are concerned if you treat all people alike?

Voice: You see them as individuals.

S: Well, suppose they're not individuals? Are all people individuals?

Manjuvajra: They must have some element of individuality.

S: Yes .. Is that the basis of your treating them all alike, or having the same attitude towards them all?

Manjuvajra: If you have the same attitude towards all people it would tend to break down the group way of looking at them. (S: That's true.) So you would tend to see them more as individuals.

S: Because you always belong to a particular group and the natural tendency is to like your group and dislike other groups. So it certainly breaks down that. So to that extent [28] it is a move in the direction of emphasis on individuality.

But I think an important reason is: that if you treat everybody alike, it saves you a great deal of mental and emotional disturbance, doesn't it? If you've got the attitude of metta towards everybody then you won't be happy if somebody wins something and somebody loses. If, for



instance, you have the same metta towards all, it doesn't really matter who wins a football match and who loses. You'll enjoy the game but it's exactly the same to you whether one team wins or the other. You've got the same metta towards both teams - and their supporters even! So you're not upset if one team wins and absolutely elated if the other team loses. So, if you have the same metta towards all, it saves you from all these emotional ups and downs.

I remember there's a story about a man reading a newspaper and he said: 'Oh isn't that awful! Two hundred people killed in a train crash. That's ghastly ... Oh no, it doesn't matter - it was in China.'

Manjuvajra: It's true; it does create less emotional disturbance if you have the same emotional response to all. But some people would say that that emotional response is what makes life exciting.

S: Yes, but what does one mean by excitement? It's the up and down, up and down. The Buddhist reply would be that the experience of metta is a far more satisfying state than this emotional up and down business of excitement. Buddhism would say that if you only have a little experience of metta you realize it is infinitely preferable: a positive emotional state which transcends the elation component of excitement - not to speak of the depression component which is its inevitable counterpart. No doubt this is a very common and popular attitude: that it's all the competitiveness and the rivalry and the excitement that gives a spice to life and without that life is nothing. It's dull and meaningless and pointless. But that's not the Buddhist point of view. But you have to be in contact with some real experience of metta to be able to feel that, otherwise life does become very dull and pointless emotionally.

I think it's true to say generally that life is dull and pointless without some sort of emotional interest, but the Buddhist point of view would be that the best form that that emotional interest can possibly take - and the most enjoyable form - is simply metta, karuna, mudita, and upekkha - to say nothing of saddha and bhakti.

So very often you hear that without some sort of emotional interest there's no zest, there's no spice in life, nothing interesting. And that's true. But then the sort of emotional interest that we usually have is one that gives us all sorts of emotional ups and downs. A bit of excitement, yes, but quite a lot of dullness and boredom too. A bit of elation, yes, but also depression, not to speak of anxiety, disappointment, etc., etc. So the emotional interest you get out of metta, karuna, and so on is infinitely better. It gives a real zest to life: a zest [29] to life which doesn't ever change. If you've got metta towards others and what you do is activated by that metta then, despite peripheral disappointments and ups and downs, you do feel contented and satisfied very deeply.

So really it does mean to have this same attitude of metta towards all, to treat them all alike. It doesn't necessarily mean to behave towards all in the same way. That would depend upon their situation and your own limitations. You may not be able to help very many people but you've got the willingness to help.

Why do you think he especially mentions looks, intelligence, colour, smell, education? Well, we're very much influenced by the way that people look, aren't we? We like or dislike according to their looks. Or according to their intelligence, or according to their colour or their smell or their education. These are all things that influence us one way or the other.

We're prejudiced usually. I'm sure that this must be one of the characteristics of a Buddhist community or a Buddhist movement: that it does treat everybody who comes along alike, whether they look attractive or unattractive, whether they seem intelligent or unintelligent, bright or dull and stupid, whether they're white or black or yellow or brown, or whatever.

Smell ... how important is smell? (General Amusement)

Roy Campbell: Usually not very important, but occasionally it's very ...

S: Just occasionally ... And education. There's one he hasn't mentioned which is very important in this country and that is class. Yes? There was a little exchange about this recently wasn't there? Class ...

Robert Gerke: Doesn't education sort of cover that?

S: In this country it's subtler than that. They coincide to some extent, but not completely. He does say 'etc.', you see. (Pause)

So it really means that a spiritual movement that is to be really a spiritual movement must be one in which there is a definite feeling of metta towards all, both within the movement itself and also directed outwardly especially towards those who come into contact with it personally. I hope that is tangibly felt in all our Centres and so on.

So, 'the collective effort of the European races during the last centuries has gone into channels which by this definition are not spiritual.' Could it be said that people in Europe at present regard sensory experience as relatively unimportant? Or that they try to renounce what they're attached to? Or that they even try to treat all people alike?

Manjuvajra: There would be some attempt at the last ... within a social context.

S: There would be some attempt at the last. Well, would [30] there? In certain respects perhaps. Well, maybe a selective attempt. You might treat, for instance, people alike regardless of colour but not necessarily regardless of their different levels of intelligence, or their different looks.

Manjuvajra: I think there would be at least a verbal homage paid to that.

S: Yes, that's probably an accurate statement of the situation - possibly in the rather dubious form of 'Everybody's equal'.

So what do you think of these three avenues of approach to the spiritual which, according to Dr Conze, 'are handed down by the almost universal tradition of the sages': that practically all sages say that the range of human experience far transcends the sense levels and the ordinary mental level, and that one should develop from within oneself rather than trying to supplement oneself by external things, and also that one should develop an attitude of goodwill towards all people equally? This would seem to be common ground, even leaving aside other differences. And do you think that all of these would in fact be avenues into the spiritual, into that higher dimension?

Vajradaka: Not necessarily.

S: Not necessarily. Why not?

Vajradaka: Because it needs commitment.

S: I would say, with regard to the first, you have actually to practise meditation, to actually experience sensory experience as relatively unimportant. You'd actually have to have some experience of meditation, higher states of consciousness. Only then would it really be an avenue to spiritual realms.

And you'd have actually to be making at least a hard effort to renounce what you're attached to. Also, about this question of renunciation, you can say it's not necessarily so much a question of necessarily forcibly giving up, but also understanding the situation, understanding what is happening, what you are doing in fact, and acting accordingly. There's not a question of renouncing something because it's wicked or because God has prohibited it, but because you understand what it means for you, what it means in terms of your personal development, what in fact you are doing to yourself in being attached and in not renouncing.

So renouncing is not so much a forcible tearing away of something from oneself. It's more an understanding that you don't need it, it's something you can develop from within yourself, which you ought to develop from within yourself, and that your attachment is just a result of your feeling of inner emptiness. Well, it's all right to feel empty. There's nothing wrong with feeling empty, because it just tells you that you are empty. So it's a quite positive feeling. But what you mustn't do is to try to fill that emptiness and try [31] to relieve the feeling of emptiness by bringing in something from outside, when you need to develop something from inside.

All right, let's go on. We've got a bit of time left.

Text: It is often assumed that there is some fundamental and essential difference between East and West, between Europe and Asia, in their attitude to life, in their sense of values, and in the functioning of their souls. Christians who regard Buddhism as unsuitable for European conditions forget the Asiatic origin of their own religion, and of all religions for that matter. A religion is an organization of spiritual aspirations, which reject the sensory world and negate the impulses which bind us to it. For 3000 years Asia alone has been creative of spiritual ideas and methods. The Europeans have in these matters borrowed from Asia, have adapted Asiatic ideas, and, often, coarsened them. One could not I think point to any spiritual creation in Europe which is not secondary, which does not have its ultimate impulse in the East. European thought has excelled in the elaboration of social law and organization, especially in Rome and England, and in the scientific understanding and control of sensory phenomena. The indigenous tradition of Europe is inclined to affirm the will to live, and to turn actively towards the world of the senses. The spiritual tradition of mankind is based on the negation of the will to live, and is turned away from the world of the senses. All European spirituality has had to be periodically renewed by an influx from the East, from the time of Pythagoras and Parmenides onwards. Take away the Oriental elements in Greek philosophy, take away Jesus Christ, Saint Paul, Dionysius Areopagita, and Arabic thought - and European spiritual thinking during the last 2000 years becomes unthinkable. About a century ago the thought of India has begun to exert its influence on Europe, and it will help to revivify the

languishing remnants of European spirituality. (pages 11/12)

S: So, 'It is often assumed that there is some fundamental and essential difference between East and West, between Europe and Asia, in their attitude to life, in their sense of values, and in the functioning of their souls.' Very often you get expressions like 'the Western mentality and the Eastern mentality', etc., etc. I expect you've come across this, or come up against this; as if to say there is a different Eastern mind and a Western mind, but do you think this is correct? (Voice: No.) No, I certainly don't, because I remember when I was in India I was in constant contact with Indians, and Tibetans for that matter, and it was evident that their minds worked in exactly the same way that our minds worked. There's no such thing as an Eastern mind and a Western mind - certainly not as regards the European peoples and the Indians, who belong all to the same race - if you can speak in those terms - anyway: the Indo-Aryan race. They've basically the same language. Practically all the European languages and most of the Indian languages are Indo-Aryan languages. So we've the same thought [32] processes, the same linguistic structures, the same minds. So I think this is an old now-exploded myth: that there's an Eastern mind which is somehow mysterious and subtle and spiritual and a Western mind which is rather different. But on the other hand it is true that the spiritual traditions do by and large originate from the East, and especially from India. So why do you think that should be?

Manjuvajra: Could be to do with climate.

S: I think very much to do with climate, in the sense that people had to struggle less with nature. Life was easier. And, say, even as we know during the Buddha's time the general population could support quite a large number of people, tens of thousands of people, who were just wandering about, who'd left home, who weren't earning a living, and who could give up all their time to meditation and spiritual study, spiritual research, and so on. So, of course, under those circumstances spiritual traditions can be elaborated. I think this is probably one of the most important factors.

And then there was continuity of development, continuity of evolution. In India you had these things going on for at least three thousand years uninterruptedly - maybe a bit interrupted by the Muslim invasion, though that took place relatively late. But in Europe there seem to have been far more upheavals and interruptions, quite apart from the less favourable climate. And it is interesting that where the climate was a bit more favourable is just where spiritual life seems to be more active, as in Greece and in Northern Egypt and in Syria and so on, whereas in the North we've just had the odd mystic and the odd spiritual philosopher, and that's all. I mean, how strong has spiritual life really been in England over the centuries? Not very strong, has it?

Also, though, the Asian countries had the population; maybe you need a certain number of people to as it were produce a significant number of people devoted to the spiritual. But it isn't because of any basic difference of mind or mental structure. That's the important point.

So, 'Christians who regard Buddhism as unsuitable for European conditions forget the Asiatic origin of their own religion, and of all religions for that matter.' Er, yes ... yes and no. After all, Christianity is in a sense a product of Judaism, or at least evolved in a Jewish context, and Judaism is a Semitic religion; it isn't exactly Eastern. But anyway, the point is that if you object to the introduction of Buddhism because it isn't Western, well, certainly Christianity

wasn't Western to begin with. Whether it was Eastern or something else, it certainly wasn't Western. But we regard it now as the religion of the West. So if Christianity has been introduced, well, why not Buddhism?

I sometimes go even further than that and say, well, Christianity was a theistic religion of Semitic origin and racially we are not Semites, we are Indo-Aryans. So Buddhism is a religion produced in India by Indo-Aryans. So the chances are that if you're going to argue along those lines [33] at all - and it's your argument not our's - Buddhism will be more suited to us than Christianity because it's the product of our brother Indo-Aryans in the East and not of these Semites, who are totally different from us. So if you invoke those sorts of arguments, they can be turned against you. (Pause)

'A religion is an organization of spiritual aspirations, which reject the sensory world and negate the impulses which bind us to it.' That seems fair enough.

Manjuvajra: I don't like the word 'reject'. I'd rather have 'transcend'.

S: Why? Don't you reject it?

Manjuvajra: No, not completely. I see it as part and parcel of existence, but not as non-existent.

S: Mmmmm? Well, you couldn't reject it if it was non-existent!

Voice: (...Unclear...) (Laughter)

S: I know, I quite agree in a way with what you say really, but I'm just saying that one should not be in a hurry not to reject, [because] even some people's reluctance to think in terms of rejection. It's a bit suspicious. It's almost as though you don't want really to give it up. I'm not saying in your individual case! But you want to leave a little loophole; so, if you 'transcend', well, you've kept that loophole. But, actually, it feels as though you have to reject; that's what you're being called upon to do. You don't want to do that. So you introduce this other word 'transcend', so that you keep the letter of it as it were but you're almost sort of not accepting the spirit. Do you see what I mean?

Manjuvajra: Yeah, yeah.

Roy Campbell: Rejecting the sensory world sounds a bit like alienation.

S: Does it?

Roy Campbell: Well, it could be construed like that.

S: But there are certain things that we just have to reject out of hand. Don't you think so? Don't you think we're a bit too shy about using this sort of language. I mean to say, suppose you've got a unskilful thought, well, you've just got to reject it, yeah? So what does 'reject' mean, as distinct from 'transcend'? (Pause)

Manjuvajra: Realize its non-existence.

S: Look at it in this way: 'transcend' introduces a sort of [34] vertical dimension. (Manjuvajra: Yeah.) 'Reject' doesn't do that. (Manjuvajra: No.) Yeah? 'Reject' is as it were on the horizontal, if you know what I mean. Yeah? (Manjuvajra: Yeah.) You're staying on the level of that thing and you're going to sort of push it away. But isn't that very often what we just have to do? We're very often not in a position to transcend, but we are in a position to reject.

Supposing, for instance, an unskilful thought comes into our mind, say an unskilful thought of hatred. Well, we can transcend that. How? By soaring up into the fifth dhyana. Well, clearly we've transcended it, we've left behind that unskilful thought of hatred. But is that possibility usually actually open to us? (Manjuvajra: No.) So we have to reject that unskilful thought. So what does that mean? We're on that same level as which unskilful thoughts are likely to arise, that is to say the level of ordinary human consciousness. But on that level of ordinary human consciousness we are susceptible to thoughts of hatred, unskilful thoughts of hatred. But we resolve not to allow them to enter in and to reject them when they do come and to push them away.

So you see what I mean? So very often it's more as it were practical and real to speak and think in terms of rejection. This is usually what we have to do. We have to fight as it were on that horizontal level. We're not in a position to spread our wings and transcend, though that is ultimately what we have to do. In that case there'll be no possibility of that sort of that sort of unskilful thought arising. That's the direction towards which we have to work our way little by little.

But I think you have to be very careful not to introduce prematurely this more sort of high falutin' language - in the case of 'transcending' - overlooking the fact that very often we just have to stay on the level where we are and reject, say: 'No, I'm not going to let this sort of thought in. I'm going to give up that particular thing.' Yeah? So I don't think this will involve alienation because it's a struggle and a fight, and when you're fighting something you're in contact with it, you're not alienated from it. I think if anything you'd be more likely to be alienated if you thought in terms of transcending. You'd then as it were be almost shirking the battle.

Roy Campbell: But surely we can't really try to reject the whole of the sensory world? I mean the sensory world is every single sense impulse that comes to us from outside the body.

S: Ah, what is meant by 'reject' here? Clearly it's not the world itself that is to be rejected, but an attitude on your part towards the world. I mean, the world remains there. It's like the New England lady, the transcendentalist lady, who said to Thomas Carlyle, she said: 'I accept the Universe!' He said: 'My God, you'd better!' (Amusement) I mean, you can't reject the world of the senses in that way; it just remains there. How can you possibly reject it? It's [35] like a sparrow kicking a mountain.

But you can certainly reject a certain attitude on your part towards it. So I think it's to be understood in that way. It's not the world of the senses as such, as the world out there, that you are to reject. It's your own attitude towards it. Though that of course may well involve the actual giving up of certain aspects of that world of the senses out there. Otherwise you wriggle out by saying things like: Well, it's not necessary to give up eating sweets. I just have to change my attitude towards eating sweets! You don't have to give up anything; you just have to change your attitude towards those things - which is a very big sort of cop-out for

most people. So I think we mustn't hesitate to use, or be afraid of using, this sort of more vigorous down-to-earth language of 'rejecting' and 'giving-up', etc.

'One could not, I think, point to any spiritual creation in Europe which is not secondary, which does not have its ultimate impulse in the East.' I think this depends on just how ultimate is ultimate? But perhaps it's so much a matter of discussion there's not much point in going into it.

'European thought has excelled in the elaboration of social law and organization, especially in Rome and England, and in the scientific understanding and control of sensory phenomena. The indigenous tradition of Europe is inclined to affirm the will to live.' I wonder what he means by 'the indigenous tradition'? Does he mean Christianity? Surely not.

Manjuvajra: No. Graeco-Roman?

S: Plato certainly doesn't. Nor does Aristotle for that matter. Nor does Plotinus: he's the greatest Graeco-Roman thinker. No, I think the language is a bit loose here. 'The indigenous tradition of Europe.' Even the Druids didn't, presumably. No, I think this is a bit questionable. 'The indigenous tradition of Europe is inclined to affirm the will to live.' Well, indigenous traditions everywhere do that. I mean, in India they certainly affirm the will to live. The vast mass of Hindus are concerned with very little else. But perhaps you could say that the will to live is the basic tendency of mankind, but in the East, especially in India, there are more avenues easily available to go beyond this, if one wishes to make use of them. There are more facilities.

Manjuvajra: Does that mean the will to live in what we call the kamaloka?

S: Well, in Buddhist terms, yes. Conze is using Schopenhauer's phraseology here. He's quite influenced by Schopenhauer. It's something we haven't touched upon, but it's quite clear even from this and from his other writings. So Schopenhauer speaks in terms of 'the will to live', which has to be denied, and the denial of the will to live is spiritual life. This is certainly one aspect of the matter.

But everywhere, whether it's in India or whether it's [36] here, the ordinary person affirms the will to live. But in India certainly there's a much more active position of a spiritual kind which has influenced even ordinary people indirectly to a much greater extent than has been possible in the West.

Manjuvajra: I mean, isn't a negation of the will to live suicide?

S: No, not according to Buddhism because you get reborn again.

Manjuvajra: How about according to Schopenhauer?

S: I think Schopenhauer did not altogether rule out that possibility, just as the Stoics didn't, but Buddhism certainly does.

End Side One , Side Two

S: What is the 'will to live'? It's a will to go on living - for want of a better term - in the material world, to enjoy the pleasures of the senses, etc., etc.; to perpetuate oneself through offspring and so on. The desire for immortality also, personal immortality, is according to Buddhism a manifestation of the will to live. So the will to live is the urge or the desire that you as a finite individual will just go on and on and on. This is the will to live. So, according to Conze, 'the spiritual tradition of mankind is based on the negation of the will to live' - because it's based upon the negation of the ego, as it were. This is something we have really to discuss. I hope we can discuss it tomorrow: this whole question of individuality, true and false, as it were.

I don't think that negation of the will to live is the whole story so far as the spiritual life or the spiritual tradition of mankind is concerned, but it's a very important component of it. The will to live represents the assertion of one's self as an individual in an absolute sense almost.

Vajradaka: It seems to have so many different levels that it can function on, that will to live, from quite primitive survival right up to quite subtle consciousness ...

S: Mmmm, mmm ... In Buddhism there is a term which is a bit like the will to live which is bhava tanha or bhava trsna, craving for existence. But it is also a craving for non-existence, which is also regarded as something to be rejected or transcended or whatever.

Vajradaka: I was trying to hint at that in the 'Oblivion' scene, (...Unclear...) because I feel that a lot of people have it, and are wanting to annihilate experience.

S: Yes, I think quite a few people seek oblivion. Just like quite a few people look for it in sleep. It's a state where you just don't have to bother about anything, everything is [37] solved as it were, at least for the time being, at least for a short while. So I think quite a few people find everything too much and life too much and the world too much, too many problems, and they just go in search of oblivion. This what people sometimes do when they drink, when they get drunk. They're just looking for oblivion; they just want to forget everything. It's all too much. So sometimes people think even of nirvana as a sort of transcendental oblivion: that they're just going to forget it all, won't have to bother about anything any more, ever! In a sense it's true, but not quite in that sort of way.

Vajradaka: It seems that the search for oblivion can be so subtle. I mean, even sentimentality can be ...

S: Even art ... Because 'art for art's sake' is art for the sake of oblivion, in a way.

Sometimes of course it's probably necessary to forget, not to have to think about things all the time. This is why we do need sleep, partly so that we can forget and have a rest. According to Buddhist tradition, and other traditions, when you're reborn you don't remember your previous lives; and that's good. Supposing you remembered all your previous lives, even just a few hundred of them. It would be terrible, wouldn't it? It's bad enough sometimes being able to remember the whole of this life, (Laughter) with all the mistakes that you've made, and the foolish things that you've done. But supposing there were hundreds of these lives and you could look back on all these mistakes, etc., etc., all the foolish trivial things that you'd done, all the time that you'd wasted.



It's just as well the slate is wiped clean with each fresh birth and you're given a fresh chance, a new chance. You just carry on, of course, the tendencies of the past; but at least you don't remember. You're not weighed down by all that; otherwise you might be terribly discouraged. Sometimes you can get a feeling of what you might have done in the past from the way that you feel now, or the way that your experience goes. You don't know for sure, and it's probably just as well that you don't.

So even to forget is a positive thing sometimes. But there mustn't be a sort of as it were neurotic craving for oblivion. Sometimes it's a positive thing just to say: 'Well, I'll forget all about it for a while. I'll think about something else and then go back to it.' Sometimes that is a way of dealing with a situation. You go back with a fresh mind. But you just as it were temporarily withdraw, temporarily forget, quite deliberately and awarely, so you can go back with a fresh mind and solve that problem or that difficulty. But you're not under any illusion that you can escape from it really by just trying to forget all about it.

Anyway, that's more or less all for this morning. We've not got very far, but never mind, we'll see what we do tomorrow. What are the main points, do you think, that have emerged this morning?

[38]

Manjuvajra: There was that matter about the presentation of Buddhism: being direct, and not being frightened to present it as it is, not having to wrap it up.

S: Also I think, when one is approaching ordinary people, they're very often not as cultured as the sort of people that perhaps Dr Conze has in mind, and haven't read all these books. So that one has got nothing to lose by the more direct approach in many cases, in fact everything to gain.

I used to find this when I returned to England at first. People sometimes used to say I spoke as though everybody was familiar with Shakespeare and Milton, and that if I explained something with a line from Milton it would make it clear to everybody, but they said it wasn't necessarily the case!

But that is a very important point. I think we can be more direct, and speak the language of Buddhism - the real language of Buddhism, not just Indian language - much more than people think, or than we sometimes think. It's as it were stating plainly the facts of the case. If, for instance, you make it clear that there is in Buddhism what we call the Conditioned and what we call the Unconditioned, and there's a tremendous difference between the two, and spiritual life consists in making one's way bit by bit from the Conditioned to the Unconditioned.

I think one can put that sort of thing across fairly easily to the average person, if one does it carefully. I think it is important we don't necessarily direct ourselves to, a sort of, almost, a cultural elite. I think that's very important, 'cause they'll be more likely I think to read books about Buddhism than want to commit themselves to the Dharma. (Pause)

I must have met in my Hampstead Vihara and Buddhist Society days hundreds and hundreds of people who were interested enough to read all sorts of books [on Buddhism] - well, you can go into Watkins [bookshop] or Compendium [bookshop] any day of the week and find dozens of them there, but not many ready to commit themselves. That's quite another thing.

You might find someone almost just straight off the street who's never read any of these things but is more likely and willing to commit himself, and ready to commit himself. So it is that that really counts.

Anyway, what other important points have emerged? (Pause)

Vajradaka: The question of attachment, (S: Mmm, mmm, yes.) the association of yourself with something out there; and that spiritual growth is a movement of bringing one's outward energies inwards to the experience of the whole and thereby filling ...

S: Perhaps we didn't really go into that as much as we could have done, but obviously we're rather, not exactly short of time, but we don't have too much of it. Perhaps I should have emphasized more the importance of staying with the experience of inner emptiness and not trying to fill it with [39] anything from outside. As I said, it's a very positive experience. If you feel empty, well, that's quite good actually. You've made some progress. If you can just stay with that feeling of emptiness until either it fills up naturally, or you no longer feel it in that sort of way or you just feel quite satisfied with the experience of emptiness, well, that's fine. What you mustn't do is to run in search of something to fill it up, whether it means stuffing sweets into your mouth, or just going to see some film that you don't really want to see, or anything else of that kind.

Manjuvajra: What if instead of just being empty, it's a real panic .. ?

S: Well, so much the better. (Laughter) Yes, yes. Stay with that feeling of panic. The Buddha had exactly the same experience. You may remember in the Pali texts there's a passage where the Buddha describes his own early experience when he was living in the jungle; and, he said, a panic, fear and terror came upon him; and, he said, 'I stayed with the feeling' - that's not the literal translation but that's what it means. He said: 'If that panic, fear and terror came while I was seated, I remained seated until it passed away. If it came while I was walking up and down, I remained walking up and down until it passed away. And if it came while I was lying down, I remained lying down until it passed away.' So what does this mean: that he remained sitting, he remained walking up and down, and so on?

Manjuvajra: He didn't try and alter the external situation.

S: Exactly. He didn't try to alter the external situation. That's very important. Of course, at the same time one must distinguish: if you really need help and feel that you need help objectively, well, by all means go in search of it. But that's a quite different thing from just trying to fill the hole by stuffing in some external object. For instance, if you've got kalyana mitras and you're in trouble, well, by all means go and talk with them, not in such a way as to neurotically fill up the inner void, but to really try to thrash out with them what is happening and what you can best do about it.

So when I say: 'Stay with that feeling of emptiness', I don't exclude doing something about it in a positive fashion. You're not to punish yourself, as it were. That isn't necessary. So this is, as Vajradaka said, very important, this whole question. It's really a very positive thing - you don't know how positive it is - when you experience this, when you experience this inner emptiness. Because what does it mean? It means you haven't got these supports, or crutches as someone called them. You're as it were shorn of them all. They've all been taken away.

And now you're down to the real situation: that you're not happy and satisfied and positive. No! You're miserable, and dissatisfied, and very negative. Right, well that's you, as [40] you are without your supports and crutches. And that's the you that has got to develop and change.

So while you're surrounding yourself with the supports and crutches - the neurotic ones I mean - you're disguising from yourself the facts of the situation. You don't know what you're really like. Take away your crutch, you nearly fall over! Well, you know at least that you can't really stand. But you thought that you could stand. You didn't realize it was only the crutch that was holding you up. But you don't realize that until the crutch is taken away. Then you realize how precarious your balance really was all the time. Or if your favourite toy is taken away and you feel all miserable and unhappy, well, then you realize how dependent you were on that favourite toy, whatever it was.

So, if you do have this feeling of emptiness and so on and so forth, then it's a sign - I don't say of progress, certainly not of real progress, but at least it's a sign that you are now in a position to make real progress, because you've realized that you have to make progress. You realize exactly where you are and the point from which you've got to start; whereas before that you were just deluding yourself and thinking you were happy and positive, etc. Of course you weren't; it's merely that you surrounded yourself with various goodies.

So everybody goes through this at some time or other, and there's no doubt how highly disillusioning an experience it is. You realize how neurotically dependent you were on this, that, and the other. But then, when you realize that, you are really in contact with yourself as you are. And it's that self that has got to make the effort and has got to progress. No other can do it. So, in the long run, it's a very positive and valuable, in fact invaluable, experience, and the last thing you must do is try to disembarass yourself of that experience.

Anyway, what else? What other positive and important points came up?

Manjuvajra: To regard that there is experience beyond the sensory.

S: Yes: that sense experience is just a relatively narrow band in the total spectrum. And one can best experience that for oneself through meditation. What else then?

Manjuvajra: And you talked a bit about developing the positive psychological attitude towards all people.

S: An equal attitude.

Manjuvajra: An equal attitude.

S: Mmmm ... We didn't say anything about upeksha or equanimity, though we well could have done in this context.

Manjuvajra: You did mention it.

[41]

S: I did, did I? Ah, I mentioned the brahma-viharas generally, didn't I? But no doubt much more could have been said about equanimity in this context. Mmmm .. Any final point or

query?

(Long Pause)

Vajradaka: Do you relate 'rejecting' together with 'overcoming'? In the sense that we were talking about rejecting an unskilful thought on a sort of horizontal level is the same as overcoming it? Or is overcoming it particularly related to transcending?

S: Well, you could use the word 'overcoming' in both ways; 'cause if you overcome someone, well, you've fought with them and you've won, you've overcome. So in that sense you're on the same level. But you haven't really overcome someone if you're having to hold him down all the time. You've only really overcome him when you just don't have to bother about him any more; and that corresponds to transcending, or overcoming as transcending. I mean, you've only really rejected when you don't even need to reject any more, or even think about rejecting. So you've only overcome something, really overcome it, when you no longer have to hold it down.

Voice: So by 'rejecting', you mean try and hold it down?

S: In that first sense, yes. As when you have the unskilful thought of hatred in your mind and you're just struggling with it; if you stop struggling and making an effort, then it will just come up again.

Voice: It comes up anyway.

S: Yes, but if you've reached a state, say, of Insight, where the unskilful thought of hatred can't possibly enter, it's just dead as it were, well, then you've truly overcome it. So one can use the term 'overcoming' in both these ways: 'overcoming' in the sense of successfully holding down, and 'overcoming' in the sense of not needing to bother even about holding down any more, because that particular kind of thought is dead so far as you are concerned, can't possibly arise.

But of course the Buddhist teaching is that it's only when Insight has been developed that unskilful mental states are as it were killed, dead. Until then it's always a struggle, whether in the short term or the long term. The unskilful thought is always likely to come back so long as there's no real Insight. So you can't rest until you've achieved a degree, at least, of Insight, until you're at least a Stream Entrant. Then you can sit back on your laurels just a little bit. But until that point is reached you can slide right back; that possibility is always there. Right back into the lowest levels of the Wheel of Life.

And everybody knows that: you can be meditating [42] blissfully one moment, almost, sending out thoughts of metta in all directions, and five minutes later you can be in a terrible temper with someone. Just slipped right back. But if you've developed Insight, this won't happen - or to the extent that you've developed Insight it won't happen. (Pause)

All right, I think that's it.

Voices: Thank you.

S: OK.

Break in recording Next Session

S: All right, let's carry on from where we left off yesterday.

I think we were talking towards the end of the session yesterday about the will to live and the negation of the will to live. We didn't really finish that off, did we? It arose in this way - Dr Conze says: 'The indigenous tradition of Europe is inclined to affirm the will to live, and to turn actively towards the world of the senses. The spiritual tradition of mankind is based on the negation of the will to live and is turned away from the world of the senses.' And you remember we saw that it wasn't quite clear what was meant by 'The indigenous tradition of Europe'; and also whether it was quite correct to contrast 'The indigenous tradition of Europe' with 'The spiritual tradition of mankind'. And I made the point that the majority of the population everywhere, whether it's in the East or the West, certainly is turned actively towards the world of the senses.

But I think everybody wasn't clear what was meant by the negation of the will to live, and I mentioned, I think, that this was Schopenhauer's expression, which Conze seems to have taken over, and also the negation of the will to live - that's also Schopenhauer's expression.

So is this still a bit unclear: what is meant by the will to live and the negation of the will to live? I mentioned, didn't I, the Buddhist bhava-tanha and vibhava-tanha? Do you remember that? But actually there are three of these tanhas or trsnas. You may remember that tanha or trsna is one of the nidanas of the twelve nidana series, the mundane series. Do you remember that? That in dependence upon contact arises feeling, vedana; and in dependence upon feeling arises, or can arise, tanha; and in dependence upon that, clinging or attachment. And tanha or trsna, which literally is 'thirst', is generally explained as threefold.

There's kama-tanha, or kama-trsna. Kama here is something like sense-experience, experience through the five physical senses, experience of, or rather desire for, inclination towards, the sense world through one's own five physical senses. So the thirst or the craving for that kind of experience is what is called kama-tanha. So I think this [43] is quite clear, what is meant by this. There is a sort of thirst or craving for physical sense experience. There's a sort of natural tendency. For instance, if you're sitting quietly in a room, after a while, what happens? More often than not, you feel like going and tasting something, or drinking something, or turning on the radio and listening to something. It's as though you feel - as we were saying yesterday - a bit empty, as it were, and you want to fill the emptiness with some sort of sense contact. You can't be very happy for very long without some kind of sense experience. And there's a natural tendency, and Buddhism would say a thirst or a craving, in the human mind, in the human psyche for that kind of experience, experience through the senses. We want to see things and hear things and touch things and taste things. And this is very, very strong. So this is called kama-tanha.

And then there's bhava-tanha or bhava-trsna, which is the thirst or craving for existence. This means, of course, conditioned existence, existence on our present terms. This is much more like Schopenhauer's and Conze's 'will to live'; except that we mustn't think of 'will' here as something conscious. It's the natural sort of urge that we have just to go on living. And, according to Buddhism, this amounts to a positive sort of thirst or craving. Also, according to

Buddhism, the desire for personal immortality after death is just another form of this bhava-tanha, this craving for conditioned existence. This is why from its more spiritual point of view Buddhism doesn't think very highly of the desire for personal immortality. I mean, in Christianity, usually if you think very seriously about personal immortality, and you want to be sure of your own personal immortality, you're considered quite a religious man, if you think in those terms. But, according to Buddhism, if you think in those terms, you're not a particularly religious man, certainly not leading a spiritual life, necessarily. You're just the victim of a more refined form of the will to live, or the craving for conditioned existence. So, even if you desire to be reborn after death in a higher heavenly world as a deva, and even if you perform all sorts of skilful actions so as to accumulate merit which will ensure that you are reborn on that higher heavenly level, this is still a manifestation of bhava-tanha. This is still something essentially mundane. It isn't anything spiritual - not in the sense of transcendental. So it doesn't constitute spiritual life in the ultimate sense. It's just a more refined form of worldliness.

And then of course there's vibhava-tanha, which I mentioned yesterday, which is the craving for non-existence. It's a bit like Freud's 'Death Wish', even. It's a sort of reaction from a disappointed craving for existence. It's just a sort of recoil from an existence which you find unsatisfactory. It's not an intelligent sort of setting aside of an unsatisfactory existence. It's just like, when you can't win at a game of chess, instead of accepting your defeat you just upset the board! [Amusement] It's more like that. But, according to Buddhism, it doesn't work. And [44] you'll just be reborn all over again, rather worse off than before. So suicide doesn't work.

Manjuvajra: Would that tend to lead to rebirth as an asura?

S: Or even worse.

Manjuvajra: Why worse?

S: Because the hatred that you cannot direct against the world, against people in the world, you turn against yourself, and negate your own existence - out of anger and hatred, not out of an intelligent understanding of the situation.

So the will to live is something like bhava-tanha, the thirst or craving for existence. It's the natural tendency that all living things have just to go on living, and to want to go on living.

But what does that sort of presuppose?

Manjuvajra: That you're alive.

S: That you're alive, but also that it's you, it's just you. The will to live expresses itself through a number of people, expresses itself equally strongly through them all, but then what happens? In their expression of the will to live, these people very often come into conflict. In a way, it's the same will to live that they all have. But supposing that there isn't enough space or there isn't enough food, then they come into violent conflict. And that conflict is an expression of the will to live of them all.

So one can say, therefore, that the will to live is sort of bound up, certainly on the human

level, with what we call individualism, and even egotism. It's a sort of assertion of the self. So if you negate the will to live, what does this suggest therefore? (Pause)

Voice: Breaking down your ego structure.

S: Breaking down your ego structure, yes. I mean, how is it possible for you to negate the will to live? It's only because there is something in you which is bigger than the ego; or that you make yourself receptive to something that is bigger than the ego.

But can the will to live negate the will to live? Well, Schopenhauer at least says no. And Buddhism no doubt would agree with that. The will to live can't just sort of turn against itself. There's some other factor required, which transcends the will to live. Schopenhauer calls that Wisdom or Contemplation, and this is the higher, as it were, transcendental faculty, from the Buddhist point of view. So it isn't a question of forcibly negating or suppressing the will to live, but seeing beyond it, seeing beyond the limitations of one's individual existence, taking a wider view - and acting in accordance with that wider view.

So Conze says: 'The indigenous tradition of Europe is [45] inclined to affirm the will to live.' Well, we're not sure what he means by 'The indigenous tradition', but this is everybody's natural tendency in East or West, Europe or India: to affirm the will to live. And it's very few people who can negate the will to live, who can rise above a purely individualistic, purely selfish, egotistic point of view.

Also, one can think, in Buddhist terms, of the negation of the will to live in positive terms. For instance, in the case of the Bodhisattva, when the Bodhichitta arises, what happens? It means that the Bodhisattva's will to live, as it were, has been completely reoriented, completely transformed. It's certainly a will, though not an egoistic will, but it's a will to the good and the happiness of everybody, and in that way it differs from the will to live, because the will to live is essentially selfish and egoistic. So one need not think of the negation of the will to live in purely negative terms; you can also think of it in the sense of *tr̥sna* being replaced by the Bodhichitta.

Manjuvajra: I get the feeling it's a bit like a wall being knocked down, 'cause the will to live seems to me to be really constricting ... (Pause) You said that it also includes craving for existence not only as we are at present, but also the craving for existence as a deva, which would presumably be a more refined form of existence. (S: Yes.) Wouldn't that be skilful to a certain extent - to have that kind of craving?

S: Oh yes, certainly. I mean, it is craving, but it is a more refined form of craving, and it's only on the basis of that more refined form of craving that you can as it were transcend craving. If you've got an intense urge for meditative experience - apart from Wisdom - this is still a form of craving; but it's only on the basis of that higher meditative experience that you can develop Wisdom, which goes altogether beyond craving. So if, for instance, you want to be reborn in heaven, if you believe in that, you want to be reborn as a deva: therefore you give *dana* and you perform all sorts of other skilful actions. Well, yes, it is in the interests, in a way, of *bhava-tanha*, but a much more refined kind. So your selfishness is being refined, as it were. Your egotism is being refined. It's being not exactly refined out of existence, but it's more easy then to transcend it, when it is more refined. It's quite impossible to immediately transcend a gross, unrefined craving. You refine the craving through these various practices.

But Buddhism is absolutely emphatic that even the most refined form of craving is not Enlightenment. Enlightenment has to go completely beyond craving, completely beyond even the highest heavenly world. That is still mundane. So that ultimately the realization of Enlightenment is through Wisdom, in the sense of the knowledge of the Unconditioned Reality, not by sila, not by samadhi, but only by prajna.

Well, let's go on to the next paragraph, then.

Manjuvajra: Can I just mention, just bring up something we discussed yesterday? I objected to 'rejection' of the [46] sensory world and said that I would like to replace it with the word 'transcend'. And you said that one must be careful in doing that, because - I can't remember exactly what you said, but I think you were indicating maybe one wasn't freeing oneself from the sensory world. (S: Yeah.) And I've been thinking about that, and come to the conclusion that I can't really see any reason for actually rejecting, totally, the sensory world.

It's rather like, as an analogy: supposing you'd been trying to write with your left hand all your life. And then you met someone who said that you can write better with your right hand. Fine. So you practise, and you find that you can write a bit better with your right hand. You don't then immediately go and cut your left hand off. You keep both. (Short Pause) Do you understand that analogy? Or is that too complicated? (General Amusement)

S: No, I don't see that it is an analogy. (Manjuvajra: Ah.) It's more like, I would say, that you couldn't write very well with your right hand because it was crippled. Yeah?

(Manjuvajra: Yeah.) So your right hand has been treated and it now writes properly. But you've rejected, as it were, the crippled state of the hand. I'd say that that was the better analogy. Yeah? (Manjuvajra: Ah, yeah, mmm ... )

But I also said yesterday that it isn't a question of rejecting the world. You can't reject the world. The world is there. It's too big to be rejected. But what you reject is a certain attitude towards the world. So what do you think that attitude is? It's the sort of greedy, appropriating attitude that you reject, really. This is what rejecting the world means. It means you don't derive your values from the world that you experience through the senses, you don't regard that as the be-all and end-all. You reject it as an absolute.

Manjuvajra: I mean, I find I still quite enjoy the world. Is that healthy? (General Amusement)

S: Well, what do you mean by enjoy?

Manjuvajra: Well ... on occasions I like to have a good meal, or I like to get involved with small worldly things, like I might like to go out drinking, or I might like to go to a party, or out with a woman, or ... all sorts of things like this.

S: I think there are enjoyments and enjoyments. I think some are relatively innocent. If you enjoy the sunshine, if you enjoy the spring flowers, or something like that, or if you enjoy, say, a cup of cold water. I'd say these are quite positive enjoyments, in the sense that they aren't tainted with any unskilfulness. I'd say all the others are quite heavily tainted, and can't really go along with a spiritual life. For the time being, while you're involved in them, your spiritual life is, as it were, in abeyance.



[47]

But at the same time - I also said this before - if life as a whole becomes too deprived of pleasure - totally - then you may lose, as it were, your, sort of, elan, and you may not be able to do anything at all. But it does become important that more and more one gets one's enjoyment from some things which are truly skilful. It is a very difficult situation to be left without anything that you enjoy. It's almost a dangerous situation.

On the other hand you must be very careful not to be in a situation where all your enjoyment comes from basically unskilful things, and it's only your enjoyment of unskilful things that keep you going, even when you're trying to do skilful things. This is maybe the most dangerous situation of all. Do you see what I mean? That you only feel happy settling down to your meditation because you had a good party the night before, so you're in a state of relative satisfaction. So to make your spiritual life dependent upon being in a good mood on account of quite unskilful pleasures ...

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S: So to make your spiritual life dependent on being in a good mood, on account of quite unskilful pleasures, - well, this is really putting the cart before the horse. On the other hand, one can't be asked really psychologically to give up all pleasures, and then get on to the spiritual path. Because life will be so uninteresting you won't be able to make any progress on that path, more likely than not - though some people may. I mean, some people might even take it as an incentive. But I think that, as I say, one really has to be careful that one's enjoyment of unskilful things isn't what is essentially keeping you going in life, even with regard to your spiritual life. Because then it means there is no spiritual life. For instance, if you didn't go to parties and you didn't go out drinking occasionally you wouldn't be able to carry on, you wouldn't even be able to get on with your meditation, or your community life, it means that really you're not leading a spiritual life at all, because what is keeping you going is not anything skilful. It's essentially something unskilful.

So what is keeping you going should be something skilful. I mean, this is what is meant by spiritual life really: that what is keeping you going is positive factors; what is keeping you going is saddha or priti or whatever. But if what is keeping you going is essentially sensuous satisfaction, well, even though you are doing some meditation and some puja, etc., you are not really leading a spiritual life at all. And this is the position, I'm sure, of many people who are supposed to be leading a spiritual life. It isn't anything spiritual that is keeping them going. What is really keeping them going is something else - incidental pleasures and satisfactions. And that's a real state of self-deception to be in. So sometimes one should think: 'Well, could I carry on if I just gave up or was deprived of all the little satisfactions? ... the good [48] food, the warm comfortable bed ... Could I then carry on? Would I be equally happy? Would I still enjoy life?'

There is this story of St Francis that I sometimes quote - I hope you haven't all heard this before - when the friars, St Francis' 'Little Brothers', they had the discussion among themselves as to what was the greatest enjoyment that they'd ever experienced. So one said: 'When I was meditating and I was caught up and enraptured - that was the greatest pleasure!' And another said: 'When I was preaching the word of God and I was carried away by devotion - that was the greatest pleasure! That was the greatest enjoyment!' So they all had something of this sort to say: that that was the greatest enjoyment - something, you know,

quite spiritual and lofty, as it were.

So then it came to St Francis' turn. 'What is the greatest enjoyment?' So he said: 'Well, the greatest enjoyment is this: It's a cold dark windy rainy night and you've been walking all day. And you've lost your way. You've had nothing to eat. And you feel cold. And you feel miserable. And you'd give anything for a good hot drink and a sit by the fire. But you're lost in the middle of a wood and it's terribly cold and the snow is falling. And you hear the wolves howling in the distance. And you're really terrified ... But then you see a light shining through the trees. And you see there's a little cottage. And there are people living there. So you go up to the door. You knock. [You think:] "We've got something at last! We're safe! We'll have something to eat and drink!" You knock - and the door flies open and a woman shouts: "Off with you, you miserable, good-for-nothing friar. There's nothing for you here." And slams the door!' He says: 'That is the greatest enjoyment!' (Laughter)

So what does that mean? That means that his inner joy is so great that it can transcend all those experiences. That is the test. It's got nothing to stand on any more. It has to come purely from within, not from anywhere else. Even in the case of the other people, they were getting their joy out of something, even though it was something apparently quite religious - out of their meditation, out of their preaching. But in St Francis's case it just came from a totally different source, which wasn't affected by any sort of worldly state, or condition. [It's like] Milarepa living joyfully in the midst of the snows with absolutely nothing.

So it's that sort of joy that really has to keep you going. If you can only keep jogging along with your spiritual life with the help of some really good food and a nice comfortable bed and a party once or twice a month, it's not the spiritual impulse which is keeping you going at all, really? Is it? I'm not saying in your individual case - but in general.

So that's where the dynamism should come from: from essentially skilful states, or from the Bodhichitta ideally. So the test is when you don't have all those other things any more. And that's one of the advantages of a solitary retreat: then you really do know what's happening.

Really we have it so easy, so comfortable. It's only the [49] people who were here at Sukhavati last winter before there was any heating and all that, and it was really quite a hard life - that was much nearer a monastic life really than you've got it now, probably in some ways. Because now it is quite comfortable. It's almost cosy. Which is quite all right, but one must realize the situation, and not kid oneself that one is leading a hard austere life when one isn't. Of course one isn't. But it's good to have the experience, sometimes even deliberately put yourself under those conditions and just give up certain things. Anyway, that's a bit by the way.

But at the same time, to go back to the original question, one mustn't go to the other extreme. The other extreme is represented by an Order Member who told me some years ago that he'd reached the point where all food tasted alike to him. He didn't enjoy anything in particular. And I said I didn't think this was a very healthy state. If you do happen to have good food, well, yes, you can enjoy it. That is not necessarily unskilful. It's only the attachment to that particular pleasure which is unskilful.

But pleasures if repeated, especially pleasures of a certain kind, are almost bound to lead to attachment. So one just has to be very careful. But you aren't necessarily in a more spiritual

state if you are no longer able to experience pleasure and joy. What would happen is that you would get your pleasure and your joy and your delight much more from purely genuinely skilful mental states, rather than from contact with external objects. So you should ask yourself: 'Supposing I no longer had the good food, no longer had the soft comfortable mattress, no longer had plenty of warm clothes, no longer was I able to go to parties and meet and chat with interesting people .. ?' (General Amusement) Could the joy that you get from your meditation keep you going? If it can't, you're not really leading a spiritual life, whatever one may be doing.

It need not be meditation. I give that as an example. It can be, say, your study of the Dharma. If you take such delight in the study of the Dharma that that keeps you going, well, yes, then also you're leading a spiritual life. But very often we think it's the Dharma that is sustaining us when it's these other things. So we're in a way deceiving ourselves. Sometimes it's just money that keeps us going, or prestige, social position, that keeps us going.

All right let's go on to that new paragraph then.

Text: Some features distinguish Buddhism from other forms of wisdom. They are of two kinds:

Much of what has been handed down as 'Buddhism' is due not to the exercise of wisdom, but to the social conditions in which the Buddhist community existed, to the language employed, and to the science and mythology in vogue among the people who adopted it. One must throughout [50] distinguish the exotic curiosities from the essentials of a holy life. (Page 12)

S: I think that is quite axiomatic: 'One must throughout distinguish the exotic curiosities from the essentials of a holy life.' Do you understand the sort of thing that Conze is talking about? And of course it was all the more necessary for him to make this statement in 1951 than perhaps it is now - at least for some people. But you do understand the sort of thing that he's getting at? The sort of thing he's talking about? Can you give any examples?

Vajradaka: The Zen period in the '60s and '70s, when it was very chic and trendy to have Zen things around the house ...

S: Mmmm ... (Chuckles) So people were really interested in exotic curiosities, not the essentials of the holy life. I remember when a Zen class was being held at Sakura on Mondays. I gathered - I don't quite know the ins and outs of it - but apparently there had been more than one Zen teacher around and the class was formed of pupils who'd been left behind by more than one of these teachers, who'd had their own way of teaching. And there was quite a hot dispute one evening about the right kind of cushion apparently: whether it should be so big or so big; whether it should be completely round or whether it should be sort of oval; and they really seemed to attach tremendous importance to these things. So here again it's more like exotic curiosities.

Do you think there's a serious danger say still of anyone within the Friends still mistaking exotic curiosities with the essentials of a holy life? Maybe it takes more subtle forms. I've sometimes noticed that in our book production work a lot of people seem to take it for granted that a Buddhist illustration has to be something Oriental, preferably Tibetan. Have you noticed this? We still tend to think in those terms, don't we? If you're not quite sure what

to do, well, put in a lotus flower, "that's Buddhist", or put in a little Buddha figure. We still tend to think in that sort of way. Maybe it's inevitable and maybe we can't always do anything different, but at least we can be aware of what we're doing.

Do you think there are many people around - in general, even leaving aside the Friends - whose interest is more in exotic curiosities? Do you think this trend persists? (Manjuvajra: Oh yes.) You do? In what sort of way does it show itself? People who wear the Tantric badges and things like that?

Manjuvajra: Yes - the whole sort of Tantric scene .. and Persian scene. I mean, that doesn't impinge on Buddhism, but it's usually the same people.

S: Mmmm, yes. I think it's changed from Zen to Tantric hasn't it? Anyway perhaps it's sufficiently obvious, We don't need to say any more about it. Right, carry on.

Text: There are a number of methods for winning salvation by meditation, of which Buddhist tradition give a clearer and fuller account than I have found elsewhere. This is, [51] however, largely a matter of temperament. Properly studied, the literature of the Jains, of the Sufis, of the Christian monks of the Egyptian desert, and of what the Catholic Church calls 'ascetical' or 'mystical' theology, yields much of the same kind. (Page 12/13)

S: Mmmm, I like Conze's expression 'Properly studied!' 'Properly studied' means taking out some of the elements which they would consider the most important - for instance, belief in God! You'd have to take that out, from a Buddhist point of view. But the Sufis and the Christian monks of the Egyptian desert would consider that very important. (Pause)

There is the possibility of course that the Christian monks of the Egyptian desert - those are the monks of the second century - were influenced somewhat by Buddhism and this is something that still hasn't been investigated. There was no monasticism originally in Christianity. Where did it come from? So some do think it was of Eastern, specifically Indian, origin. But as I said that's still under investigation. Right, go straight on then.

Text: To a person who is thoroughly disillusioned with the contemporary world, and with himself, Buddhism may offer many points of attraction - in the transcending sublimity of the fairy land of its subtle thoughts, in the splendour of its works of art, in the magnificence of its hold over vast populations, and in the determined heroism and quiet refinement of those who are steeped in it. Although one may originally be attracted by its remoteness, one can appreciate the real value of Buddhism only when one judges it by the results it produces in one's own life from day to day.

(Page 13)

S: So, 'To a person who is thoroughly disillusioned with the contemporary world, and with himself, Buddhism may offer many points of attraction.' I wonder if Dr Conze really understood what he's saying here. 'To a person who is thoroughly disillusioned with the contemporary world, and with himself,' ... Do you think that this is a state that many people attain? It's to say quite a lot to be thoroughly disillusioned - not disgruntled mind you, not disappointed - 'thoroughly disillusioned with the contemporary world, and with himself'. Are there many such people? [Voice: No.]

And what do you think that would involve: to be 'thoroughly disillusioned with the contemporary world, and with [one]self? I think if you were thoroughly disillusioned, you'd be on the brink of Enlightenment ... really. It's a very advanced state. (Pause) Well, don't you think so? 'Thoroughly disillusioned' - well, it's a very strong expression - 'with the contemporary world and with himself,' ... especially to be thoroughly disillusioned with oneself. What do you think it would mean to be thoroughly disillusioned with oneself? How would it show itself? What difference would it make? 'Thoroughly [52] disillusioned with himself, ..'

Voice: You would be unable to act - in any sense.

S: Unable to act?

Voice: In a worldly sense.

S: In a worldly sense, yes. He wouldn't want to have a job, would he? ... Wouldn't want to make money. But what does one mean by being disillusioned with oneself?

Voice: Seeing oneself as an illusion.

S: No, I wouldn't say that. I think that's going a bit too far. It's in a way seeing through oneself. It's understanding that all the motives that you'd had, that you'd thought were so noble and disinterested, you just see through them. You see that they weren't noble, they weren't disinterested. They were just as mean and selfish as anybody else's. That is being disillusioned with yourself, that you're not the nice sort of person you thought you were. You see all sorts of little mean streaks, etc., etc. You are disillusioned with yourself. You see how individualistic you are, how selfish you are, how greedy you are, whereas before you thought you weren't such a bad sort of chap. But now you see yourself as you really are - or at least you see the more negative side of yourself as it really is. You're disillusioned. The illusion that you had about yourself has been dissipated.

So you've no illusions about the contemporary world. You don't think it's a wonderful place - all these gadgets being multiplied, and progress going on. You've seen through all that. You've seen through your own self. You're thoroughly disillusioned with them both. So, 'To a person who is thoroughly disillusioned with the contemporary world, and with himself, Buddhism may offer many points of attraction.'

I think Conze should have put it more strongly than that. I mean, to a person who is completely disillusioned with the contemporary world, and himself, Buddhism quite clearly presents itself as the only way! (Chuckles) It's not a question of 'many points of attraction'! (Amusement - Bhante's and general) I mean, what alternative have you got, except to follow a clearly marked spiritual path? - if you really are thoroughly disillusioned with the contemporary world, and with yourself.

So what are the attractions? 'The transcending sublimity of the fairy land of its subtle thoughts' ...

Manjuvajra: I don't think that would be an attraction to someone who's thoroughly disillusioned with everything. In fact, it would ...

S: (Interrupting) ... And 'the splendour of its works of art' ... No, they'd seem a bit of a mockery, in a sense. [53] You would have exhausted your interest even in Buddhist art. I think, to get to this stage of complete disillusionment. 'In the magnificence of its hold over vast populations' - well, that's out of date anyway now. It no longer has that hold - 'and in the determined heroism and quiet refinement of those who are steeped in it.' I think the 'determined heroism' rather than the 'quiet refinement'. (Noises of Agreement)

'Although one may originally be attracted by its remoteness, one can appreciate the real value of Buddhism only when one judges it by the results it produces in one's own life from day to day.' Well, that's certainly very true.

So what do you think about this paragraph, on the whole? It seems clear to me that Dr Conze hasn't quite realized what he meant, or what he in fact was saying, when he used the word 'disillusionment'. How many people do you think do come along to the Friends completely disillusioned with the contemporary world and with themselves? What does it mean to be disillusioned with the contemporary world? Do you have any hope for the contemporary world? I personally don't; not the present way it's going. It's clearly heading in the direction of disaster, in one form or another.

I mean, do you really believe in democracy? Do you believe in equality? (Pause) Really? Or are you disillusioned with them? Do you believe in parliamentary government? Do you believe in the free market and the free play of economic forces? Do you believe in state socialism? If you're not disillusioned with all of them, you're not completely disillusioned.

Manjuvajra: Actually, I feel quite disillusioned about any possibility, not only in this world, but any world. I mean, if you look back through history all civilizations have been unsatisfactory.

S: Unsatisfactory as what?

Manjuvajra: As ends in themselves. If you're looking for a satisfactory world in terms of social structures, you can search all through history and you can't find one.

S: Well, what in fact are you looking for? I mean, what would be a satisfactory social structure, etc.? You can presumably form a concept of one, but you're saying that that concept is never actually realized?

Manjuvajra: Well, it would be a world in which everyone was very happy and blissfully wise and .. !

S: It sounds like Sukhavati!(Laughter) I mean the Sukhavati, not this little reflection. (Pause) So to be disillusioned with the world means not to turn sour on the world. It means to see quite clearly that the world as such can't give anything which is unconditioned. For that you've got to look elsewhere. And however perfect your social and political and economic arrangements they're not going to be able to make [54] everybody absolutely happy all the time. If you're thinking in those sort of terms, you've got to look elsewhere.

Do you think that many people come into the Friends really thoroughly disillusioned with the contemporary world? [Voice: No.] So why do you think they come in at all if they're not

completely disillusioned?

Manjuvajra: I think they're slightly bored with the contemporary world.

S: Bored? What, with all that's going on? (Pause)

I think many people see the Friends as part of the contemporary world, very often as another group - in a quite positive kind of way. They're looking for something they can belong to, identify with, and they see the Friends as something of that kind. So in a way they see it as part of the contemporary world, as giving them the sort of things they're looking for in the contemporary world, not as going beyond all that.

And do you think many people are disillusioned with themselves? How many people have ever felt disillusioned with themselves? Or seen right through themselves and not really liked very much what they saw?

Atula: To a certain degree.

S: To a certain degree. (Pause) 'Cause in a way one doesn't really start doing anything about oneself at all unless one does become disillusioned with oneself and one sees the limitations of all one's efforts and what one has done so far, and how the motivations are so very mixed, to say the least.

Manjuvajra: That's a particularly dangerous state for a lot of people, I think, because even if they see it, they immediately have to close it off because they're not usually offered any opportunity for doing anything about it. So if they become disillusioned with themselves, and no path is open to develop themselves, then they're left in quite an awful dilemma.

S: I'm not so sure about that. I think in some ways there's a very deep satisfaction in being disillusioned with oneself. Do you know what I mean? If you're disillusioned with yourself, well, what you may be seeing about yourself may be very unpleasant and uncomfortable, but in a way you feel that you have come to rock bottom and at least you're seeing yourself truly. And the knowledge that you are seeing yourself truly, however uncomfortable that may be, gives you a certain kind of very deep satisfaction. And the satisfaction can be as it were so deep that you can be quite content to remain with that for quite a long time, until you do find some further way ahead.

So I wonder if you're distinguishing sufficiently, really, between disillusionment and disgruntlement. I see disillusionment with oneself as a very positive experience. [55] (Manjuvajra: Mmmm, yeah.) I don't think, if you have been really thoroughly disillusioned with yourself, I don't see how you can close up again after that if there is no way offered to you immediately.

I think some people may - we sometimes read this in the lives of mystics and saints - some people may have to stay in this state for years. But in a way it's a very satisfactory state to be in, because it's a state without illusions about the thing about which you're most likely to have illusions, namely yourself. So if you're really in a state of having no illusions about yourself, of being thoroughly disillusioned about yourself, you clearly see what you are really like, or were like, - all the greed, selfishness, individualism, etc. - that is a very positive experience.

You're really sort of swept clean, as it were. And I think someone who had this experience in a sense would not mind remaining in that for quite a long time until the next step presented itself.

End of Side One

Side Two

S: In fact, I think such a person would be very cautious about taking a next step, realizing how he'd deceived himself in the past [and how suspect his motives were, [and] would be quite happy, in a way, not to take any further step until he'd really thoroughly assimilated what he'd seen about himself. I'm a bit doubtful whether, if there was no path immediately obvious, someone who was thoroughly disillusioned would in fact close up. If you're really thoroughly disillusioned, you can't shake that off very easily.

It is, it certainly would be, a painful experience. But I think, as I said, there'd be in the midst of it a very deep satisfaction that at last you'd got to some truth and certainty, even if it was the unpleasant truth about yourself, and you really saw that. You might have been inclined at first not to face it and to put it aside, but once you've thoroughly seen it and been thoroughly disillusioned and really accepted that, I don't think it would matter for a while if no path to the next step presented itself.

To deepen that experience of disillusionment with yourself in a way would be the next thing to do, or to safeguard yourself against losing that vision of yourself as you were. You would feel: 'This is something very valuable. I must hang on to this. That's the next step for me: not to let it go, not to let any of the old illusions about myself come back.' And you also feel: 'Well, there's some truth that it's possible to ascertain', even if it is just the bitter truth about yourself. (Pause)

Anyway, (...Unclear...)

[Note: very poor recording quality on this tape]

Voice: (...Unclear...) (Laughter)

[56]

S: (...Unclear...) (Pause)

Manjuvajra: What is it then when sometimes you get (...Unclear...) they're verging on realizing something of that, and then (...Unclear...) literally in a few seconds? And then you can see them turn away from it.

S: Oh yes. This happens all the time. But they're not thoroughly disillusioned; we're talking now about someone in a state of thorough disillusionment with himself. I mean, they've approached that, but they're shrinking from it.

Voice: What's disgruntlement?

S: Ah, disgruntlement is where you don't see through something, you've merely been



disappointed. You'd still like to have that thing, but you can't, and you're dissatisfied and disgruntled. You haven't seen through the thing as essentially unsatisfactory or inadequate. You've just not been able to get it! So you're dissatisfied and resentful.

Voice: Suicide .. (...Unclear...)

S: Indeed, yes. If you committed suicide in a positive sort of way you'd go about it very calmly and happily and take your time, as it were. But most people commit suicide in a highly reactive fashion, 'cause they can't get what they want. That is disgruntlement. There's a discussion of this on a seminar and the transcript was printed in an old edition of Shabda. You could look at that. (...Unclear...) It's called Disgruntlement and Disillusionment. I forget which seminar that was on, but it was quite a good discussion. Might have been the Bodhicaryavatara in fact.

Voices: (...Unclear...)

S: And also - and this is of some interest - you mentioned on the seminar that you thought or rather you asked whether 'disgruntlement' was connected with 'grunting'. (General Amusement) So I said I thought it wasn't. But when I looked it up in my etymological dictionary, I found that it was! Grunting is, sort of, a sign of discontent; to grunt or to grundle is to express your discontent. So to be disgruntled is - not to grundle, but it is the state of grunting and grunting and expressing dissatisfaction all the time. (General Amusement) So add a little note to that effect.

You could go so far as to say that disillusionment - genuine disillusionment, not disgruntlement - is a form of Insight. I'm using the word Insight in its full technical Buddhist sense. Do you see what I mean? Do you see that? Probably the most important form of disillusionment is disillusionment with oneself. It means that then you get rid of all your false ideas about yourself. Most people have got plenty of false ideas about themselves - I mean in a very basic sense. (Pause)

When you become disillusioned with the contemporary [57] world and with yourself, then you're on very firm ground actually. And it's this, perhaps, that gives you your feeling of satisfaction. As I said, you're down to rock bottom. But when you're standing on rock bottom, even though it's bottom, it's rock! And when you're standing on rock, you're standing firmly, however low down you may be.

So if you do see quite clearly that you're greedy, selfish, grasping, neurotic, etc., - well, you're seeing really clearly, and not only seeing clearly, you're on really firm ground, because you're seeing truly, and you can't be standing on anything firmer than the truth, even if it is the truth about your wretched and miserable self. So that's what gives you at the same time your feeling of deep satisfaction: that 'This is the truth, this what I'm really like, and I'm really seeing it.' Truth is truth.

Manjuvajra: Isn't that a little like the realization of being a sinner?

S: Well, yes and no. If a Christian is really seeing himself as a sinner, in the sense of actual genuine limitations; but if he's really feeling bad about all sorts of things which the Church has said are sins, but which are not really sins at all, well, then that's a different situation

altogether.

If you think: 'What a terrible sinner I am! How miserable! How unworthy! How deserving of the wrath of God! I didn't go to Mass last Sunday!' Well, that's not what we're talking about. That itself is illusion, not disillusion. But if he just does see in the same way that a Buddhist might see that he is greedy, he is selfish, well, yes, that's the same thing then. I mean, leaving aside that very questionable element of guilt in the specifically Christian sense. That isn't really part of clear seeing.

I think this is what some Protestant Christians, I think, call 'conviction of sin': when you become convicted by your own conscience that you are a sinner. But there's quite an element of this in it, of disillusionment with yourself. I wouldn't reject it entirely by any means, even though it is rather spoiled, in a way, by this specifically Christian feeling of guilt. But when the sincere Christian is, as it were, 'convicted of sin', and sees himself as he is, well, there's a lot of genuine disillusionment in that about himself

I think this is the sort of experience you could even have outside the specifically religious and spiritual context, as when you are just open and you see for a moment what you are really like and what your motivations really are.

And to be truly disillusioned about oneself is to see oneself as essentially contingent, as essentially impermanent and insubstantial, and this is where the Insight, from a Buddhist point of view, really does come in. You don't see yourself as a permanent unchanging ego any more. You see yourself as a concatenation of ever-changing factors and forces.

[58]

Vajradaka: What does concatenation mean?

S: 'Linking together', as in a chain.

So, to summarize, disillusionment with oneself is really a very positive experience, though it may be quite unpleasant. But obviously, sooner or later, the question does arise of getting on to a positive spiritual path. I think that there is the danger there that if you are simply in a state of disillusionment too long, you may give way to despair. I think that is a genuine danger; but not an immediate danger. It's certainly not a danger that need confront anybody who's got any contact with the Dharma.

You might at some time start even despairing of your own ability to make any genuine progress at all, when you feel that everything is tainted, that even your attempts to develop spiritually are wrongly motivated. But even that is not a bad sort of state to be in, because then you just remain quiet and don't do very much until you can be sure of doing the truly skilful thing, or until the truly skilful thing is just done, it just happens.

Sometimes we attach too much importance to doing things, and are not sufficiently happy just to remain not doing anything at all. But, as I've said on other occasions, just to be in a state of refraining from doing any harm to anybody, including your own self - this is itself a tremendous achievement, because you're just not making things worse than they already are! Very often we're only too ready to rush in and interfere and try and straighten things out and put things right. More often than not, things are just like turbid water: it just needs to be left

alone so that the sediment can sink to the bottom and the water can become clear of its own accord. Very often it's simply that that is needed. So we shouldn't be afraid of just not doing anything at all for a while. I think T S Eliot expresses something like this. In one of his poems he says: 'Don't hope; because hope would be hope for the wrong thing' etc. Do you remember that? (Noises of assent) I don't remember the whole passage.

I hope this doesn't sound too negative, all this talk about thorough disillusionment. It isn't really such at all. It's really quite a positive and inspiring state, when all the illusions do fall, the scales fall from one's eyes, as it were, and you just start seeing things rather more clearly.

It's like, for instance, when you look out of your window in the early morning just before the dawn, and light hasn't dawned, and you're in a strange place; so maybe you think, you're under the impression, there's a beautiful garden out there, and that as soon as the sun starts shining you'll see all the beautiful rose bushes and so on. [And] you're looking: 'Oh, that must be a rose bush, and that must be something else ...' But then suddenly the sun rises and you see it's really a sort of battlefield with corpses strewn all over the place. You see it as it really is. That's what it's like. Your illusions are shattered. I think it's much more dangerous - if one wants to talk in terms of [59] danger - to be disillusioned about other people. (Pause) You seem to be in hearty agreement with this. What have you got to say?

Vajradaka: Well, I was talking to someone just quite recently who was very disillusioned with the people he was around, and it just produced a very negative effect.

S: Hmm .. Is this person disillusioned about himself?

Vajradaka: To some extent.

S: 'Cause I'd say - again if I was going to talk in terms of danger - it's very dangerous to be disillusioned with others before you're disillusioned with yourself; because you see through others but you don't see through yourself. And you think that you're the one righteous person in a world of sinners! Or that you're misunderstood; or people haven't appreciated you, etc., etc. And then you start feeling self-pity, which is a terrible negative emotion.

Vajradaka: I think that that's probably true of this person.

S: You were going to say something?

Manjuvajra: I think you've answered it. I'll say it anyway. You mean sort of holding up somebody, putting somebody on a pedestal, for example, and then maybe seeing that they're not quite like that, and so you lose all faith .. ?

S: No, I wasn't thinking necessarily of anything as dramatic as that. But you take it for granted - usually, to begin with - that people are all right and pretty decent; but you might have a few unpleasant experiences, and then you might just start seeing that everybody is motivated by greed, hatred and delusion, so you become disillusioned about people. But if you become disillusioned about people in that way and see them as all motivated by greed, hatred and delusion, but you think that you are the noble, disinterested, unselfish person - well, that's very dangerous.

Anyway, let's go on to the next paragraph.

Text: The rules of wholesome conduct which are recommended in the Buddhist Scriptures are grouped under three headings: Morality, Contemplation and Wisdom. Much of what is included under Morality and Contemplation is the common property of all those Indian religious movements which sought salvation in a life apart from ordinary everyday society. There we have, in addition to rules of conduct for the laity, regulations for the life of the homeless brotherhood of monks; many Yoga practices - rhythmical and mindful breathing, the restraint of the senses, methods for inducing trance by staring at coloured circles, stages of ecstasis, the cultivation of unlimited friendliness, compassion, sympathetic joy and even-mindedness. Further, meditations of [60] a generally edifying character, which could be found in any mystical religion, such as meditations on death, on the repulsiveness of the functions of this material body, on the Trinity of the Buddha, the Dharma (Truth), and the Sangha (Brotherhood). Few could be expected to practise all these methods in one life-time. There are many roads to emancipation. What is common to all them is that they aim at the extinction of the belief in individuality. (Page 13)

S: So, 'The rules of wholesome conduct which are recommended in the Buddhist Scriptures are grouped under three headings:' - this of course is the famous sila, samadhi, prajna. Conze translates samadhi as 'contemplation'. This is a bit misleading. It really covers what I call concentration, meditation and contemplation. Contemplation is generally used more in the sense of Insight.

So, 'Much of what is included under Morality and Contemplation', i.e. sila and samadhi, 'is the common property of all those Indian religious movements which sought salvation in a life apart from ordinary everyday society.' I think we won't quarrel with the use of the word 'salvation'; but what about this 'life apart from ordinary everyday society'? Why should one seek 'salvation in a life apart from ordinary everyday society'? Why not in ordinary everyday society? What do you think is the reason for this?

This is something that one will surely be asked by people here in the West whom one encounters. I mean, does one believe this? Or what does one mean by this? 'Salvation in a life apart from ordinary everyday society.' So what does one mean, first of all, by 'a life apart from ordinary everyday society'? And is this the only way of finding salvation? And if so, why? How? So what does one think about this? (Pause)

I mean, everybody knows, I think, what the ancient Buddhist monks did - not even Buddhist monks: the wanderers. What did they do? They just left home. They left the household life, as I mentioned in one of the lectures recently. They gave up family life; they gave up domestic and civic responsibilities and duties; they gave up earning a living; they depended upon alms. So this is what is meant by 'a life apart from ordinary everyday society': that you're not living at home, you're not living with your family, you don't have a job, you're not earning money, you're not making money.

So why should this life be necessary to salvation? As I said, we won't quarrel with the word 'salvation' - or, if you like, we'll change it. Why should this sort of life, 'a life apart from ordinary everyday society', be necessary for higher spiritual development? For the attainment of Enlightenment? Why can't you continue to lead an ordinary everyday life in ordinary everyday society and gain emancipation? Or can one? What do you think?

Voice: One could theoretically but it's more (...Unclear...)

S: In what way?

[61]

Voice: Whilst in ordinary everyday society you're so surrounded by unskilful motivated actions.

S: Yes, and therefore perhaps tend more oneself to perform such actions.

Voice: It's a lot harder not to. And by separating yourself from those, you gain a certain degree of isolation from them.

S: It's a common criticism that that sort of life is selfish. Now how would one reply to that? If one is told that to give up the family life, to give up domestic and civic responsibilities, and just to go off and think about your own self-development: that's very selfish. How would you reply to that? You've surely heard something of this sort before. How would you reply to that?

Manjuvajra: I've replied by saying that the reason you do that is because you see that the life you have at the moment is not satisfactory and you want to find some way to solve that problem, so you start by looking within and decide to devote yourself to a spiritual life, and hopefully when you've found that it's successful for you, then you'll have more ability and power to be able to explain it to other people.

S: Hmm, yes. I think also perhaps you need to question people's unspoken assumption that the life that they are leading is unselfish. (Bhante chuckles) This is the unspoken assumption, that 'We with our wives and families and children and jobs are leading an unselfish life. We're working for others. We're thinking of others. But you are not. You are just going to think of yourself. That is selfishness.' So I think one must question that unspoken assumption that they are unselfish.

For instance, I've heard this a number of times, even within the Friends; that if you're married and you're looking after your wife, you're looking after your children, you're being very unselfish. You're leading an unselfish life. You're not only thinking of yourself. But the unmarried person, especially the unmarried man, the bachelor - he's selfish. He's not looking after anybody. He's only looking after Number One. But one has in all frankness to say that, selfish as the bachelor may be, the married man is surely no less selfish. Why did he get married originally? Was it out of pure undiluted altruism? I mean, here again there's a sort of self-deception.

Manjuvajra: I can see the point you're making there, but I also don't think that's a valid way to argue.

S: Bearing in mind the sort of people that you're talking to and the way they might react?

Manjuvajra: Yeah, I think they would react, and also, in a [62] way, it doesn't answer the question. It sort of says: 'Well, I'm not going to answer whether I think this life is selfish'.

S: I'm not suggesting that it's the whole answer, but I think it is one of the things that can at least sometimes be pointed out. I personally would be more inclined to take the offensive. What I'm probably getting at is more that, if one leads a spiritual life, people try to put you on the defensive, that you have to. But they don't have to justify their way of life; that is obviously good and right and noble. It's you who have to justify. So they try to put you on the defensive. So what I think one might sometimes do is to reverse the positions and put them on the defensive. Attack is the best method of defence, as it were.

I think that, sometimes, one shouldn't mind putting the cat among the pigeons. I must say that as I get older I feel more and more like doing this, 'cause I feel that there's so much compromise going on, and the truth is so very rarely spoken. So maybe one should allow oneself to become rather unpopular, at least in some quarters, by speaking out much more. It's as though the truth is so rarely heard and it raises its little voice so weakly and occasionally that one ought to speak up much more, much more strongly and boldly, even if it does upsetting quite a lot of people. I wonder whether sometimes within the Friends we're a bit too mild and gentle and compromising, even. I say this of myself as well as of others.

Manjuvajra: I work on the basis that, if anybody's come along to the Friends in any way, then they already know that there's something wrong with their own lives, but they're going out there looking for something else, and what they want to do is be convinced that what they are going into is OK, not that what they are leaving is bad.

S: No, I'm only saying this within the context of someone asking you to justify your supposedly selfish behaviour. So I am therefore saying that if they adopt that attitude towards you, it can be a quite useful technique almost that you just reverse the situations, and you attack them, just as they are as it were attacking you, and you ask them to justify their way of life; because there's this unspeakable self-satisfaction in people, that they are right, that their way of life is right, that it's OK, that you have to justify yourself. If they're going to the races or to the gambling place, betting shop, whatever, that's OK, that's fine! They spend money right and left, on this, that, or the other, that's OK! You spend two or three hours meditating, you've got to justify yourself! This seems all wrong.

End of Cassette Three, Cassette Four

S: So sometimes I feel we must take the offensive. Maybe I'm just getting a bit impatient, (Chuckling) but this is what I sometimes feel, quite often feel, nowadays: that we mustn't [63] allow ourselves to be put on the defensive so much, and be apologetic, as though we had to excuse ourselves and explain and justify on other people's terms. We don't. I don't think we really need to do that.

Anyway, these various methods that have been mentioned .. Well, perhaps we're going on too quickly. Maybe we ought to say a bit more about this 'salvation in a life apart from ordinary everyday society'. I mean, do you think it's ever possible to gain salvation or win emancipation in 'ordinary everyday society'? Can one make real spiritual progress in the world? Is it really possible? Under present conditions, say, in England or America? Do you really think it's possible? Do you really see it happening? This is quite a serious question.

Manjuvajra: I think you could living in the country. I think you could still exist within the social framework, or be seen to exist within the social framework living in the country

somewhere and to be able to get on with the spiritual life.

S: What about work? Are you assuming you're living on an allowance, or .. ?

Manjuvajra: Oh no, I think I could work.

S: I don't, frankly. From what I've seen of people living in this way in the country they just stagnate. This is what I've seen, so far. I think they settle down into a reasonably positive way of life, but I doubt very much whether they make any real progress, spiritually.

Voice: I feel there's degrees of attachment to society. We're attached to society, we're still part of ordinary everyday life, in various senses. So to my way of thinking it's not so much a question of: 'You're in it or you're out of it', but: 'How much are you in it and how much are you out of it?'

S: Well, you could even say about the wandering monk that he has some connection with society, even if it's only via his begging bowl, because that contact has to be there. So in a sense it is a question of degree. So then the question becomes: Where do you draw the line? On one side of which a definite spiritual progress is possible, on the other side of which it isn't?

Voice: It depends on the individual.

S: It may in some cases depend on the individual. But can one generalize? Can one make a generalization?

Manjuvajra: It seems to me that you've got to have time to meditate ... and the ability to get free of your involvement with that world.

[64]

S: Mmm, yes. And not to feel under pressure. And not to have to spend too much of one's time in a way which is basically unskilful, or under conditions which are basically unskilful.

It seems to me that under conditions, say, in this country, the only sort of situation in which the vast majority of people are going to be able to make any real spiritual progress at all is within the context of a spiritual community. This seems quite clear: that those who do live in that sort of way do make more and better progress than those who don't. I think one can generalize to that extent.

One does see that people who've been associated with the Friends for quite a long time but have not been involved with a spiritual community or become part of one, they just seem to be more or less where they were some years ago. This doesn't mean that if you're in a spiritual community, you'll make progress automatically. You still have to work at it. But that does seem to offer the most favourable environment. You are still in the world to a great extent; you may even go out to work; but your basis is the spiritual community.

I think, broadly speaking, that is where the line can be drawn, certainly in this country. That means that you're away from family life and you're away from the necessity for a regular full-time job, except in emergency situations where you just go out and earn money for the

community, which is rather different from earning it for self and family, 'cause the motivation is different. So that would seem to be the line of development, or that would seem to be the direction in which one is to go forward.

So I think this also needs to be made clear. Sometimes people do say it doesn't matter what the conditions are, it doesn't matter what your lifestyle is, as it were, it's your inner dedication that matters. Well, that's true in a way; but it's also true that your external circumstances do affect you very, very much and you're very dependent on them. So I think we mustn't, as it were, hold out any false hopes to people: that you need not make any real changes, you can go on living just as you are, you can still spiritually progress. I think that's just cheating people, to say things like that. It's not even a skilful means, I think.

So I think it has to be made clear sooner or later that if one is serious about one's spiritual development it really does mean a quite radical change in one's whole way of life, that one cannot carry on as before, assuming, say, that one had all the things that most people usually do have. (Pause)

Anyway, maybe that's enough on that.

These 'various methods' ... 'regulations for the life of the homeless brotherhood of monks; many Yoga practices - rhythmical and mindful breathing,' - he's clearly referring to the anapana sati - 'the restraint of the senses, methods for inducing trance' - 'trance' is Dr Conze's rather idiosyncratic word for the dhyanas; I think it's one of his less fortunate translations - 'by staring at coloured [65] circles,' - one doesn't stare at coloured circles.

Are you familiar with this particular method? I've mentioned it in a few lectures. It's the kasina method. Has anyone heard about this? Who hasn't heard about it: the kasina method? There are ten kasinas mentioned in Buddhist tradition; for instance, there's the red kasina. How you practise it is this: you make, not a circle, it's not a circle, but a disc, you make a red disc, say, on the wall. In ancient times they did it with, say, red clay. You make a red disc on the wall about the height of your nose when you're sitting cross-legged. You make it about ten or twelve inches in diameter. And you take your seat about six or seven feet from that wall, from that disc of colour. It can by the way be red or yellow or green or blue or white depending on your temperament. You take your seat facing it and you just look at it.

You can set it up in another way. Another method if you're living in the forest on your own is to gather flowers of that particular colour and make a sort of disc on the ground in front of you and then you sit and look at that. So when you look at colours, what is one of the things that happens?

Vajradaka: There's emotional response.

S: There's emotional response. What else? (Pause)

Robert: It depends on the colour to some extent, doesn't it?

S: The emotional response depends on the colour; but what else sort of generally happens when you look at colour, certainly if you look at it for some time?



Roy: On a physical level the retina of the eye becomes desensitized to that colour and if you look away you can have a colour negative.

S: Yes, yes, I wasn't thinking of that; though that is true.

Voice: It blurs ...

S: No, I wasn't thinking of that. I was thinking of the psychological effect, mental effect. Or at least what can happen. What can happen is that you become mentally less active. A colour is something as it were sensuous. When you're preoccupied with that, you tend to think less. Do you see this? If you look at a colour you can become absorbed in looking at that colour, and that colour, inasmuch as it's a sensuous thing, you have a sort of emotional response to it. You can become absorbed in it and feel quite happy and satisfied looking at it. And to the extent that you're feeling happy and satisfied and become absorbed, you don't think; you're not mentally active. You continue to be aware and awake, but you're not mentally active. There is this tendency. Do you see what I mean? So what you do is: you look at this disc of colour; and you don't stare at it, as [66] Conze says, you just look at it - just as when you're doing the communication exercises, you don't stare, you just look. And you allow your whole attention to be absorbed by that disc of colour.

The differences of colour are related to temperament in this way: that if you're a person who is very dull and sluggish, then you set up a disc of red colour, bright red; if you're a person who is very mentally active, well, a green one or blue one would be better; and so on. So you allow your whole attention to be absorbed by this disc of colour, and you try to cut out all thoughts, so that you're completely focused on this disc of colour. You're not thinking about it, you're just aware of it, and sort of sinking into it as it were, and experiencing it. In other words, you concentrate on that disc of colour. I've avoided the word 'concentration' up till now, because that might suggest forcibly fixing your attention and really staring at the disc, but it isn't like that. It's more like allowing your attention to be absorbed by that disc of colour. So this is the first stage of the practice. You're totally absorbed by that disc of colour.

Then, when you've done that to your satisfaction, you close your eyes, just sitting there as you are, you close your eyes and you mentally reproduce that disc of colour. And you try to see that disc of colour mentally as clearly as you were seeing it before physically. Now, if you find that difficult, if you find the mental image is slipping, you can open your eyes again and look at that disc, refresh your memory as it were, then close. So you carry on like this for as long as you think suitable until - and this may take you a number of different sessions, even weeks and months - until you can see the disc of colour mentally as clearly as you see the disc of colour with your physical eyes. So that's the second stage.

The third stage is when you are able to see the mental disc of colour very clearly, and that becomes your object of concentration. When you've concentrated on this for a considerable length of time, then you will have a certain experience in connection with that disc of colour. One of the things that may happen is that you have the experience of a disc of light emerging from that coloured disc. When that disc of light emerges, a much more intense concentration develops, and this can carry you even into the dhyana levels.

So you've got three levels or stages of practice here: concentrating on the coloured disc painted on the wall; concentrating on the mental image of the coloured disc; and then

concentrating on the disc of light that emerges from that mental image. So this is called kasina practice or kasina exercise. 'Kasina' means 'a device', the device here being the disc of colour.

You can also do it with a bowl of water. Sometimes monks used their begging bowls: filled them with water, put them in front of them. But then you wouldn't get a disc. It would be more like a sort of ellipse, wouldn't it? But that also can be used as an object of concentration. This is a sort [67] of more psychological method, if you like. And you can see how this led later on to the visualization of figures of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. This is the more abstract geometrical sort of method. The devotional element doesn't come in here. You can see how it links up with the stupa visualization too. But this is a very ancient and primitive form of practice. There are ten kasinas described in the Visuddhi-magga, (The Path of Purification). It's very rarely practised nowadays. I've only met a very very few monks who ever practised kasina.

Chintamani: If you used something like this, would one expect to be magnetically drawn to such things as one was passing.

S: What do you mean by 'passing'?

Chintamani: If they are around one (...Unclear...)

Vajradaka: Like a belisha beacon?

Chintamani: No ...

S: No, because the traditional method would be that, if you practised meditation you'd just go off very quietly some place.

Chintamani: I was just thinking, supposing one had a coloured disc on one's wall, and it was just there in one's room, would it .. ?

S: Oh yes. If you were sitting in front of it periodically, when you were just moving about in the room, yes, it would certainly draw your attention. That would be positive or negative depending on circumstances: that if you were trying to concentrate on something else and wanted not to concentrate on that, it would certainly set up some tension and conflict, which wouldn't be good. But if that wasn't the case and you were just trying to keep in mind throughout the whole day that particular disc, as you might do, say, with your mantra, then that would be quite positive, that would be part of your practice. But one would have to be careful not to set up a conflict.

Anyway, what other methods are mentioned? 'Stages of ecstasis,' - I think he means here samadhi. Do you know what ecstasy is? Or 'ecstasis', as he puts it? What do you think is meant by this? Literally it means 'standing outside'. It's like standing outside the body when you are completely carried away by your intensely joyful experience; you seem to be carried out of the body. It seems to correspond more to the Buddhist priti.

'The cultivation of unlimited friendliness, compassion, sympathetic joy and even-mindedness.' These, of course, are the so-called brahma-viharas.

So, 'further, meditations of a generally edifying character, which could be found in any mystical religion, [68] such as meditation on death, on the repulsiveness of the functions of this material body, on the Trinity of the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha.' These are also found.

'Meditation on death' - anybody know anything about this? I think it's pretty obvious what it means, isn't it? It's one of the Ten Recollections.

And 'on the repulsiveness of the functions of this material body' - I'm not quite sure what he means by that. There is a meditation or recollection of the repulsiveness of food. Has anybody come across this? There's quite a lot about it in *The Path of Purification*: recollection of the loathsomeness of food. Buddhaghosa gives a really quite exhilarating description of its loathsomeness, and how you have to take the stuff, and actually put it into your mouth in large lumps, and chew it, and mix it with saliva, and down it goes, and it mixes with all sorts of unpleasant juices, etc. He gives you the whole story from beginning to end in full and lavish detail. (General Amusement) So this is of course to counteract one's natural attachment to food.

I had a friend staying with me in Kalimpong who was a medical doctor, an Englishman, and he read this passage of Buddhaghosa's and he said he just didn't agree with it at all; because as a doctor he thought or he believed that the whole digestive process was really beautiful! (General Amusement)

But that wasn't Buddhaghosa's intention of course. It's more like an attempt to get you to see the other side of things. You tend to concentrate on the pleasant and forget the other side or to just ignore the other side. So there is this contemplation or recollection of the loathsomeness of food.

And then there's meditation on the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha ...

'Few could be expected to practise all those methods in one life-time. There are many roads to emancipation. What is common to all of them is that they aim at the extinction of the belief in individuality.' (Pause)

Hmmm ... Just one or two points here. 'Few could be expected to practise all those methods in one life-time.' In fact, it isn't necessary to practise all the methods. Usually it's considered that if you've practised two or three methods, that's quite enough. But the point is: you must practise them. You find quite a lot of people just sampling different methods: taking up now this, and now that, and never really getting deeply into any one of them. It's this that has to be avoided. One might even say that if you stick really conscientiously even to one method, well, that will be sufficient, if you just put enough energy and effort into it. But certainly one in most cases one needs not more than two or three different methods of meditation.

Anyway, 'What is common to all of them is that they aim at the extinction of the belief in individuality.' So let's go on to the next paragraph, where we learn something about individuality.

Text: When taken in its present-day vagueness, the word [69] 'individuality' does, however, fail to convey the Buddha's meaning. According to Buddhist teaching, as we shall see in more

detail later on, man, with all his possible belongings, consists of five 'heaps', technically known as Skandhas. They are:

The Body

Feelings

Perceptions

Impulse and Emotions

Acts of Consciousness

Anything a person may grasp at, or lean on, or appropriate, must fall within one of those five groups, which make up the stuff of 'individuality'. The belief in individuality is said to arise from the invention of a 'self' over and above those five heaps. The belief expresses itself in the assumption that any of this is 'mine' or that 'I am' any of this, or that any of this 'is myself'. Or, in other words, in the belief that 'I am this', or that 'I have this', or that 'this is in me', or that 'I am in this'. The fact of individuality disappears with the belief in it, since it is no more than a gratuitous imagination. When the individual, as constituted by an arbitrary lump taken from those five heaps, ceases to exist, the result is Nirvana - the goal of Buddhism. If one wishes to express this by saying that one has found one's 'true individuality', the word 'individuality', as understood at present, is elastic and vague enough to permit this. The Buddhist Scriptures do, however, distinctly avoid this, or any equivalent, expression. (Pages 13/14)

S: That last statement is not completely true, because there are the Pudgalavadins, there are the references to the pudgala, which can be translated either as 'individual' or 'person', but we'll come on to that in a minute.

What does one make of this paragraph? This is a quite serious matter. In a sense, it's the basic issue. So what does one make of it? This whole question of extinction of individuality? How does one understand it? Or how does one feel about it? Is one aiming at the extinction of one's individuality? Is that a meaningful expression for one?

Vajradaka: Not really

S: Not really .. Well, why do you think that is?

Vajradaka: Because it doesn't take into account this, the attitude that we have towards ourselves. It's almost like using the word 'extinction' implies some kind of physical annihilation

S: Well, it's the annihilation of a false imagination, a false belief ..

Vajradaka: Right, rather than a physical .. ?

[70]

S: What is actually there, according to this interpretation, is Body, Feelings, Perceptions; but

what is not there is an individuality apart from those things. But what do you think of the analysis itself? I mean, do you think that this still as it were makes sense to us? And what do you understand by 'individuality'? What do you think he's getting at, by speaking in terms of 'extinction of individuality'? Is there an alternative way of putting it?

Manjuvajra: Seeing things as a continual process.

S: Yes, seeing things as a continual process. (Pause)

Manjuvajra: I mean, it seems to me that this is much more easily acceptable to modern man, because this is really the genuine scientific analysis. And also people are beginning to think now in terms of operations and systems, instead of entities.

S: So what is the spiritual advantage of thinking in that sort of way vis-a-vis one's own self?

Manjuvajra: It means that you're not stuck with 'this'; whatever 'this' is.

S: Hmm, right, yeah: that you can change, which means you can develop. I think this is really, from a practical point of view, the main point: that there isn't a sort of fixed unchanging phenomenal individuality. The possibility of change is there.

So it's that changelessness that is being denied. I think that should always be included as part of what is negated. It's not a question of the extinction of the individuality. It's not even a question of the extinction of the false belief in individuality. It's the extinction of the false belief in any permanent unchanging individuality.

So, for instance, if someone has got an unskilful mental state, which might even be expressed as a habit, and somebody else points out to them that that is something unskilful. And then they say: 'I can't change; that's just me.' Well, this is this false belief in individuality: if they say: 'Well, that's just me; I can't possibility change. It's me.' You sometimes hear this, don't you? 'Well, that's just me!' As though it's a complete explanation and justification. 'I can't change!' - which obviously really means: 'I won't change. I'm going to continue hanging on to this conception of myself as being such-and-such kind of a person. If I'm lazy, well, I'm lazy: that's just me. If I'm bad-tempered, well, I'm bad-tempered. What can I do about it? It's just me.'

So this is all this false belief in individuality. I think this is probably the most meaningful way in which we can look at it, short of actual metaphysics, as it were. (Pause)

So it's not so much a question of extinguishing individuality, as, sort of, melting it, making it less [71] rigid. But there is even something beyond this.

Manjuvajra: I mean, isn't it radical to think of yourself as a system?

S: I don't know, not having a very scientific mind. (Amusement) It may be for some people, sure.

Vajradaka: I suppose it depends how far you conceive the limits of the system, if you see a definite limit to the system ...

Manjuvajra: A system wouldn't have limits. It would just be a series of ... I'll have to try and express this clearly ..

Voice: A system has tendencies. Could you say that?

Manjuvajra: No. In my brighter moments how I think of 'myself' - in inverted commas - is of the six senses all coming together - like the image of the house with six windows - and then all sorts of other things coming from other dimensions, all sort of just merging in together and producing the experience I'm having at that particular moment. But there's influences from the six senses and all sorts of other dimensions. And the only thing that I can do is sort of float in the middle of all that. I seem to be a point at which all these things coalesce. And as different things come in from different directions, then the experience or the point changes. So it seems to be a matter of keeping open to influences from different areas .. (Short pause followed by general baffled amusement)

S: I think to my non-scientific mind it doesn't seem to convey very much. (Manjuvajra: Ah.) Do you really feel yourself as just a sort of a non-dimensional point?

Manjuvajra: Sometimes.

S: You do? Hmm .. well, that's quite good then I suppose ..

But there's another way of looking at this whole question of individuality. It's also connected with disillusionment; but it becomes a bit metaphysical. Supposing for instance you are disillusioned with yourself. You're thoroughly disillusioned with yourself. And you really see through yourself. But also, maybe, you begin to see something beyond yourself. Let's say that you begin to come into contact with the Unconditioned; you begin to come into contact with Ultimate Reality; or you begin to come into contact with the Absolute. Now you can see that, or you experience that, as something which is the complete negation of everything which you now are. Mmmm? Yeah? That there's absolutely no resemblance between you as you at present experience yourself and 'that'. Is that clear?

You are of such-and-such nature, but 'that' is of a [72] completely different nature. Or 'that' is of such-and-such nature, but you are of a completely different nature. There's nothing in common between you. You see this quite clearly. So 'that' represents the complete negation of everything that you have and are. It represents, as it were, the complete annihilation of everything that you have and that you are. So if that is, well, you are not; you cannot be. Do you get this?

But then supposing also you have the experience, with regard to that Unconditioned, that 'that' is me. Well, then what? What is that an experience of? (General Amusement, including Bhante's)

Voice: Delusion?

S: Hmm? No, you're thinking of something different. No, if you were to form an idea about that, and think of that as yours, and incorporate within your individuality, yes, that would be delusion. But I'm not thinking of that. Because your individuality has been completely negated, and you have genuinely seen through it completely. So it can't play those sort of

tricks any more. That's the situation that I'm envisaging.

But then you see that though that Unconditioned completely cancels you out, nonetheless, that is what you really are. So what is that?

Voices: The Bodhichitta?

S: Hmm, yeah. I've used the word 'Unconditioned'; the Bodhichitta is also something Unconditioned. So, yes, one could say that it was more like the Bodhichitta. The Bodhichitta, you could say, is in a way at a lower level. If you take the Absolute as Absolute, that is as Enlightenment, well, the Bodhichitta is not that. Even though it is unconditioned, it's not the Unconditioned. But, yes, you can certainly think of the Bodhichitta in that way. It's not any sort of thought of your's; it's not any will of your's; but it is something which as it were just arises in the midst of you - and is you. It's in a way more you than all the other things are, which you have been thinking of as you hitherto.

So in the same way, even though the Unconditioned as it were negates you completely, totally, and finally, in another sense it is also you in a deeper and truer sense than you ever have experienced. So you could then say that that was your true individuality.

Vajradaka: Which is Emptiness; or, more technically, Tathagata-garbha.

S: No, that's a bit different.

Vajradaka: Is it? Oh ...

S: So what I'm trying to get at is: the concept of individuality is quite a useful one. I don't think we can [73] just take as it were a negative view of individuality, or use the term 'individuality' simply in a negative way.

This is the whole point of the Pudgalavadins, who were quite a large and important school of thought in ancient Buddhist India, but which were regarded by the others as a bit heretical, though they had full scriptural justification.

I think in a way it's quite dangerous to take an exclusively negative view of individuality. I think it's much better to think in terms of a negation of an unchanging or static individuality, not of negation of individuality as such. And to think in terms of growth and development, rather than of cancelling out. But you can say that if you have an experience of something which is totally other than you, but at the same time that you feel that that is you - in this genuine sense - then to that extent it is an experience of Wisdom. Do you see what I mean? But that is something quite difficult. Well, obviously, it's more than difficult: it's impossible. (Bhante laughs)

Manjuvajra: A number of times when I've been asked about what Insight was, I've said that the way to recognize it was that it seems to come from outside, but obviously it can't, because it doesn't come from anywhere.

S: Yeah, I think this is very true. Certainly in the early stages it does seem to come from outside. This is the actual experience: it comes from outside. Whether it's a light coming from

outside or whether it's an object coming from outside, it is actually experienced as coming from outside, however one may choose to think about it afterwards. Or however much that may be corrected by - if it is a question of correction - by further experience.

But perhaps I've gone on a bit too far ahead. I've talked about the Unconditioned; maybe it would have been better to put it in terms of the Bodhichitta. The Bodhichitta is described as Unconditioned. I've mentioned this before. It's not included among the five skandhas. So it's a quite mysterious thing. It's not included among the five skandhas: it's not, obviously it's not, anything bodily; it's not a feeling; it's not a perception; it's not an impulse or emotion; and it's not an act of consciousness. It's something other. But at the same time, it's you. It's your Bodhichitta - not in the sense of it being your possession, not in that sense, but in the sense that you as it were recognize yourself in it, in a much deeper and truer way. So that when the Bodhichitta has arisen you are much more deeply and truly an individual than you were before.

It's the same with a Buddha. A Buddha is an individual. If you read the life of a Buddha in any sort of version, what is the impression that you get? It's a very strongly marked impression. It's of someone with a very definite character, a very definite individuality. The Buddha really stands out among the disciples, doesn't he? This is someone whose individuality is supposed to be extinct - well, which is extinct! But he seems more of an individual than ever. [74] What does this mean? What does this suggest?

Manjuvajra: There's more energy.

S: Yes, but I'm thinking more metaphysically.

Chintamani: By overcoming your false individuality, you realize your true individuality.

S: Right, you can put it in that way; though, as Dr Conze says: 'The Buddhist scriptures ( ... ) distinctly avoid this, or any equivalent, expression'. That's not completely true. They don't all avoid it, not even all the Pali texts, though it certainly isn't the standard mode of expression. But it's as though, when you negate your individuality as you at present experience it, then you break through into a level of individuality which is as it were more individual. When your individuality becomes extinct, you don't become less of an individual; you become more of an individual, paradoxically. But maybe it's not very safe or very wise to think in terms of becoming more of an individual. That might lead you just into an aggrandizement of the present individuality. Definitely the present individuality must be completely negated on its own level, before you can break through into this other, as it were, higher level of individuality.

So this is what you find about the Buddha, or about Milarepa, or even someone like St Francis - to go outside the Buddhist fold: they seem more individuals than anybody else, though they're less selfish, less individualistic, etc. But they're more individuals. And the Pudgalavadins expressed this with the idea of the pudgala, the 'person'. You've got a remnant of that mode of expression even in the Vandana, [where] you say, in the Sangha [section]: 'attha purisa-puggala esa bhagavato savakasangho'.

So you can say people aren't really individuals yet.



End of Side One Side Two

S: People are usually what I call statistical individuals. Their heads can be counted, but they're not sufficiently integrated to be considered real individuals. They're just sort of loose bundles of thoughts and feelings and impulses and so on. They're not integrated. They don't really add up to a genuine individual. The genuine individual develops as a result of spiritual life, especially as a result of experience of the higher, as it were meditative levels. It's only when that more developed individual, more integrated individual, comes into contact with the Unconditioned, or some Unconditioned element like the Bodhichitta arises within him, that one can begin to speak of true individuality.

But one must be very careful not to think of that true individuality as a sort of extension of or more refined version of or slightly more beautifully decorated version of the old individuality. No, the old individuality, on its own [75] terms, has to be completely negated.

In other words, in Christian terminology, you just have to die before you can live. And most people want the life without the death. They want the new individuality without the old one dying. They want just to take the new individuality and put it on to the old one like a sort of patch. Do you see what I mean? And this is what we're trying to do much of the time. We want to get on to the new without giving up the old, the old individuality.

Chintamani: Would you think though that when you've torn down the old individuality, some of those pieces be used for the .. ?

S: Depends what you mean by the same pieces. For instance, if the old self, the old individuality, knows how to speak a certain language, well, he might be using it for quite selfish purposes, might be using it in connection with his business. But when the old self has as it were been dismantled, and the new self comes into existence, well, the knowledge of that language remains and that skill can be incorporated. In that way, any skill, which isn't in itself unskilful, which is just a qualification or technique, yes, it can be made use of .. any knowledge, any ability ...

Chintamani: I was thinking of more personal or emotional qualities that are in people.

S: It's strange in a way that even after Enlightenment someone is still recognizably the same person. When the Buddha went home to Kapilavastu after his Enlightenment, he was recognized. It may be that there is even a certain character structure which is, as it were, neutral, and through which the Enlightenment experience and the new individuality expresses itself. In some cases there may not be much need for modification.

So your friends would still recognize you even after you became Enlightened. But the more they got to know you, the more they'd realize how very, very much you'd changed. You might look pretty much the same, though there'd be a slightly different expression, let's hope.

And when they got to know you a bit better again, they may find your emotional reactions were different, that you'd changed on that level. And then when they got to know you better still, then they'd realize there was something completely different behind at a deeper level that they'd had no contact with and no knowledge of before whatever, and that in the depths of your being you were a totally different person. But maybe they'd have to get on to that level

and contact you on that level only bit by bit, little by little.

Some might even say: 'Well, he's just the same as he was. People say he's Enlightened but look! He doesn't look any different to me. He still speaks, he still drinks tea, [76] he's still even a bit quick-tempered.' They might even speak in that sort of way. They might not be able to make contact with that level within you which was totally and radically different; because you'd be functioning through the same old psycho-physical organism. And in their view that might not have changed very much. But the way in which it was functioning might be very different actually.

The Buddha says in one passage that - he was asked how to recognize an arhant, one who had gained Enlightenment. He said: 'It is not easy to know another man. You have to live with him a long time before you really know him; and even then it takes a wise man to know him and not a fool.' So it would certainly take time for people - if you did become Enlightened - to contact you on that level. And they couldn't do that without being with you for a long time and being themselves quite wise, quite understanding, quite receptive, quite open. And then they might begin to see that new individuality in you, but they probably wouldn't see it before.

It's just the same when you go home - without there being any question of gaining Enlightenment. You've just grown up a bit and you go home, and maybe your parents don't see you as any different from before. They may rather like to say: 'Well, people may think he's very big and successful now, but to me he's just my little Johnny'. This is the way they very often like to think or speak.

But the point I'm basically trying to make is that the new individuality - if you like, the Enlightened individuality - though it is us - it's still us! - but it's at the same time radically and totally different from what we were before - though it's us. In that sense, it's a new individuality. It's not a totally different person, as it were succeeding to the old one. It's not the same; it's not different; nor both; nor neither.

So if you do gain Enlightenment and people are trying to work it all out and understand you, they'll say: 'Well, he's certainly not the same as he was before, but on the other hand he isn't absolutely different. And it isn't a combination of sameness and difference. And at the same time it isn't neither of those.' So they end up sort of baffled, which is quite good, unable to express it logically. And this is what the Buddha said about himself, because he was the Tathagata or the Pudgala etc. Inept to say of the Tathagata after death either that he is or is not, or both or neither. What to speak of after death, even during this present life it is inept to say of him, inappropriate to say of him, that he is or is not, or both or neither.

So this new individuality can't really be expressed in any of the categories which are derived, as it were, from the old individuality. Even the word 'individuality' isn't really appropriate. It's just used to indicate.

But I think - and this is in a way the practical upshot - that even when people think in terms of change or speak in terms of change or speak in terms of development, they've no idea at all how radical a change is needed, or how radical a change is really involved here. They're used to [77] thinking of change as being a little bit of improvement here, a little bit of extension there, but, as I say, it's much much more than that. But it will still be them in a sense. So no minor modifications; a completely new model is required.

So we get some idea of this from the Bodhichitta. The Bodhichitta, we can say, represents the beginnings of our true individuality. It's not us as we at present are. It's not us in any sort of conditioned sense. It's not a thought of us. It isn't our thought. It isn't any act of will on our part. It isn't us! So this is why I sometimes speak in terms of the Bodhichitta 'taking us over', or something like that. Because it isn't us as we at present are.

But at the same time in a deeper sense, yes, it is us - in the sense that we feel that the Bodhichitta is more deeply and truly us than were the things that, up to that moment of the emergence of the Bodhichitta, we thought were us. We think: 'Well, that wasn't really me at all! I thought that was me, but it wasn't! That wasn't what I wanted to do. I thought it was what I wanted to do, but it wasn't. Or that wasn't what I really knew; I didn't really know it though I thought I did.' But, no, in the Bodhichitta you find not only a deeper and truer self, but a deeper and truer knowledge, and a deeper and truer feeling: 'This is what I really feel. This is what I really think. This is really me; not that which I thought before.'

So, so long as this sort of experience hasn't arisen on some level or other, there hasn't been any real progress. You've just improved slightly here and there. It's like just wiping the mud off the mudguards of the car instead of getting a completely new car. That's what you really want. Though the analogy isn't a very good one because there are two cars and there will be two selves but the two selves, the old and the new, are related in the way that the two cars can't possibly be related. Anyway, you see what I'm getting at, and what this sort of discussion of individuality involves.

Right, any queries or comments on all that? Has it clarified anything? Or has it created further confusion?

Voice: (...Unclear...)

S: Hmm, hmm ... It's a very important point. Well, in a sense it's the basic point. Because if one doesn't understand this, there's no understanding of what wisdom is, and wisdom is one of the things that we're talking about all the time: you know, sila, samadhi, prajna; ethics, meditation and wisdom. But what is Wisdom? This is what Wisdom is. There's some kind of Insight of this kind.

And this is what we need to understand in connection with the first of the three fetters: sakkaya-drsti. There are ten fetters that you have to break, according to Theravada teaching to gain Enlightenment. So if you break the first three, you become a Stream Entrant. So what is the very first one? Sakkaya-drsti. Sakkaya-drsti is usually translated 'belief in individuality', 'belief in the self', [78] but it means really the belief in yourself as you at present are, as something fixed and permanent and unchanging, something in fact that cannot be changed; that you as you at present are, in your empirical individuality, are a sort of ultimate datum and that's that. As when a person says: 'Well, that's me!' That in a way is the ultimate heresy: to think: 'Well, that's me!' - with the idea or suggestion that 'I can't possibly change', that this is a sort of unchanging nucleus around which there can be changes - but the nucleus itself must be left intact. The nucleus is irreducible.

But it's just at the nucleus you've got to make the attack. The nucleus has got to change. So until this sakkaya-drsti has been dissolved, there can't be any Stream Entry, there can't be the beginnings of Stream Entry; therefore, no real spiritual progress in the transcendental sense.

So even meditation doesn't take you as far as this. I mean meditation in the sense of concentration, dhyana experience. Insight goes beyond that. In meditation in the dhyana sense, which is still quite an advanced state, you're sort of extending your present self, your present individuality; you're refining it. But you're not transcending it. So even meditation is not the last word by any means, even as far as it goes. Insight must supervene, and normally it supervenes more easily or wisdom supervenes more easily on the basis of meditation. It's as though if the curtain is very thick, you can't tear it apart, but if you've worn the curtain very thin, then you can tear it apart. It's rather like that. Your conditioned individuality has to be really refined before it can be transcended.

All right, any further queries? (Pause)

All this does represent something very very important that most people, even if they've been involved with the Movement or practised meditation for some years in some cases, just haven't even begun to feel, even begun to see. But if there's to be any real progress, well, one must see it and feel it very clearly and strongly. One could say that when one gets some sort of insight or feeling of this sort then you begin to know what you really are about, and what spiritual practice and spiritual progress really means. Before that you are just playing around, just tinkering around with yourself. (Pause)

I think what we'll do, we'll just read the last paragraph, and then that means we'll end that whole section, and tomorrow can concentrate on u

Buddhism as a Philosophy. Maybe there won't be anything much to discuss here but let's just read that paragraph.

Text: The various schools of Buddhism spring, as I will try to show, from differences in the approach to the Buddhist goal. Already in the early Order, men of different temperament and endowment are reported to have reached the goal by different roads. Sariputra was renowned for his wisdom, Ananda for his faith and devotion, Maudgalyayana for his magical potency. In later times, different-minded people [79] formed different schools, and, in addition, the spread of the doctrine led to geographical separation and to separate organizations. Some of the methods for achieving de-individualization, which we shall discuss in the later chapters of this book, are not mentioned at all in the oldest strata of the tradition as it has come down to us, or are no more than dimly foreshadowed. But, as many of the later Buddhists would have argued, in his love for beings the Buddha would have excluded nothing that could help anyone who wanted the right thing. A great deal of this book will be devoted to explaining what each of the chief schools stood for, what method it chose as its own particular way, how it can be thought to lead to the same goal as the others, and how it fared in the world of history. (Pages 14/15)

S: Any queries there? There's one possible misunderstanding: 'Already in the early Order, men of different temperament and endowment are reported to have reached the goal by different roads. Sariputra was renowned for his wisdom, Ananda for his faith and devotion, Maudgalyayana for his magical potency.' Doesn't that suggest that Sariputra reached the goal by wisdom, Ananda by faith and devotion, and Maudgalyayana by magical potency? But actually that wasn't the case at all. According to the Pali texts, they all reached it by wisdom - when they did reach it. Sariputra, yes, of course he reached it by wisdom and in a way sort of represents wisdom. Ananda had great faith and devotion, but the scriptures clearly say that

Ananda didn't gain Enlightenment until after the death of the Buddha and that one of the hindrances that he had to overcome was his personal attachment to the Buddha. But when he did gain Enlightenment, he gained it through wisdom. Maudgalyayana certainly had 'magical potency', but nowhere is it said that he gained Enlightenment through magical potency; he too gained it through wisdom.

So it's wisdom in one form or another through and by which one gains Enlightenment, whatever the difference of initial approach may be. Sometimes wisdom is expressed in emotional terms, and sometimes the word 'faith' is used in the devotional schools, but if you look more closely into it, you see that 'faith' means wisdom.

Wisdom mustn't be thought of as something intellectual or conceptual. It's that sort of transcendental faculty which can be expressed in conceptual terms or in emotional terms. I've quoted, I think, in my Survey a Japanese Shin writer who says: 'What is faith? Faith is an instant of pure egolessness'. Well, that's wisdom clearly, isn't it? So one must be a bit careful about this question of different approaches to the goal. There are certainly initial differences of approach but people start converging, as it were, long before the final goal is actually reached, and they converge on wisdom, in one form or another, expressed in one way or another.

Voice: What's meant by 'magical potency'?

[80]

S: The ability to work what would usually be regarded as miracles: things like for instance telepathy, clairvoyance, clairaudience, and so on. These are all referred to as iddhis or siddhis. These are the magical potencies. The word iddhi means a power, influence, potency, and especially a magical one, a sort of miracle-working power - which in Buddhism isn't regarded as miraculous but only as supernormal, out of the ordinary.

But nowhere is it said in any Buddhist scripture that one gains Enlightenment or gains the goal or reaches the goal by means of magical potency. No, it's a by-product of one's following of the path in the case of people of a certain kind of experience, a certain kind of temperament.

So if Dr Conze gives the impression here that it's possible to gain Enlightenment through magical potency, then that is clearly incorrect, as he himself would be the first to admit. He knows it perfectly well. Enlightenment is only through wisdom; though one must also say wisdom is not necessarily expressed in purely conceptual terms, or in any terms at all.

Any other point? (Pause)

One particular point with regard to what we were saying before is: I sometimes use this word 'transcendental'. So 'Transcendental' can be taken as meaning as being synonymous more or less with 'Wisdom'. The 'Transcendental' - with a capital T as it were - is the object of Wisdom, and the Transcendental Path is the path on which Wisdom in this sense is developed.

So if one hasn't got some sense of the Transcendental, some awareness of the Transcendental, or if one hasn't developed at least germinally a sort of Wisdom, then you've got no idea of

what Buddhism is all about. And without some sense of the Transcendental you cannot Go for Refuge. And this is one of things that we really have to look for in the case of people who Go for Refuge or want to Go for Refuge or say that they want to Go for Refuge: Is there awareness of something beyond present? Is there an awareness, however dim, however vague, that there is something which is absolutely beyond everything that they at present think and feel and experience? And are they convinced that, in that which is absolutely beyond, that ultimate truth and reality and happiness is to be found?

Otherwise, how can you Go for Refuge? If you haven't got even an inkling of that - and even the faintest of inklings will do, if you know what I mean - then how can you Go for Refuge? I mean, what you will be Going to Refuge to in fact, even though you use the words 'Buddha', 'Dharma', and 'Sangha', will be something conditioned. So you'll just be Going for Refuge to something within the conditioned world which you have labelled 'Buddha', 'Dharma', and 'Sangha'. For instance, you might not really be Going for Refuge to the Sangha; you might just be happy to have found some nice cosy group, which is not the Sangha at all. So to express your willingness to be a member of that group is not to Go for Refuge to the Sangha, etc.

So therefore one must have, to be a Buddhist at all, [81] some awareness of - however vague, however dim, however distant - that there is something beyond, beyond everything that you have so far felt, or thought, or imagined, or experienced; and that ultimate Reality is there, not here.

As I said, it doesn't matter if you've only seen it once, or you've only glimpsed it once, or had even the vaguest of feelings about it. That will do. That's the beginning. Even if it's only for a second, that will do. But you must have had something like that to be able to really Go for Refuge, or to really have any idea of what Buddhism is all about. Otherwise, how can you? You must have some sort of intuition that there is something completely other from everything that you've experienced so far, something that you can't think, that can't be thought, that is the true object of thought, as it were, as the Perfection of Wisdom would say.

Anyway, perhaps we'd better leave it there and reflect upon it over lunch ...

And, of course - one final point - you can have that sort of intuition even though you are very much still on the path of irregular steps. And this sometimes makes things quite difficult for you, because you may have had a very genuine intuition of something which is really other and beyond, but you may not have been able to organize and sort things out very well on the ordinary level of one's life and spiritual practice. But, anyway, never mind. The fact that you at least have that intuition is the basic thing, whether you're following the path of regular steps or irregular steps. In a sense it doesn't matter. You'll sort everything out sooner or later.

Break

[Recording quality of following session extremely poor.]

S: ... dealing with Buddhism as a Religion. So now we come on to Buddhism as a Philosophy. So would someone just read straight through that first paragraph? And then we'll talk about it.

## Text: Buddhism as a Philosophy

Philosophy as we understand it in Europe, is a creation of the Greeks. It is unknown to Buddhist tradition, which would regard the enquiry into reality for the mere purpose of knowing more about it, as a waste of valuable time. The Buddha's teaching is exclusively concerned with showing the way to salvation. Any 'philosophy' there may be in the works of Buddhist authors is quite incidental. In the ample vocabulary of Buddhism we find no word to correspond to our term 'philosophy'. An analogy may clarify the position. The Chinese language, as the Chinese understood it, did not contain any grammar, and it was taught in China without any grammatical instructions. Some European philologies, on the model of our Latin grammatical categories, have constructed a 'grammar' for the Chinese language. It does not fit [82] particularly well, and the Chinese continue to dispense with it. The Latin-style grammar, with its familiar categories, may, however, help some Europeans to learn the Chinese language more easily. In a similar way, an attempt to define Buddhist thought in the philosophical terminology current in Europe may facilitate the approach to it. Buddhism, as a 'philosophy' could then be described as a "dialectical pragmatism" with a "psychological" turn. Let us consider these three items one by one. (Page 15)

S: Mmmm ... So what do you make of this first paragraph? Especially those first few sentences? (Pause) Do you agree with it? Or not agree with it? Do you find it perfectly clear?

Robert Gerke: (...Unclear...)

S: Right. There's an ambiguity about what is meant by 'enquiry into reality' and what is meant by 'knowing more about it'? And where is the ambiguity?

Vajradaka: In the word 'knowing'.

S: In the word 'knowing'. Yes. In what way does the ambiguity arise?

Vajradaka: Well, it's not clear whether it's to 'Know' with a big 'K' - (S: Right.) - or just to 'know' with a small 'k'.

S: Yes, exactly. Because bodhi is knowledge, knowledge of the Unconditioned. And what could be less 'a waste of valuable time' than trying to know the Unconditioned? (...Unclear...) But there is some ambiguity there.

Voice: (...Unclear...)

S: No, he doesn't - but then one wouldn't, would one?

(...Unclear...) So, 'The Buddha's teaching is exclusively concerned with showing the way to salvation.' Conze uses the word 'salvation' but it isn't really a very Buddhistic word at all. There isn't any word in Pali or Sanskrit that really corresponds to it. If one was to say 'emancipation', vimutti or vimukti or vimoksa. But 'salvation'? Well, 'salvation' seems to be a much (...Unclear...)

It's quite true that (...Unclear...) 'Philosophy as we understand it in Europe, is a creation of the Greeks. It is unknown to Buddhist tradition, which would regard the enquiry into reality for

the mere purpose of knowing more about it, as a waste of valuable time.' Well, as we've seen, that depends on what you mean by 'knowing'. If you mean really knowing, in the sense of the development of prajna, well, that certainly wouldn't be 'a waste of valuable time'.

'The Buddha's teaching is exclusively concerned with showing the way to salvation.' This is probably true, provided one doesn't take the word 'salvation' too [83] literally.

'Any "philosophy" there may be in the works of Buddhist authors is quite incidental. In the ample vocabulary of Buddhism we find no word to correspond to our term "philosophy".' Well, this is of course true. (...Unclear...) (Pause)

One could say that The Buddha's teaching is exclusively concerned with showing the way to salvation - but that salvation consists ultimately in knowing reality. But one certainly isn't concerned with speculation, purely intellectual speculation for the sake of speculation, without any reference to the actual direct knowing of Reality in one's own experience.

What do you think Conze could have said to avoid that ambiguity? (Pause) Well, what he really means is: 'It is unknown to Buddhist tradition, which would regard the enquiry into reality simply by means of the rational mind for the mere purpose of knowing more about it rationally, without reference to experience of what one knows, as a waste of valuable time'. This would be nearer the truth. (...Unclear...)

Anyway, let's go on.

Text: In its origin and intention a doctrine of salvation, Buddhism has always been marked by its intensely practical attitude. Speculation on matters irrelevant to salvation is discouraged. Suffering is the basic fact of life. If a man were struck by an arrow, he would not refuse to have it extricated before he knew who shot the arrow, whether that man was married or not, tall or small, fair or dark. All he would want, would be to be rid of the arrow. The Buddha's last injunction to his disciples ran: All conditioned things are impermanent. Work out your salvation with diligence. In their long history, the Buddhists have never lost this practical bent. Innumerable misunderstandings would have been avoided if one had seen that the statements of Buddhist writers are not meant to be propositions about the nature of reality, but advice on how to act, statements about modes of behaviour, and the experiences connected with them. 'If you want to get there, then you must do this.' 'If you do this, you will experience this.' (Pages 15/16)

S: So what does one think of this? Do you think it is so straightforward as all that? Well, let's go back to the beginning: 'In its origin and intention a doctrine of salvation, Buddhism has always been marked by its intensely practical attitude.' Well, that's fair enough if one (...Unclear...) the word 'salvation'. 'Speculation on matters irrelevant to salvation is discouraged.' That's true. But why does one speculate? What is speculation? What do you understand by it? Philosophical speculation?

Manjuvajra: (...Unclear...)

S: In what sort of way?

[84]



Manjuvajra: (...Unclear...)

S: I don't think that would be a standard definition of speculation. (...Unclear...) The essence of speculation seems to be that there's no practical upshot. You let your mind as it were just wander off into abstract possibilities.

But, even so, is speculation so entirely out as this sentence is suggesting? What is the flaw in speculation essentially or really?

Voice: (...Unclear...)

S: Speculation - at least in theory - is unrelated to any practical or any actual experience. You just get farther and farther away from your actual situation. But then the question arises: Why do you speculate?

Voice: (...Unclear...)

S: (...Unclear...) For instance there's a great classic example of speculation from medieval theology. There's the famous speculation: How many angels could dance on the head of a pin? This was seriously discussed at one time and this would be regarded I think by most people as speculation. But why should people have the interest to discuss this? What is it that makes people speculate? (...Unclear...) Or is it purely neurotic?

Voice: (...Unclear...)

S: You find this sort of statement in all sorts of books about Buddhism: that Buddhism discourages speculation. But does one ever stop and ask oneself: What is this speculation that is being discouraged? What is it that as a good Buddhist I am not supposed to do?

Vajradaka: I don't think speculation is (...Unclear...) It's holding on to what you come up with (...Unclear...)

S: You could say - to look at speculation in a positive way - that it's an exploring of metaphysical possibilities. I think the objection comes in when you simply go on exploring metaphysical possibilities without any attempt to relate any of them to your actual life and your actual experience. Do you see what I mean? When the exploration of your metaphysical possibilities becomes an end in itself, if anything perhaps even an escape from the practical and the real.

For instance, there is this famous example which Conze refers to, of the man wounded by the poisoned arrow and he doesn't want to have the arrow extracted until he has known what sort of man has shot the arrow. But do you think this is altogether a valid illustration?

Voice: (...Unclear...)

[85]

S: (...Unclear...) The Buddha himself does go into this - who shot the poisoned arrow - when he traces the chain of conditioned co-production. You might well say: Well, why bother about what causes the suffering? Just get rid of it. But sometimes you have to know what causes it

in order to get rid of it.

I don't think the solution is quite so neat and straightforward as would appear. It's not so much that speculation in itself is wrong, but speculation for its own sake, as a means of avoiding practical issues.

Vajradaka: Isn't Conze doing the same thing here that Suzuki

(...Unclear...)

S: It's certainly true to say that Buddhism is intensely practical, but what is really being said is that speculation is not necessarily impractical. If you just explore what I called metaphysical possibilities, then you might say: 'This is the one that is the key to my problem. This is the one that is going to help me practically.'

End of Cassette Four, Cassette Five,

S: 'This is the one that is going to help me practically.' Just like if a scientist has got a problem, a scientific problem to solve, what does he do? He just let's his mind wander a bit and come up with this hypothesis, that hypothesis. Then he thinks: 'Well, that hypothesis is the one that is going to solve my problem. Let's try it. Let's see if it fits.' But he has to let his mind wander and roam a bit to begin with, doesn't he? I think it's like that with speculation. It's a sort of roaming of the mind in that rather free kind of way, trying to come up with a sort of solution.

But the difficulty is, or the drawback is, if you just go on doing that and get immersed in it for its own sake, and lose contact with your actual concrete situation, your actual concrete position. So I think we've got to be a bit careful about dismissing speculation, and saying you shouldn't speculate, too glibly without fully realizing what we're doing, or what it is that we're dismissing or discouraging. (Pause)

'If a man were struck by an arrow, he would not refuse to have it extricated before he knew who had shot the arrow, whether that man was married or not, tall or small, fair or dark. All he would want, would be to be rid of the arrow.' I think the analogy holds, but only to some extent.

'The Buddha's last injunction to his disciples ran: All conditioned things are impermanent. Work out your salvation with diligence.' I think everybody knows that this isn't what the Buddha said. Rather surprising to find Conze quoting Rhys Davids's translation when he could just as easily have made his own more correctly. I take it everybody knows now what these words actually are in Pali? We recite them often enough: 'Apamadena sampadetha'. So what does [86] 'Apamadena sampadetha' mean? Apamada is non-heedlessness. There was a long note in Shabda not so long ago, wasn't there, about non-heedlessness, apamada. There's a chapter in the Dhammapada, the Apamada-vagga: 'The chapter on non-heedlessness', or you could say heedfulness or mindfulness. So apamadena is 'with non-heedlessness', or 'with heedfulness' or 'with mindfulness': apamadena sampadetha. It's the imperative mood of the verb (...Unclear...) exert. We can't really translate this into English properly, because we've changed our speech over the centuries. It should be 'Exert thee!' 'With mindfulness, exert thee!' This is what it literally means. There's not a word about salvation or 'working out'. 'All

conditioned things are impermanent. With mindfulness, strive!

What about this word 'salvation'? What does it convey to most people? Do you think it's a valid word to use in a Buddhist context? Or do you find it just meaningless?

Voice: (...Unclear...)

S: Well, it's connected obviously with 'to save', and being saved. Usually in Christianity you are saved, you don't save or deliver yourself. You have to be saved by somebody else. The word has that sort of connotation. It's a word I personally never use.

Voice: Is there such a word as 'salve'? (...Unclear...)

S: Yes, there is. (Pause)

Anyway, 'In their long history, the Buddhists have never lost this practical bent'. That's true. 'Innumerable misunderstandings would have been avoided if one had seen that the statements of Buddhist writers' - presumably statements about reality - 'are not meant to be propositions about the nature of reality, but advice on how to act, statements about modes of behaviour, and the experiences connected with them. "If you want to get there, then you must do this." "If you do this, you will experience this." ' What do you think of that? Or, how do you understand that?

Voice: It seems a bit easy. As if all you've got to do is follow the right advice and do the right thing and you're inevitably on the Path.

S: Well .. that's true, isn't it? (General Amusement)

Voice: But I think it should be stated that it needs personal insight to go (...Unclear...)

S: I think also one has to bring in here the question of temperament. I went into this a bit in one of the Brighton lectures. Do you remember? The difference between the faith follower and the doctrine follower. Do you remember that? Were any of you present? The faith follower and the doctrine follower. So what is the main difference between these two temperaments, or people of these two temperaments?

[87]

The faith follower will do just what you say. He'll just hear the advice and have great faith and confidence in that, and he won't require any further explanation. He'll just do what he is told to do, or what he is asked to do, and he'll just get on with it. But the doctrine follower is not like that. The doctrine follower needs much more in the way of explanation: why he should get on with it; what is the reason; how it is that that particular practice leads to that particular goal. This is the doctrine follower.

So it would seem as though it's very difficult to make these sort of general statements. It's a question of what sort of people you're dealing with. If you're dealing with, say, a faith follower, you can say: 'Well, all you need to do is practise meditation. You just practise meditation. You just do your puja regularly. In the end you'll get there. You will gain Enlightenment.' And the faith follower will find that approach and that attitude perfectly

satisfactory - I'm speaking now about the extreme type - and will get on with it quite happily, and will progress and will end up where he's supposed to end up without a doubt.

But if you speak in that sort of way to the doctrine follower, chances are you'll only irritate him. He'll want you to produce reasons. He'll want you to explain. He'll want perhaps the whole philosophy expounded in the context of which you make that sort of effort and get that sort of result.

So I think one has to bear in mind the distinction between these two kinds of people, these two kinds of temperament, and realize with whom or with what one is dealing.

But is it true that Buddhist writers never make 'propositions about the nature of reality', which are meant to be taken as 'propositions about the nature of reality', but only give 'advice on how to act, statements about modes of behaviour, and the experiences connected with them'? Do you think that this is true?

Voice: I'd say it was usually true.

S: There are statements about the nature of reality. Taking a very simple one: in the Pali canon, where not many such statements are made, there is the Buddha's statement, a very famous one which I quoted again in one of the recent lectures, that: 'There is, O monks, an Unconditioned, an Unborn, an Unoriginated.' Now do you think that this is intended by the Buddha or was intended by the Buddha as a statement about reality? Or was he not making a statement about reality at all, but simply trying to get the monks to behave in a certain way? Or, can you make that distinction even?

Voice: (...Unclear...)

S: If you say there is an Unconditioned, well, that statement has got a sort of objective meaning, as it were. You do really, as it were, say, you do really believe, that there is an Unconditioned, there is this absolute reality. But if you manage to convince the monks that there is this Unconditioned reality, then surely that will have a certain effect on them [88] and galvanize them in a certain way, in a certain direction. It seems rather unreal, rather artificial, to say or to maintain that when the Buddha said that - that there is this Unconditioned reality - he wasn't saying that at all. He wasn't talking about an Unconditioned reality, he was simply getting the monks to behave in a certain way. But in any case, what would be that way? Well, to realize an Unconditioned reality! So you can't, I think, separate the two as much as seems to be suggested here. Every statement about ultimate reality has certain practical implications.

Manjuvajra: If you think of all the statements within the Buddhist scriptures as being attempts to communicate, then in a way this matter of it being a proposition about the nature of reality doesn't come into it at all.

S: Mm .. yes, exactly. I mean, one can fully admit that your statements about reality are inadequate; but they're not totally devoid of adequacy. They do give some hint or some glimpse or they point in the direction in which you have to look. But I think Conze is going a bit too far here in the direction of Pragmatism. He becomes quite explicitly Pragmatic later on in a sort of Jamesian way. You've probably heard of William James, the American philosopher, who was a Pragmatist. It seems to me that Conze is leaning a bit too much in

that direction.

Manjuvajra: I tell you one thing I always find about the use of this word 'reality' which you do use quite a lot - or you used to - you don't use it so much now ...

S: No? Well, you didn't hear my recent lectures! Never mind.

Manjuvajra: Anyway, it seems to me that using the word 'reality' does give the impression that there is a kind of fixed, almost tangible reality, that's a something that other things can be said about.

S: Well, certainly the Buddha gives that impression in the Pali canon. He uses the word 'fixed'; (Unclear Pali word): 'fixed', 'stable'.

Manjuvajra: Yeah .. It seems to me that reality really is a word describing an experience, not a kind of, not a thing.

S: Oh no, I think most philosophers would say, certainly traditional philosophers, that is exactly what the word 'reality' doesn't indicate. It indicates something which exists independently of all experience. It doesn't depend upon it at all. It can be experienced, according to some of them, but it stands there as it were independently, whether it's experienced by any human being or not. That's what makes it the ultimately real. It's not dependent upon you, it's not dependent upon your experience. It just as it were stands there like Mount Everest whether it's climbed or not.

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Manjuvajra: Would that be the Buddhist view as well?

S: This is the view, perhaps you could say the rather unsophisticated view, that emerges from the Pali scriptures. The technicality of it is that nirvana, or nibbana, is described as a dhatu, as nirvana-dhatu. It is not simply a state of mind. This is expressing it more from the Abhidharma point of view. It is an objective reality, which exists above and beyond the world and independently of whether anybody experiences it or not. This is what is meant by nirvana being a dhatu. Whether that was the original Buddhist view is open perhaps to discussion, but this is the sort of standard view that emerges from, broadly speaking, the Hinayana form of Buddhism.

Manjuvajra: I've always thought of reality as being a sort of feeling that something was more real. You know, something seems to have a certain kind of sense of reality about it. Other 'things', in inverted commas, seem to have more reality or less reality.

S: From this as I said unsophisticated point of view - and it is philosophically quite unsophisticated - reality is characterized by three things. It's characterized by permanence - though not so much in the sense of permanence as continuity within time, but permanence transcending time altogether - permanence; complete blissfulness - being completely satisfactory so that when you attain that or experience that, then you have no desire for anything else whatever, and that sort of blissful experience never palls or never changes into boredom, or never diminishes; and, thirdly, that it constitutes, according to the Hinayana, that it is sunyata, that is to say it has no fixed determinate being in the way that conditioned things

have a fixed determinate being. It is not a selfhood, as it were. There is sometimes a fourth one added: that it is completely pure and beautiful, subha.

So according to the general Hinayana tradition these are the marks of reality, the marks of the Unconditioned. The marks of the conditioned are just the opposite. Conditioned existence is characterized by its impermanence, its essentially painful and unsatisfactory in character, its insubstantiality, and its impure and unattractive nature.

So delusion consists in trying to discover the Absolute or the Unconditioned or the Absolutely Real in the conditioned or the unreal, that is to say you search for instance for absolute happiness in conditions, whereas conditioned things can't give you that absolute happiness, only the Unconditioned.

So when one speaks in this sort of way, uses this sort of language, or has recourse to this sort of philosophy, then clearly you start with the basic distinction of conditioned and Unconditioned, and you think of the Unconditioned almost as a sort of Transcendental object confronting you, sort of standing 'out there' of such-and-such nature. And the Hinayana doesn't seem to feel it necessary, broadly speaking, to go any [90] further than that. It is philosophically rather naive, but the majority of Hinayana Buddhists found this sort of framework quite sufficient for all practical purposes and didn't care to go into it in a more sophisticated manner, philosophically speaking. And I think this will probably suffice many people even now.

So, the main point which emerges is that according to this tradition, reality doesn't denote simply a certain kind of experience; it also denotes a certain kind of object, in this case the Unconditioned. One could of course say that one mustn't go to extremes in either case. After all, you're operating within the framework of the subject/object duality - aren't you? - when you speak here in terms of experiencing reality in that sort of way. But it is also a datum of Buddhist thought that the subject/object relationship is itself a relative thing. It belongs to the phenomenal world.

So if you're talking about reality - real reality, to use that expression, or the absolutely absolute - you can't really describe it either in terms of subject or in terms of object. You can't really say that is just an experience, or you can't say that it is just an object which exists independently of your experience. You can only describe it

as if it was either one or the other and indicate the limitations of your approach.

So it's quite valid to say that, yes, nirvana is an experience, is the ultimate experience. That's quite a valid approach. It's also a valid approach to say nirvana is the ultimate object. When all subjective delusions have disappeared, the residual object, the true object, that's nirvana, that's Enlightenment. It's quite valid to speak in that sort of way. But of course whether one speaks in one way or the other one must realize that you're speaking from a certain point of view in both cases, which is the point of view of the subject which is distinguished from the object, and that in real reality that subject/object duality will be abolished, so that even though you can speak of reality, nirvana, as the ultimate experience - in other words the subject at its height - and also as an object - the object as its height - in real reality it is neither.

You can say real reality is beyond the subject/object division. But even when you say that,

you're making it an object standing as it were outside these two other objects. You can't help using that sort of language, or using that sort of phraseology, or looking at things in that way, so long as you yourself are functioning, operating, within the subject/object duality, so long as you are you.

So we can sort of conceive abstractly the possibility of some 'thing' which is neither experience nor object beyond, but it's almost impossible to put it into words that won't be misunderstood. So, as you said to me originally, one can't insist on a hard and fast distinction between experience and reality, or between knowing and being, which is what is this whole discussion in a way is (...Unclear...).

Anyway, let's get back to the (...Unclear...). So Buddhism does in fact make statements about reality. One can't distinguish those statements about reality quite so sharply [91] from descriptions as to how one is to act as Conze seems to think. At the same time one can fully recognize the ultimate inadequacy of all descriptions. But a description is intended as a description.

All right, would someone read the next paragraph?

Text: We can, therefore, say with some truth that Buddhist thinking tends in the direction of what we call Pragmatism. The value of a thought is to be judged by what you can do with it, by the quality of the life which results from it. Wherever one finds evidence of such qualities as detachment, kindness, serene self-confidence, etc., one would be inclined to believe that the 'philosophy' behind such an attitude had much to say in its favour. Of whatever teachings you can assure yourself that they conduce to dispassion, and not to passions; to detachment and not to bondage; to decrease of worldly gains, and not to their increase; to frugality and not to covetousness; to content and not to discontent; to solitude and not to company; to energy and not to sluggishness; to delight in good and not to delight in evil, of such teachings you may with certainty affirm: This is the Norm. This is the Discipline. This is the Master's Message. (Page 16)

S: But again is it so simple? Can you detach these two as easily as Dr Conze seems to think? Or as pragmatism seems to think? Do you see this? Can you really act upon something which produces good results simply for the sake of the good results, without believing in the truth of what you're acting upon?

Vajradaka: I thought that one of the main things about pragmatism was that it was that it was a process of discovery as you went along, and ...

S: (Interrupting) No, this is simply pragmatism in a sort of general popular everyday sense. He's referring to Pragmatism with a capital 'P', the philosophical theory of William James, Pierce and Schiller and others. Their view is exactly what he says here, 'The value of a thought is to be judged by what you can do with it, by the quality of the life which results from it.' They don't quite say that; it's more like 'The truth is what works'. This is the way it's sometimes put.

Let me give you a crude example. Supposing somebody says to you: 'All right, if you believe in God, if you believe that God has created all men, if you believe that all men are children of God, that you are a child of God, everybody else is a child of God - what would be that

practical result of that?' Suppose somebody asked you that question, what would you say? What would be the practical result - if you can really believe that you are the child of God and everybody else is the child of God, how would you behave if you really believed that?

Voice: (...Unclear...)

[92]

S: Exactly. So isn't that a good thing? So what makes it difficult for you to act like that? I mean, it's a perfectly good belief. It's going to lead to perfectly good consequences. So can't you accept it therefore for the sake of those good consequences? Would that be possible? Would you be able to accept the belief in God just because that belief was shown to lead to certain good consequences? What would you say? Most of you? Presumably? You'd say: 'Well, it's true that if you believed in God, etc., etc., that is how you'd behave - but it isn't true that there's a God. It isn't true that God has made us all.' So why would you put up that sort of resistance?

Vajradaka: Because one hasn't seen (...Unclear...)

S: It means that there is a preoccupation with truth as such for its own sake, almost an innate preoccupation, apart from the practical consequences of any particular belief. And you can't get over that.

You might say: 'Well, yes, I fully accept that; that if I believed in God, if I believed that God was the Father of us all, I'd act in a wonderful way, better than I'm acting now - but I can't believe in that sort of God. It isn't true.' So actually nobody will simply act in this sort of way, or accept something as true, for the sake of the admittedly positive consequences that might follow. Do you see the point?

Manjuvajra: Yeah. I wonder if the converse - it's not quite the converse - but if you turn it around - if you can convince someone of something conclusively to have a positive effect upon their behaviour, isn't that, couldn't one say that that's what Buddhism sets out to do? I'm thinking off the top of my head. It's rather as though you could say: All right, if you can convince a certain group of people or a certain individual that such-and-such is a true view of the world, and if he accepts that and then behaves in a certain way it will lead to their becoming positive, then isn't that one of the ways in which Buddhism works? One of the things that we're trying to do?

S: But the question arises whether you yourself believe in the truth of what you say, from which those positive consequences will flow. I mean, would you just go and tell somebody something that you didn't believe in yourself just to get him to act in a particular way, even though that was good for him? Or good for everybody? Could you do that? (Manjuvajra: Yes.) You could? Oh ... (General Amusement) Do you really think you could? (Manjuvajra: Yes.) I rather doubt it actually. I mean, for instance if you were convinced that belief in God helped people to act in a positive way, could you sort of put this over to them and say that: 'You ought to believe in God,' when you yourself, say, didn't or you yourself thought that belief in God was completely false?

Manjuvajra: At certain times you could I think, yes.



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S: But can you convert people with your tongue in your cheek?

Manjuvajra: I mean, you can do it - and this is the way you work when you're teaching maths in schools - that you get people to do things by telling them things that you know aren't true.

S: Well, no wonder they say that the teaching profession is an immoral one! (Amusement)

Manjuvajra: But you have to do that to teach.

S: Do you really?

Manjuvajra: Yeah. For example, you can't teach - supposing you've got a child who you want to bring up to be a physicist, you've got to teach them mathematics. In order to teach them mathematics you have to start by teaching them simple mathematics, which is based on falsehoods.

S: No, I'd say there wasn't analogy here because mathematics doesn't have anything to say about the nature of ultimate truth. It simply says if you take such-and-such an assumption, well, such-and-such will follow. So you merely take those assumptions and you sort of play with them as it were. But you're not concerned with ultimate truth or ultimate validity in the way that you are in philosophy or religion.

I mean, if you're a Christian, you don't say: 'Well, let's take this idea of the belief in God and just see what follows and act upon it'. No. You say: 'Well, there is a God.' - if you're a Christian. 'It is a truth that there is God.' So it seems to me that Pragmatism, whether the original sort or what Conze says in the Buddhist context, is out of touch with the facts of human nature. I think you have to believe in the truth of your position, to some extent at least, however vaguely and shakily, before it can become for you a basis of committed action. There may of course be a heavy element of rationalization in your belief. That's a quite separate question. But at least you must as it were believe that you are believing in the truth. Do you see what I mean?

And I think this is why it's so difficult for some people with very active minds - who are the doctrine followers - to act, because they haven't yet ascertained for themselves what they can accept as the truth. Because their minds are more active, and more sophisticated, and maybe more subtle. But a person with a relatively unsophisticated mind can rest in something as the truth, even though it's formulated in a quite simple sort of way, and then can proceed to act on that basis. Do you see this?

Manjuvajra: Yeah. I can see what you're saying. In a way you're confirming what I said earlier, in that .. Let's take rebirth as an example. I find that I can't believe in the rebirth doctrine and yet I know that I come across people who do believe in it quite faithfully and simply, so that in talking to them I can sort of use the rebirth doctrine to [94] explain why they should do such-and-such else, and yet I don't really believe in it myself, in that way. Is that being dishonest, do you think?

S: No, it's not being dishonest, because you're only pointing out to them the logical consequences of what they believe. And those consequences happen to coincide with

consequences which you regard as valuable on other grounds. So I wouldn't say that that was being dishonest - unless you pretended that you believed in rebirth. But what you're actually saying is: 'Look you believe in rebirth. So, if you believe in rebirth, well, such-and-such a line of conduct automatically follows. But you're not following that; therefore you're being inconsistent'. But you're only pointing out the consequences of what they themselves believe. You're helping them to be more logical. That's all. So there's no dishonesty there.

Manjuvajra: Isn't that sort of pragmatism what the Buddha used, when he was trying to communicate his experience .. ?

S: He did sometimes do this, especially, say, with the Brahmins in relation to their brahminical ideas, yes - That for instance: 'You're supposed to be Brahmins and you're supposed to believe in union with Brahma. Well, do you think that you'll gain union with Brahma by means of the way in which you're living now?' This is not so much pragmatic. This is what is called the ad hominem argument, isn't it?

But what I'm basically getting at is: I don't think that anybody can - well, perhaps the odd person might, but broadly speaking I think that nobody can accept a certain doctrinal or philosophical position solely on account of its consequences or alleged consequences, however desirable. I think there's a sort of, as it were, separate truth faculty - to speak in this sort of way, though it's not really very valid - which has to be satisfied. Before you can act upon something as true you have really to believe that it's true, at least to some extent. And you might say: 'Well, I don't care how positive the consequences that would follow from such-and-such a belief if I happened to accept it, I just can't accept it, because it doesn't seem true'. This is what you would say. You'd sort of dig your heels in. So it's as though there is in you a desire for truth, as it were, independent of all practicality. And that must be satisfied first, at least to some extent, at least provisionally, at least to the extent necessary to enable you to act at all.

So I don't think therefore that the practicality of Buddhism can be reduced to, to - I was going to say American-style Pragmatism, but I don't want to be insulting (General Amusement) - but pragmatism - that, 'if it works, it's the truth'.

If it works, it works. It's not necessarily the truth, not the ultimate truth. So one might say: 'I would like to be kind. I would like to be loving. I'd like to treat all men as brothers. And clearly I'd be able to do that if I believed in the Fatherhood of God - but, sorry, I can't believe in God, however positive the consequences of believing in God might [95] be.' So one just has to continue one's quest for truth.

So I don't think one can say, almost I'm afraid glibly, as seems to be said here: 'The value of a thought is to be judged by what you can do with it, by the quality of the life which results from it.' I mean, some people might for instance perform all sorts of good actions on the basis, let us say, of a scientific delusion. Would that make that delusion true? No. Anyway, let's have tea - or coffee ...

Roy Campbell: I have heard some teachers suggest: 'Don't worry about whether it's true or not, try it as a working hypothesis and ... '

S: Well, that's a different approach. Try it as a working hypothesis - well, that's fair enough I

would say: Try it as a working hypothesis.

Roy Campbell: (...Unclear...)

S: But that of course is, I would say, woolly thinking.

Vajradaka: That that working hypothesis is woolly thinking?

S: Yes. For instance, there's another thing that you could say. Well, this is something even that the Buddha said. There are quite a lot of things that you can do without any as it were doctrinal justification. Do you see what I mean? Well, in a sense you just do them. I mean, for instance, Schopenhauer points out that it's possible to lead a spiritual life, at least to some extent, whether you're a theist or a non-theist. So is therefore either theism or non-theism the indispensable theoretical basis of a spiritual life? No. So, you should be able to lead a spiritual life without either of those theoretical bases, in a way just because you want to.

And maybe this position is closer to the Buddha's own attitude. It's almost like saying you don't need a theoretical basis really. You give yourself one, and you have to believe that it's true. You can't give yourself a fake one. But you can really get along without it. If you say: 'I don't need a reason to be kind. I'm just going to be kind.' Do you see that? So if someone really wants to be kind - or is kind - does he need a reason to be kind? You're only looking for a reason to be kind when you're not kind and you're trying to be kind, so you're finding a reason to be kind.

Manjuvajra: Or if you're trying to convince others.

S: Or if you're trying to convince others, yes. (Pause)

Manjuvajra: It really seems to come down to communication. The Buddha could get on with things quite all right by himself, but as soon as he wanted to communicate to everybody else he had to devise techniques.

S: 'Devise techniques' sounds a bit artificial. I think it was much more spontaneous than that.

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But you see what I'm basically getting at with regard to what Conze says? That, leaving aside this question of provisional acceptance as a working hypothesis, you can't just accept something as true just because if you accept it as true it has certain positive results. You can't be a pure pragmatist in that sort of way.

Manjuvajra: Wouldn't there be those things that you would accept because they were (...Unclear...)? Maybe if you've got an inherent desire to be kind, then you would accept quite easily a philosophy which ...

S: Well, in that case I would say you should watch yourself very carefully, because then you'll be just accepting what agrees with or even justifies your whole mode of behaviour; and you'd be likely to accept something very easily without undue examination just because it seems to justify or explain your way of life. For instance, if you're very anguished and you feel that life is pointless and futile and all that sort of thing, you'd be very pleased to meet with Jean-Paul

Sartre's explanation. You'd think: 'Well, yes, this is really what it's all about. This is true.'  
(Pause)

I'm going into this at some length simply because I just want to discourage vague and woolly thinking. I'm afraid even Dr Conze seems to be a bit vague and woolly here.

End of Side One, Side Two

So I take it that when the Buddha said: 'Oh monks, there is an Unconditioned reality', he really meant that there was an Unconditioned reality, and he intended the monks to take it, to understand that he meant, that there was an Unconditioned reality, not that he thought: 'Oh well, if I tell the monks that there is an Unconditioned reality, it will make them behave in the right sort of way, so let me tell them that'. I'm sure this wasn't the Buddha's attitude. The Buddha felt or experienced or had realized whatever it was he termed the Unconditioned. He was convinced of the ultimate reality of it. So he said: 'Oh monks, there is this state, or there is this entity'. He tried to communicate that, however inadequate his actual words, and he intended that to be taken as a statement about reality, not merely as an exhortation to behave in a particular way, even though the behaving in a particular way would follow.

Vajradaka: It seems there are so many uses of the word 'pragmatism', because I'd always understood pragmatism - although I'd never really heard of the kind of philosophical, or read of the kind of philosophical approach - as being that you have a certain practical thing to do and you try it for a while and see if it works. And then if it does work to some extent, well then you see that it's true, and you believe it.

S: But what do you see is true?

Vajradaka: Well, that it works.

[97]

S: Ah, but what is working? That's the point.

Vajradaka: Well, like for example ...

S: (Interrupting) Well, let me give you an example. Suppose you say: 'I want to see what makes the sun rise. So I'll shout at six o'clock every morning. If the sun rises then, I'll know that's what makes the sun rise'. (Laughter) You see? (Chuckles)

Pragmatism as a philosophical theory - which is associated especially with the name of William James - means that a thing is true as a statement if positive consequences come from it. So he applied that, for instance, to the belief in God. It worked, therefore it was true. So the truth is what works. So that is all right on the practical, as it were scientific, level, but not on the metaphysical level. The fact that something works empirically does not prove its metaphysical truth.

So that's a different sort of thing from pragmatism in the ordinary sense of just trying to make something work, or just trying to find out what's gone wrong, and you frame a hypothesis, and you tinker with the engine accordingly and you find out whether that hypothesis works. If it does, you say: 'That was true; my assumption was correct'.

But what he is speaking of with a capital 'P' is philosophical Pragmatism. 'The value of thought is to be judged by what you can do with it.' And James applies this to metaphysical thoughts. So you end up also with the belief that opposite propositions can be equally true - which is nonsense, really, stated in that way. (Pause)

Manjuvajra: (...Unclear...)

S: Oh yes, it is. That's true, that is true; but not within this sort of framework. (Pause)

So I think what Doctor Conze says here illustrates rather well what he himself says earlier on about it not being really possible to speak of Buddhism as a philosophy. He is still here trying to give us some understanding of what Buddhism is by citing the Western philosophy of Pragmatism, but it isn't really a very helpful comparison actually. If someone knows all about Pragmatism, and has read William James, and then is told Buddhism is a kind of pragmatism, it doesn't really help very much.

But I don't really think it is pragmatism. I think you can't overlook, in the case of Buddhism, or the Buddha's attempt to communicate, the reference to an ultimate or absolute truth independent of all possible consequences that follow from the acceptance in practice of that truth. (Pause)

All right, what about the pragmatic criterion - this is pragmatism with a small 'p' - about the Buddha's teaching?

Manjuvajra: I've always looked at it (...Unclear...)

S: Well, yes, it is pragmatic in the ordinary usage of the term, but not Pragmatic in the sense of William James' [98] philosophy of Pragmatism. (Pause)

So the Buddha says: 'Of whatever teachings you can assure yourself that they conduce to dispassion, and not to passion; to detachment, and not to bondage;' etc., you can be sure that 'This is the Norm. This is the discipline. This is the Master's Message.' These teachings, of course, would be practical teachings like the practice of meditation and so on. But the Buddha certainly isn't saying here that if an abstract, as it were, philosophical doctrine, when practised, results in positive consequences, then you can accept the philosophical truth of that doctrine. He is not saying that.

So to come back to another point: It does seem to vary very much between one person and another, the amount of philosophical certainty, as it were, that is needed before they can act. And it would seem that the faith follower requires a minimum and perhaps the doctrine follower relatively a maximum of explanation and theoretical framework before action is possible in their case. I think one can see this within the Movement and in one's own friends. Some people are definitely faith followers and others are definitely doctrine followers. I don't think that one can say that one is more easy to deal with than the other. But the faith follower would seem to need more in the way of inspiration, especially positive personal contacts. The doctrine follower would seem to need much more guidance with regard to clarity of thinking and thrashing out of intellectual difficulties. Many people of course are rather mixed in temperament, or at one time more one than the other, but even so some people do fall definitely into one category than another.

Well, let's go on. We could linger over that, but I think we'd better try and finish this section.  
(Pause)

Text: As Buddhism developed, its pragmatism became even more explicit. One came to see that anything one may say is ultimately false - false by the mere fact that one says it. Those who say do not know; those who know do not say. The Aryan silence alone did not violate the Truth. If one says something - and it is astonishing to find how much the supporters of the Aryan silence had to say - it is justified only by what they called "skill in means". In other words, one says it because it may help other people at a certain stage of their spiritual progress. (Page 16/17)

S: I think there's a certain ambiguity here too. 'As Buddhism developed, its pragmatism became even more explicit.' I don't think that's true. It's not the pragmatism, it's the awareness of the relative value of all statements of their ultimate reality. 'One came to see that anything one may say is ultimately false - false by the mere fact that one says it.' What do you make of that statement: that 'anything one may say is ultimately false'?

Manjuvajra: Conceptions and descriptions of reality can't include all of reality.

[99]

S: Yes, it's ultimate reality that is being talked about really in Buddhism, and it's quite true that, as Buddhism developed, people like Nagarjuna came to see more and more clearly that whatever you say about ultimate reality is in the last analysis untrue. But on the other hand there is a complementary statement. And what is that?

Manjuvajra: Anything you say about reality is only partially true.

S: Exactly. This is what Blake says. Blake says something very striking in this connection. He says: 'Anything possible to be believed is an image of the truth.' That's the complementary truth. It is true that all ideas, all concepts, about ultimate reality are ultimately false inasmuch as they do not adequately represent reality; but every concept represents it to some extent. That's the other half of the coin.

Otherwise, if no concept had any relation whatever with ultimate reality, how, taking those concepts which you believed to be true of ultimate reality, could you as it were get anywhere near ultimate reality? If all concepts were equally inadequate, all ultimately inadequate, then it would be no more useful to think of ultimate reality as the Unconditioned than it would be to think of ultimate reality as a tea cup. It would be just the same. But actually, it helps much more to think of ultimate reality as the Unconditioned. Doesn't it? So I think Conze goes to extremes here.

'One came to see that anything one may say is ultimately false' - well, one came to see that anything that one said about ultimate reality, yes, was ultimately false, but that anything one said was also true to some extent. But why 'false by the mere fact that one says it'? That wouldn't seem to have any meaning. I mean, it is true or false even if you think it. Just saying it doesn't make it false - does it? Or is there something here that I've missed?

Chintamani: The conceptualization of it.

S: It's the conceptualization of it, not the saying of it. It's not the expression of the concept in words. And what about this: 'Those who say do not know; those who know do not say.' Where's this from? Which sutra is this?

Voice: Doesn't sound very Buddhist.

S: Ah, well, is it from a sutra?

Roy Campbell: Isn't it the Tao te Ching?

S: It's the Tao te Ching! So what is he doing quoting from the Tao te Ching here? It is interesting that he cannot find a Buddhist quotation to prove his point, isn't it? - To have recourse to the Tao te Ching - which is a very fine work, but it is not really very relevant here.

So is it true that [100] 'Those who say do not know?' Let's not just swallow things because we read them. Is it true that 'Those who say do not know; those who know do not say'? Well, let's take the second one. 'Those who know do not say.' Well, let's take it that the Buddha knew. Did he say? (Voices: Yes.) Well, yes. What about Lao Tse himself, the author of the Tao te Ching. Did he say? Well, yes. He wrote his book - in five thousand characters. There is a poem by Po Pui, a later Chinese poet. He says that: 'Lao Tze in his Tao te Ching says: "Those who speak do not know; those who know do not speak." How does it come then that he writes a book in five thousand characters?'

So one mustn't be overwhelmed by these things. 'Those who say do not know.' Well, some do, some don't. The Buddha knew and said, and so did Milarepa, but no doubt thousands of others didn't know and said. (General Amusement) 'The Aryan silence alone did not violate the Truth.' This seems to me a real bit of woolly thinking. I'm really surprised at Doctor Conze.

Manjuvajra: Does he mean that if you were coursing in the truth you wouldn't be able to talk?

S: But the Buddha talked. (Pause) And what is the Aryan silence? I mean, let's really get down to brass tacks and technicalities, if you want to be technical. What is the Aryan silence according to the texts?

Manjuvajra: (...Unclear...) Silence in the mind.

(...Unclear...)

S: No, that's my little addition. No, what do the texts actually say? What is the arya-mauna (?)

Manjuvajra: It's related to the second dhyana.

S: That's right. It's the absence of mental activity. So it's quite true that the Aryan silence won't violate the truth, because you are not thinking at all! (Amusement) How can your concepts be inadequate if you don't have any concepts? But isn't it a rather negative sort of non-violation of the Truth? You see what I mean? So, 'The Aryan silence alone did not violate the Truth' - well, it didn't violate the Truth, yes, but a dog doesn't violate the Truth, nor does a cow. There is no particular merit in that, is there? Anyway, perhaps the point is

sufficiently clear.

'If one says something - and it is astonishing to find how much the supporters of the Aryan silence had to say' - well, it's astonishing how much the Buddha 'had to say', in Dr Conze's terms - 'it is justified only by what they called "skill in means". In other words, one says it because it may help other people at a certain stage of their spiritual progress.' This is very true. But one has to be very careful what one is actually saying. One says something, yes, because it will help people in their spiritual progress, but you also say it as true. I think this is the important point here. You may fully recognize the inadequacy of your words. You may fully recognize the inadequacy of all your expressions about [101] ultimate reality, but they are intended as expressions about ultimate reality and point in that direction. Their function is not simply to get somebody to behave in a particular way. You believe in the truth of what you are saying basically, despite the inadequacy of your expressions, as well as in the usefulness of it.

In other words, to put it in really Buddhist Mahayana terminology, you cannot really separate prajna from karuna. Skilful means is an expression of karuna. But what is karuna? It's an expression of prajna, wisdom. So, therefore, you can't say that my wisdom tells me that what I'm saying is completely inadequate, or completely false, but nevertheless out of my compassion, I'm going to say such-and-such and such-and-such, even though I know it's completely false, because that's going to help them. That's a real travesty of the actual Buddhist position. The Buddhist position is that your wisdom is your karuna, and you can't say something out of compassion without it being at the same time an expression of wisdom, however inadequate the terms of the expression may be. Do you see that? In a sense, if there is real compassion there, there will be wisdom. (Pause)

When I was much younger, when I was in my 'teens, I used to hear people quoting these sorts of words. I've heard them quoting them since, when I first went along to the Buddhist Society: 'Those who know do not speak; those who speak do not know.' It is very easy to come up with these very gnomic sort of statements, these apparently very profound statements, and just swallow them whole without asking yourself: What do they mean? And are they really true? They sound impressive, and maybe there is some truth in them, but one has to be very careful that one understands what is being said, and thinks about it. (Pause)

And I think it is not really quite, well, honest of Doctor Conze to slip in a quotation from the Tao te Ching here almost as though it's a quotation from the Buddhist scriptures.

Do you 'violate the truth' by speaking? What do you mean by violating the truth? When the Buddha spoke in the way he did speak about the Unconditioned, do you think he violated the truth? I think one has to be quite careful about using these sort of expressions. Yes, surely, as you said, you can violate the truth, but you don't necessarily violate the truth by speaking. You can violate the truth by keeping silent - can't you? This statement suggests that silence is closer to ultimate reality than speaking, but you could say that the more ultimate truth is that both are equally near and equally far, if you want to be really ultimate ...

All right, let's go on.

Text: The holy doctrine is primarily a medicine. The Buddha is like a physician. Just as a doctor must know the diagnosis of the different kinds of illness, must know their causes, the



antidotes and remedies, and must be able to apply them, so also the Buddha has taught the Four Holy Truths, which indicate the range of suffering, its origin, its cessation, and the way which leads to its cessation (see pp. 43-48). If one, however, isolates the Buddha's statements from the task [102] they intend to perform, then they become quite meaningless, and lose all their force. (Page 17)

S: So what do you think of this comparison? 'The holy doctrine is primarily a medicine.'  
(Long Pause) You could say that there were different kinds of patients. They've got different attitudes towards the doctor. Some patients will submit themselves to the doctor quite implicitly and just swallow any medicine or any treatment that they are given. They are like the faith followers. But others will ask the doctor: 'What is wrong with me? And how did I get ill in that sort of way? And how long is it going to last? And what medicine are you going to give me? Are you sure it's the right one? Will it really work?' Only when the doctor has answered all these questions will they take the medicine. What do you think of this implicit comparison of existence itself to a state of disease, of dis-ease, dukkha? What about the Four Noble Truths, the Four Holy Truths, themselves? I take it everybody knows what they are.

Manjuvajra: (...Unclear...)

S: I've talked about this before but I'll talk about it again because it is quite important. What does one mean by saying that the Four Truths are Aryan truths?

Voice: (...Unclear...)

S: But who is the Aryan?

Voice: (...Unclear...)

S: Not necessarily completely Enlightened. It's the Stream-Entrant, the Once-Returner, the Non-Returner, Arhant - these are all called Aryans. Bodhisattvas are called Aryans. So the Aryan truths are truths as seen by the Aryans. So who are the non-Aryans? What is the term used to describe them?

Voice: (...Unclear...)

S: Prthagjanas or puthujjanas, yes: that is to say, all those who are not Stream Entrants and so on; that is the vast majority of people. So the Four Noble Truths are truths which reveal themselves to the Enlightened or comparatively Enlightened vision of the Aryans, those who are of some degree at least of real spiritual development, actual transcendental development.

So, for instance, if you take the first one: dukkha - dukkha is, well, suffering, to give the everyday translation. The truth of dukkha states that all conditioned things are suffering. This can be looked at in three ways, or rather, it's sometimes said there are three kinds of suffering. [Or, sometimes, seven kinds of suffering: see Guide to the Buddhist Path, page 191ff] I've gone into this elsewhere I think.

There is what is called dukkha-dukkhata, that is suffering which is suffering, that is a present, actual painful [103] experience either mental or physical. This is dukkha dukkha.

Then there's parinama-dukkha or viparinama-dukkha, that is to say, dukkha by transformation, suffering by transformation. Supposing you're enjoying something and you are enjoying it very much, but it comes to an end. When it comes to an end you suffer; so the pleasant experience has changed into a painful experience. So all pleasant experiences, to the extent that they are objects of attachment, turn into painful experiences. So this is called viparinama-dukkha, 'painful by transformation'.

And then there is what is called khandha- or skandha-dukkha, painful by mere virtue of the fact that they are conditioned. Now what does that mean? It means that you can be totally and fully and finally satisfied and made happy only by the Unconditioned. Anything that falls short of that, that is to say anything conditioned, will not give you that full or final happiness. There'll always be some lack or some deficiency. So there will always be dukkha. Even supposing - for the sake of argument - that some conditioned thing could be yours for ever and ever, it still wouldn't give you complete happiness; it would still be to that extent dukkha.

So there are these three kinds of dukkha: there's the actual present painful experience; the pleasant experience which, when terminated, becomes painful; and then the fundamental unsatisfactoriness of things due to the fact that they are of an essentially contingent or conditioned character and cannot give you the absolute happiness which in a sense you are looking for, which only can finally satisfy you.

So the Aryan sees this. The ordinary person has no understanding of the Aryan truth of suffering. The ordinary person suffers, but the ordinary person does not experience the Aryan truth of suffering. Do you see the difference? So just to experience suffering is not enough. You can go on experiencing suffering; it just doesn't lead you anywhere.

So sometimes this isn't made clear. Sometimes, in some books about Buddhism, you are given the suggestion that if you experience a lot of suffering then you know the Aryan truth of suffering. But this is not true. Some people can be as it were awake to the Aryan truth of suffering after just a very little actual personal suffering, or even without any at all of any catastrophic nature, just by seeing the world around them, just by reflection. And others can have a lot of painful experiences in their lives and no understanding, no inkling, of the Aryan truth of suffering at all.

So the Aryan truth of suffering doesn't mean just experiencing suffering, but understanding suffering, having Insight into suffering. And the same with the other truths.

So similarly sometimes people say that the Buddhist teaching is that everything is suffering and that therefore Buddhism is pessimistic. But this does not mean that according to Buddhism that there is no pleasurable experience. For instance, you can go through your whole life with no painful experience. You can have, say, only pleasurable experiences. But it is still true that your life is dukkha - within the perspective of the Aryan. Do you understand that?

So when Buddhism is propounding the first Noble Truth, it [104] is not saying that all our actual experience is painful experience. That is only covered by the first kind of dukkha. You can escape that, escape it in its more extreme forms. You might even escape the second. But you'll never escape the third!

So, when you say that, according to Buddhism, everything is dukkha, you must be careful not to give the impression that according to Buddhism there are only painful experiences in life and never any pleasant ones. The Buddhist point of view is that the pleasant ones are also painful - within the perspective of the Aryans. So that you can be, for instance, having intensely pleasurable experiences - for instance, let's say you're in good health and spirits; you feel well; you feel vigorous; you've just had a good meal; your belly is full. Maybe you've had a drink of wine as well. It's a fine beautiful day. Everything's going right. But you can still see that it's all dukkha. And it is all dukkha.

So the fact that it's dukkha doesn't mean that the experience as such is painful, but it means that by the mere fact that it cannot last and that you're attached to it, it sooner or later brings suffering upon you, and in any case it's only conditioned. So it cannot give you Unconditioned happiness. So you see the difference between the fact of the experience of something painful and the Aryan truth of suffering? So the Aryan truth of suffering is not to be equated with the actual experience of suffering. It goes beyond that. Do you see this?

Voice: Isn't 'suffering' a misleading word to use then in that context? Like, at the top of page sixteen it says: 'Suffering is the basic fact of life'. To me, that gives the impression that it is the basic fact of life: it's a fact of life that you suffer.

S: Well, this then isn't correct according to Buddhism. You could say suffering is a prominent fact of life - but so is pleasure. Most people would say that their lives had been mixtures of pleasure and pain. So if you're speaking in terms of actual experience, you can't say that suffering is the basic fact of life. Lots of people would disagree with that totally and say that for them suffering has not been the basic fact of life.

But you can say that the Aryan truth of suffering is the basic fact of life. But the Aryan truth of suffering does not say that all your experiences are actually painful; and in that sense does not say that suffering is the basic fact of life.

And what do you mean by basic? I mean, that's again a bit ambiguous, isn't it. Yes, you can say certainly that suffering is a prominent feature of most people's lives, i.e. the actual experience of suffering. But there's quite a few people who go through life without any really serious suffering at all. But the Aryan truth of suffering still holds good.

So supposing you go to somebody and say you're trying to convince them about Buddhism or explain to them about Buddhism and you say: 'Life's all suffering and this is what Buddhism [105] teaches'. What will they say? They might disagree totally and say: 'I haven't noticed it yet'.

But this is not what the Aryan truth of suffering says. The Aryan truth of suffering says: 'Well, you're happy now; yes, we accept that. You're happy. You're really enjoying yourself. But there's something else to bear in mind. One: that this won't go on for ever, and the more attached you are to it the more you will suffer when it comes to an end. Two: even though you are happy now, you are not enjoying ultimate or absolute happiness. If this happiness was to go on and on indefinitely you'd get really fed up and bored with it. You'd want something more.'

So this is what the Aryan truth of suffering is saying. It's not denying that there are pleasant

and happy experiences. It's only denying that they are ultimate, or that they can give you complete, total and permanent satisfaction.

Has anybody ever been given this impression by anything that they've heard or read about Buddhism? That it is pessimism in that sense?

Vajradaka: I was living with a Buddhist in Japan, a good friend of mine, who was telling me about Buddhism and saying, one day he said: 'It's all suffering'. And it seemed completely alien to me 'cos I was very happy. I felt it was his own idiosyncratic interpretation.

S: Anybody else come across this? Or not? Or did everybody understand this distinction quite clearly from the beginning? (Pause) Or did they not think about it?

Voice: I found I very soon cleared it up, the misunderstanding I had. But I often find statements like that (...Unclear...) misleading, or very easily misinterpreted.

S: I think that this is the general impression that prevails - to the extent that any impression about Buddhism prevails - among the public at large: that Buddhism says it's all suffering and that therefore Buddhism's attitude towards life is negative. I think this is a quite widespread impression.

Robert Gerke: (...Unclear...)

S: Well, it's true to say that the Buddhist would say meditate on the Four Noble Truths and the Aryan Truth of suffering, but that wouldn't mean meditating on the fact that all experiences were painful and no experience was pleasant. It would consist in just trying to see further than that and saying: 'Well, even if the experience is pleasant now - and it is pleasant - one: it's not going to last; and two: it is not the total absolute satisfaction which is what you really want, to be truly satisfied'. But one would meditate on it in that way, not in the sense of reflecting that there's only pain and suffering in the world and no pleasure at all anywhere. That would be completely false.

I mean, Lama Govinda points out in his Psychological Attitude of Early Buddhist Philosophy that, according to the [106] Abhidharma, there are more pleasurable than painful states of existence within the samsara. For instance, all the heavenly worlds - and there are far more heavenly worlds than any other kind according to tradition - are states of pleasure and enjoyment and bliss, etc. But they all come within the scope of the first Noble Truth because the pleasures do not last and it is not the pleasure of nirvana. So you could say that Buddhism is much more optimistic than people usually think, in their sense of 'optimistic'. On the other hand, it's also much more radically pessimistic in a really metaphysical sense.

Vajradaka: Can you explain that? That last bit, that it's 'radically pessimistic'?

S: Yes, I said 'radically pessimistic in a metaphysical sense', that is to say even though it believes in the existence of, teaches the existence of, all these higher heavenly realms and that life there is so blissful and so enjoyable and so wonderful, and it goes on for millions of years - but it also teaches that at the end of those millions of years it comes to an end. And if you've been attached to it, then you really do suffer. And that, in any case, it isn't the ultimate bliss of nirvana. So in that sense Buddhism is radically pessimistic in a metaphysical sense about the

whole of conditioned existence, much more radically pessimistic than the ordinary person can even imagine! (Chuckles) Buddhism is radically pessimistic about heaven, what to speak about earth!

All right, let's go on to the next ...

Text: Meditation is in Buddhism easily the chief means of salvation. The stress is throughout far less on "doing something" by overt action, than on contemplation and mental discipline. What one aims at is the control of mental processes by meditating on them. In consequence, Buddhist thought is impregnated with what we call Psychology. It mixes metaphysics and psychology in a way to which we have no parallel in the West. (Page 17)

S: This is of course broadly true. 'Meditation is in Buddhism easily the chief means of' - well, let's say 'emancipation'. 'The stress is throughout far less on "doing something" by overt action, than on contemplation and mental discipline.' This is true; except that one must be careful I think not to give the impression that when you're meditating, you're not really doing anything. I think this is the average person's assumption. 'What one aims at is the control of mental processes by meditating on them.' Do you think this is quite correct? Do you control mental processes by meditating on them? What does one mean by meditating on mental processes? (Pause) Perhaps it would be more correct to say that you control mental processes, you control those mental processes that need to be controlled, by being aware of them, by being mindful of them. 'In consequence, Buddhist thought is impregnated with what we call Psychology. It mixes metaphysics and psychology in a way to which we have no parallel in the [107] West.' This is true.

All right, any comments on meditation as 'easily the chief means of salvation' or emancipation?...

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S: ...Because if that is so, if you find meditation difficult, then you are in a difficult position, aren't you? But what does one mean by meditation in this context?

Vajradaka: In a broader sense it's becoming mindful, not necessarily just sitting down cross-legged becoming mindful

S: Though it's not only just becoming mindful. It's the concentration of all one's energies on one particular topic.

Voice: (...Unclear...)

S: That would be contemplation. Someone was mentioning the other day about Socrates. Socrates used to do all sorts of odd things, and several times in his life he was observed to stand stock still, deep in thought, for a whole day - once when he was on active service. And his friends who were also on active service, the other soldiers, they formed a ring around him and just watched him for the whole day, and he didn't move. And at the end of the day on each of these occasions he'd just sort of shake himself, go off and have a bath, and then behave as though nothing had happened.

So clearly he was deep in thought. You could say he was meditating. He wasn't meditating maybe in the Buddhist sense, but all his energies were geared to whatever it was that he was thinking about, totally oblivious of his surroundings as though he was in a sort of samadhi state. But so far as we know he didn't practise meditation in the Indian sense.

There's also an important connection between psychology and metaphysics, as Conze call them, in this sort of way: one of the most important aspects of meditation is getting rid of unskilful thoughts, not just wandering thoughts, but unskilful thoughts: unskilful mental states in the sense of, say, fear hatred, jealousy, craving, etc., etc. So why do you think it is so important, within the context of meditation, to get rid of these unskilful mental states? Why do we try to get rid of them?

Voice: They drain energy.

S: They drain energy. That's one thing.

Voice: They're in the way.

S: They're in the way. Anything else?

Voice: They're like poisons.

S: They're like poisons. Yes. They're also called klesas, which means both defilements and afflictions. They afflict us, [108] they upset us, they torment us, they disturb our peace of mind. But more than that, what do they do?

Voice: They lead to unskilful actions.

S: They lead to unskilful actions, yes. But even more than that!

Voice: They're centrifugal rather than (...Unclear...)

S: Well, perhaps from this point of view - and the point of view here is the connection between psychology and metaphysics - is that they distort our vision. Do you see this? They lead to things like rationalizations. So long as those unskilful mental states are there, there's always the possibility of having a distorted view of reality. So what you're trying to achieve, in the case of contemplation, is an undistorted, a completely clear and true, vision of reality, which is prajna.

So the unskilful mental states will get in the way of that. So this is one of the reasons why meditation is so important. The ultimate aim of meditation is to develop Wisdom, Insight. But so long as the unskilful mental states are there you've very little chance of doing that, because you'll want to see things in terms of your greed, and your delusion and your anger and hatred and fear, and so on. These will be distorting your vision of reality all the time. So it's only when these unskilful mental states have been removed, or have been put out of the way at least for some time, that you can have this undistorted vision of reality.

But most people they try to come to - that is those who think at all - they try to come to some understanding of reality or some vision of reality or vision of truth without getting their

unskilful mental states out of the way. Do you see this? Even some professional or academic philosophers in the West; this is what they do. And this is their great mistake from the standpoint of Buddhism: that they're trying to philosophize, as it were, with contaminated minds. It's true that very often you can see a truth without necessarily being able to act upon it and practise it. But to be able to see any truth, any more ultimate truth, at all, at least for the time being, your subjective - using now the word 'subjective' in a negative sense - your subjective feelings and emotions must be out of the way.

So this is why, according to Buddhism, without meditation - this is part of the reason - there is no Wisdom. If of course you're thinking so deeply and so concentratedly that you altogether transcend all those unskilful emotions, well, fair enough. But it's very difficult to keep them out of the way long enough for you to be able to get a definite insight into truth or vision of truth without some help at least from meditation. This is one of the things that meditation tries systematically to do.

So, from a Buddhist point of view, to try to philosophize, to try to find out about the nature of reality, without some kind of mental discipline, without some kind of spiritual training, is just ludicrous. And you can see this in the lives [109] and in the writings of some philosophers. You can see in certain instances just where they were misled by their emotions, very often their unskilful emotions. There was a well-known book - or at least it used to be well-known - I don't know if anyone's heard of it? - I've forgotten the name of the author - called *The Psychology of Philosophers*, and it points out a number of such instances in the case of Western philosophy.

So, in other words, it means [that] in order to develop Insight, in order to develop Wisdom, you have to be able to rise above your narrow limited personal or individual standpoint, at least to some extent, and be free from, or relatively free from, your various subjective emotions. Otherwise you're liable to sort of seize upon as true whatever is in agreement with your particular form of craving or hatred or delusion. So therefore meditation plays an essential part in the search for truth. Do you see the connection now? So in this sense it's quite true to say, as Conze does, that Buddhism 'mixes metaphysics and psychology in a way to which we have no parallel in the West'. (Very Long Pause)

All right, let's go on to the concluding paragraph.

Text: In addition to pragmatism and psychological emphasis, Buddhist thought is inclined to what we may call Dialectics. Dialectics is a form of logic, associated in Europe with such names as Zenon of Elea (S: It's usually spelled Zeno, without the final 'n') and Hegel. It stands for the belief that, if you think properly and deeply on anything, you arrive at contradictions, i.e. at statements which to some extent cancel each other out. Buddhist thinkers loved [110] paradox and contradiction. I may illustrate this by two quotations from the Diamond Sutra, a treatise written probably about 350 AD., which has had more readers than any other metaphysical work. There the Buddha says: "'Beings', 'beings', O Subhuti, as 'no-beings' have they been taught by the Tathagata. Therefore are they called 'beings'." Or again: "As many beings as there in these world systems, of them I know, in my wisdom, the manifold trends of thought. And why? 'Trends of thought', 'trends of thought', O Subhuti, as 'no trends' have they been taught by the Tathagata. Therefore are they called 'trends of thought'. And why? Past thought is not got at; future thought is not got at; present thought is not got at."

By defeating thought, contradictions are set free. Another fetter of existence has been cast off, and the vastness of the unlimited space of truth opens itself up. In a more secular way, some people get a similar feeling from reading nonsense literature. In Buddhism, the ordinary rules of logic are defied in the name of freedom of the Spirit which transcends them. In addition, it is the introduction of the notion of the Absolute which here, as also with Zenon, Nicholas of Cues and Hegel, makes self-contradictory statements appear permissible. (Pages 17/18)

S: So what do you make of this, this dialectical aspect of Buddhism? I think Doctor Conze has rather overstated it actually, in the sense that he says 'Buddhist thinkers loved paradox and contradiction'. Do you think this is strictly correct? What does it suggest?

Vajradaka: It suggests that they weren't interested in Enlightenment, just paradox and contradiction.

S: No, I wasn't thinking of that. I was thinking of its validity as a generalization. 'Buddhist thinkers loved paradox and contradiction.' (Voice: Some.) Some; it should be 'some' - some admittedly quite prominent ones, mainly those of the Madhyamika tradition. But, for instance, the Abhidharma, which was the main philosophical tradition in India for centuries, did not indulge in paradox, did not indulge in dialectic at all. So I think one must heavily qualify that statement, that Buddhist thought is not so unadulteratedly dialectical and paradoxical as Doctor Conze says here. The Madhyamika is his favourite school of thought. He regards it, perhaps quite rightly, from the Mahayana point of view as a central one, but there are many many Buddhist thinkers who didn't go in for dialectics at all, and as far as we know the Buddha himself didn't.

But what do you think, what do you make, of this general dialectical principle? That, if you think properly and deeply on anything, you arrive at contradictions, i.e. at statements which to some extent cancel each other out. What do you make of that? What do you think of that? Do you think it's true?

Manjuvajra: That's not actually what I understood dialectics to be. I thought it was when you started thinking about something, and you came to a polarization, and then the polarization gave rise to a new state, a new ...

S: That's the same thing. You come to a contradiction, which you then try to transcend. This the Hegelian, or so-called Hegelian thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. Dialectic in Europe started with Socrates; and it was a form of discussion. Socrates would lead somebody and they'd make a certain statement; and then Socrates would lead them on into other statements; and then other statements; and then finally into a statement which contradicted the first statement. And then, of course, they'd be quite nonplussed as to how that had happened; and then he'd ask them whether they still adhered to that first statement or not.

But some thinkers hold that thought, human thought, logical thought, is inherently dialectical; in other words, is inherently self-contradictory. So what does one think of this? This is the main point about dialectics, and this is the sort of dialectics that Conze has in mind. Do you think that thought is inherently self-contradictory?

(Short break in recording)



... opposite to the first statement?

Voice: (...Unclear...)

[111]

S: You do? But do you actually find this when you think, philosophically, or logically?

Voice: (...Unclear...) ... you can only get so far.

S: Or you can put it in another way. You can say there are certain situations in which opposite statements seem equally true. These are sometimes called antinomies. Kant investigated those: that space is finite and infinite. Though of course there is the point that when that happens you must simply question your assumptions. This is what Kant did. Kant said, for instance, that there were arguments in favour of space being finite, there were arguments in favour of space being infinite, without limit, and both sets of arguments are equally valid, as far as one can see. Therefore, space is both finite and infinite. But how can it be both finite and infinite? There's a mistake somewhere. So where is the mistake? The mistake, according to Kant, is that you considered space to be a thing 'out there', an object, whereas according to him, it is not an object, but the form, or a form, of your perception of objects. So the contradiction arises - or the antinomy arises - when you treat as an object something which is essentially part of the process of perception, in other words part of the subject.

Robert Gerke: (...Unclear...) .. why everything is contradictory is the problem of words: in a sense words can't ever describe anything. But we think in words, naturally, (...Unclear...) ...

S: Yes, there must be some deficiency. The more words you use, the more the deficiencies accumulate.

Robert Gerke: Words never get to that essence of anything ..

S: Mm, Mmm ...

Robert Gerke: (...Unclear...) .. perception?

S: In a way it does, because if words don't really exhaust the essence of things, the different words can express different aspects. If you're concerned with the absolutely real, then even contradictory statements can be equally valid with regard to the ultimately real. This is certainly what Buddhism says: that ultimate reality is one; it's also many. And both are equally true. Because ultimate reality, in itself, is of a nature which transcends both oneness and difference to such an extent that both are equally distant from and equally near to it. So you can equally well speak of that ultimate reality as one or as many. I mean, they are as it were different, they are contradictory, but they're equally true of the absolute, or if you like equally untrue. But if they're equally untrue, they're also equally true.

So this is a great point made by the Madhyamikas: that with regard to ultimate reality, contradictory statements may be equally true. So this is the point in a way of the quotation [112] here: "As many beings as there in these world systems, of them I know, in my wisdom, the manifold trends of thought. And why? 'Trends of thought', 'trends of thought', O Subhuti, as 'no trends' have they been taught by the Tathagata." In other words, in the absolute, or

from the absolute point of view, contradictory statements coincide. So what the Buddha is saying is that from this standpoint, from the standpoint of Wisdom, contradictory statements are equally true. They have the same meaning. So, by using contradictory statements, you try to point to something which is altogether beyond. You use thought to cancel out thought so that you can reach that which is beyond thought. So this is the so-called dialectical method of the Madhyamikas or the Perfection of Wisdom sutras.

So Conze refers to European thinkers who also have recourse to some extent to this method. He refers to Zeno of Elea, the famous Eleatic philosopher. You know about his paradoxes, don't you? What do you remember about them?

Manjuvajra: I remember there's one where there's a Greek who says: 'All Greeks are liars. I am a Greek.'

S: Mmm, yeah. So is that a true statement or a false one? And then there's the one about the hare and the tortoise ... No, it's just about a tortoise; or it could be about a hare. The tortoise is moving towards a certain line. There's a certain space he still has to go. So you divide that into half; and it's going to take it about an hour to get there. Before it can get there, you divide it into half; and you go on dividing it into halves. So you can go on dividing it into halves infinitely; you can go on halving the remaining space before the tortoise gets to it each time. So that means he'll never cover the whole distance. (Amusement) Do you see that?

So what does this mean? What sort of paradox is this concerned with? Well, it's the infinite divisibility of space; whether space is infinitely divisible or not. According to what he's doing, space should be infinitely divisible - but actually we find the tortoise does reach the post. So that surely means that space isn't infinitely divisible. So you've got a proof of the infinite divisibility of space on the one hand - at least you can conceive of its infinite divisibility - but on the other hand, in practice, it seems not to be infinitely divisible. So it's both infinitely divisible and not infinitely divisible. There are arguments on both sides. But apparently it can't be both. What's the solution? I'm told the solution was arrived at mathematically only in this century.

Manjuvajra: Yes.

S: .. the mathematical solution. (Pause) I don't know what it is, by the way, but I think I know the philosophical solution.

Manjuvajra: Do you want to know that one?

S: Yes, please!

[113]

Manjuvajra: If you think a bit, supposing the tortoise is going from there to there. You count that as one unit. Then it's got to go half of a unit, then it's got to go a quarter of the unit, then an eighth, then a sixteenth. (S: Mmm.) So what you do is: you take one unit, plus a half, plus a quarter, plus an eighth, plus a sixteenth, and so on. It looks like an infinite series. (S: Mmm.) And in the last century they devised a way of calculating what infinite series add up to, and they found that if it goes on to infinity and you add it all up, the answer would come to two. So he just travels two units, although it's an infinitely long series.

S: Mmm, what was that way of calculating an infinite series?

Manjuvajra: That's called (...Unclear...) I can't remember all the (...Unclear...) ..

S: Mmm, Mmm, so an infinite series adds up to two. I must say I can't see it ... But no doubt it can be mathematically demonstrated.

Manjuvajra: You can do it by writing down another infinite series (...Unclear...) and writing it down backwards. I can't remember how that works ...

S: Hmm ... Anyway, these are paradoxes, these were Zeno's paradoxes. Apparently, that one wasn't a true paradox, in a way, but you get the idea. Nicholas of Cusa - he's usually called Nicholas of Cusa, not Nicholas of Cues - was an Italian Catholic - he eventually became a cardinal - who was also quite interested in philosophy. And Hegel, of course, was the great German philosopher. So they all had some recourse to this dialectical method in respect of ultimate reality, especially, perhaps, Nicholas of Cusa.

So you can see that this can be a valid approach to ultimate reality: by way of seeing that with regard to ultimate reality, contradictory statements can be equally true. And this does help one to get beyond the limitations of, not just rational thinking, but of the rational mind itself. One can see this. But can you see any dangers here?

Well, first of all, of course, you've got to have really two contradictory statements, both of which are equally true, not one of which is true and the other of which is demonstrably false. But do you see any practical danger in this approach?

Manjuvajra: Yes: you might just give up. You've got to believe both.

S: You've got to believe both of them. Yes, that's very true. The Zen koan is a sort of concrete exemplification of this sort of approach. Like the famous 'goose in the bottle', where you've got to get the goose out without breaking the bottle. You can't do both. But that's what you've got to do. Here it's two contradictory actions rather than two contradictory statements. Or the 'one hand clapping'. Well, how can one hand [114] clap? But it does in Zen. But first of all you've got to believe in both statements, and you've got somehow to believe in them as referring to ultimate reality. As I've indicated before, I don't think Zen koans are meaningful for us in that sort of way. They are so tied up with Japanese culture.

Manjuvajra: They can easily be criticized as nonsense.

S: Because they are just played with like party games. But you have to come up against a real dilemma in your own life, where there's a certain course of action, or rather you're in a certain situation, and you can do either one of two things. As far as you can see, the arguments on either side are equally valid. So what happens then? And suppose you've got to act. But supposing the actions are contradictory. One, as it were, part of you - well, not even part of you - on the one hand, you're totally convinced that you should act in this way, and that seems completely logical and rational. But there's another way of looking at it, which you see is equally valid, equally true, in fact totally true also, which is completely contradictory to the first way of acting. You've got to act in either one way or the other. They're contradictory. And you've got to act immediately. What do you do? (Pause) What do you think? (Bhante

chuckles) Well, it's difficult enough acting when there isn't any logical contradiction, isn't it?

Well, you'd have to rise to a higher - you'd either collapse or you'd break through into a higher third, a possibility which has transcended and included the other two, of which you couldn't possibly have thought on their terms. You'd be forced into a higher mode of being, where you'd see things completely differently ... and act accordingly.

And this is what the Zen discipline forces you to do. It just forces you into a higher mode of being where the contradiction is resolved. But you need to be very much within the context of traditional Zen, have that traditional faith, have faith in the Zen Master and all the rest of it in a way which is perhaps very difficult if not impossible for us.

So the contradictory approach, the dialectical approach, is a very good approach to thinking about something which is beyond thought. But it can end up, if you're not careful, in a sort of general scepticism, or relativism. We do find tendencies, traces of that, even in the Indian Madhyamika. It tended to end up a bit scholastically, a bit sceptically.

Manjuvajra: You think scepticism is a bad state to arrive at?

S: Yes. It is in the sense that I'm using the term anyway. Well, scepticism about there being any ultimate reality. (Pause) I also think there's a danger in irrationalism. Conze mentions here: 'In a more secular way, some people get a similar feeling from reading nonsense literature.' I think there's a danger of instead of breaking through reason, reason simply breaks down. I think there's a very great tendency - I think Dr Suzuki's writings, in a way, quite unintentionally, have encouraged this sort of attitude.

[115]

Manjuvajra: I don't understand the last sentence.

S: What's that?

Manjuvajra: 'In addition, it is the introduction of the notion of the Absolute which here, as also with Zenon, Nicholas of Cues and Hegel, makes self-contradictory statements appear permissible.' (Page 18)

S: So, what is 'the Absolute'? The Absolute is Absolute; it's beyond all relativity. So it's only, you could say, the notion of the Absolute which gives contradictory statements their meaning.

Manjuvajra: Gives them space to exist in.

S: Gives them space to exist in, yeah. Gives them something to point to. I mean, if you've only if you've got contradictory statements just existing by themselves, well, then all that they do is to cancel each other out. But if you introduce, as it were, the notion - to use that term - of the Absolute, then it's not simply that the contradictory statements cancel each other out, but in the very act of cancelling each other out or by virtue of the fact that they cancel each other out they point to something which transcends logic.

Manjuvajra: Isn't that a bit illogical? It seems to me to be improper to suggest that if you've got two things that are contradictory there must be a third.

S: No, it doesn't logically follow. You simply introduce the notion of the Absolute from somewhere beyond logic, from experience. It doesn't logically follow at all. No, not even in common sense. It doesn't follow logically, from the fact that there are two contradictory statements, that these two contradictory statements must therefore indicate something which is supra-logical. No, it doesn't follow at all.

But you introduce your notion of the Absolute from somewhere else entirely, i.e. from tradition, from your own experience, etc. And then that notion of the Absolute - though don't take the term 'notion' too literally - gives a meaning to the self-contradictory statement, or the two contradictory statements, which they could not have and would not have without it.

So in other words they cease to be two statements negating each other. Together they become a statement about the Absolute. Do you see that? Logically, they are two statements which contradict each other. Metaphysically, they are one statement, which is a statement about the Absolute. For instance, when the Buddha says: "'Beings', 'beings', O Subhuti, as 'no-beings' have they been taught by the Tathagata. Therefore are they called 'beings'." Here, the notion of 'beings' is cancelled out by the notion of 'no-beings'. And the notion of 'no-beings' is cancelled out by the notion of 'beings'. But the statement - you can take it as one statement - of beings cancelling out non-beings, or no-beings, and [116] no-beings cancelling out beings: this points to, or points in the direction of, sunyata. But those two statements mutually cancelling each other out have the function of indicating that which is beyond all logical statements.

It's like if you've got the two base angles of the equilateral triangle, well, they point to the other angle. It's a bit like that, though it isn't a logical point; it doesn't logically follow. So, logically, as I said, you've got simply two contradictory statements, two statements which logically cancel each other out in the sense that both cannot be true. But their function is to point beyond logic to a stage or sphere where they are both true - but clearly it is not on the level of logic. It has to be beyond logic. It's only as it were 'in' the Absolute.

So this is what the Perfection of Wisdom sutras are rather fond of doing and what the Madhyamikas are rather fond of doing; not all Buddhist thinkers.

So this is why - to go a little further afield, and also to come back to a bit of practice - in some of the visualization practices you get a sequence of practices. I've talked about this before once or twice. For instance, supposing you're visualizing a particular Buddha or Bodhisattva. You're visualizing that particular rupa - rupa in the sense of 'form', not in the sense of a physical image. All right, so that image is there, and you're concentrating on it, etc., etc. Then supposing after a while you dissolve that image. So what you have left is as it were sunyata. It's not the real ultimate sunyata. It's only sunyata in the sense that it is devoid of that image; that that image is no longer there. So for a while you meditate upon that. So you've got these two stages. You've got the stage of meditating upon the Buddha or Bodhisattva, on the form. And then you've got the stage where you're meditating on sunyata, understood as the absence of all form or the absence of that particular form.

So the question arises: Can you have the form and the absence of form at the same time in the same sense in the same place? Can you? Logically? No, you can't. In other words, you're either doing the one practice or the other, aren't you? You can either meditate on the form, or you can meditate on the void. Do you see the point? When you're meditating on the form,

you're not meditating on the void. When you're meditating on the void, you're not meditating on the form. Is this clear? So there are these two levels of practice, and you have to alternate them. Meditate on the form of the Buddha or Bodhisattva, then you meditate on the absence of that form, on the void, then you meditate on the form, then you meditate on the void. But what do you do after that? What's the third stage?

Manjuvajra: They come together.

S: But how can they come together?

Manjuvajra: They just do!

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S: (Chuckles) Well, that'll do!

The third stage is: you have to meditate on them both together. And you're given a bit of help; you're given the analogy that the form sort of instantaneously emerges from the void and goes back into it, sort of like a fish leaping from the sea and just flashing an instant and then [diving] back. But this is to give you a glimpse, an intuition of both at the same time. Even though they're contradictory. And that is the real experience of sunyata, the sunyata which is beyond the antithesis of fullness and emptiness.

So, in the visualization type practice, this is what one does. This is how the visualization type practice becomes a means of approach to the Absolute, to sunyata in the real sense. First you learn to visualize the form of the Buddha or Bodhisattva that you're particularly devoted to. Then you dissolve him or her back into the void, and you meditate only on the void. And then you go back to the form, and you alternate them quite a while. Then you try to bring them together, even though logically they can't be brought together, because one is the absence of the other. And that brings you to that third point, as it were.

But this is another way - you can see the analogy with the koan practice, can't you? You go beyond the rational mind, you go beyond logical thought ... Or, when your mind is concentrated, you can just reflect on the Diamond Sutra teachings.

So you can understand the connection if you go in to see the Zen Master, and he asks you: 'What are you carrying?' And you say: 'I'm not carrying anything.' And he says: 'Well, drop it then!' You see the connection? (Noises of assent) 'Cause you think carrying something and dropping it are two contradictory things; 'cause how can you drop something unless you're carrying it? But the Master doesn't see things like that apparently. According to his way of thinking, you can drop something even though you're not carrying anything. But you then have to say or do something to show that you've also gone beyond that duality. If you can't, well, you're just thrown out! (General Amusement) You haven't passed the test. You're just slung out on your ear to go back to the meditation hall and try again. And if you were to say: 'Well, that's a logical contradiction', you'd get hit over the head with a long bamboo pole. (General Amusement)

Vajradaka: What would be the right saying or comeback?

S: Well, there is no, as it were, standard or set comeback. There are sayings which disciples

have said in the past and things that they've done, and which have met with the Master's approval, which have shown that they've understood, but if you were to go and just reproduce one of those, well, that would in a way be the worst offence of all. That would be just ...

End of Side One, Side Two

S: .. just faking it. (Laughter) And that is the last thing that is allowed. Like the disciple who went to a Master, and [118] was asked for the solution to the koan. He said: 'Mu!' That means: 'No!' 'Mu!' The Master said: 'Right, you're Enlightened'. So the next disciple was outside the door and he overheard all this. So he waited for his turn and the Master asked him for his solution to the koan. So he quite confidently said: 'Mu!' The Master said: 'No!', hit him over the head and threw him out! So the disciple just couldn't understand it. He thought: 'Well, the first chap gave the right answer - but when I gave it it wasn't the right answer? Why wasn't it?' He started thinking about this, and in the end of course he got the right answer. So there's no right answer in any specific sense. It's very difficult to fake it in Zen - but, well, I may have mentioned before, I think it is being a bit faked nowadays.

Voice: (...Unclear...)

S: Well, if you mean successfully in the sense of deceiving a certain number of other people, yes. You wouldn't, presumably, deceive any real Master who happened to be around.

Voice: Are you implying the level of Zen Masters has fallen?

S: No, only that maybe they're not around as much as they might be. I said if they were around, they'd surely spot it. They're either around somewhere else, or maybe there aren't as any of them as there used to be. You could also say that some people's faking gets subtler and subtler; maybe even more difficult for even a Zen Master to detect.

One used to hear quite a bit of this sort of Zen faking in Buddhist circles in this country a few years ago. One has even read books of fake Zen. I remember being sent a little book for review about twenty years ago called *The Goose is Out* by someone called W.J. Gabb, [amusement] which I reviewed in the *Maha Bodhi Journal*. It was clearly absolutely fake. It was pseudo-Zen stories from a pseudo-Zen Master. It was clearly all worked out by somebody or other over their weekends; and it was published by the Buddhist Society; a little book. It's terrible!

I think this is a very important thing: that one develops the faculty to detect what is fake. I think this is a real test. Since we're dealing with Dr Conze, I remember being quite disappointed when Dr Conze reviewed Lobsang Rampa's *The Third Eye* and couldn't make up his mind whether he was a genuine Tibetan lama or not. That really, in a way, shook me. He wouldn't commit himself. He hasn't reprinted, by the way, that review, in his collections of reviews. He couldn't make his mind up. He didn't commit himself: whether he was a real Tibetan lama or not. He sat on the fence. Anyone would have thought that [if you] just read a few pages you'd feel you're not in contact with anything real here. And there are quite a few books about Zen on the market which purport to be written from a sort of Enlightened point of view. It's quite clear that they're not. So one must develop that sort of sensitivity, that sort of faculty, as it were: that you can detect the fake, and have the confidence of your own [119] convictions. If you can't, well, it says quite a lot about you.

Sometimes of course things are mixed: they're partly fake and partly genuine, but one must be able to feel this too. If you read, say, some of the songs of Milarepa, well, you come up with something completely genuine; no doubt about it at all. It really does come from experience. It is really direct. Even though maybe the language is not the language that one might use nowadays, but that doesn't matter.

So, if you read a pseudo-Zen dialogue that somebody has painfully constructed after much thought, you can see at once it isn't the real thing - at least you ought to be able to see. Perhaps we ought to test people sometimes: just giving them little quotes and asking them: 'What do you think of this? Does this ring true to you? Is someone here speaking from his own experience, or not?' We ought to be able to detect the real thing. And very often we can't. And what does that mean? That we don't have anything that is very genuine within ourselves.

Anyway, the time's practically up. Anyway, this is Buddhism as a Philosophy. What do think we've mainly learnt from this?

Voice: (...Unclear...)

S: Well, it's dangerous, and potentially misleading, to try to present Buddhism in terms of anything other than itself. It doesn't really need this. This is something that perhaps we saw yesterday too; or the first day, wasn't it? It doesn't really help anybody, I think, to say, for instance, that Buddhism is a sort of pragmatism. This introduces, maybe, a bit more confusion. (Pause) What else have we seen? What else have we learnt? (Pause)

Manjuvajra: (...Unclear...)

S: Well, as somebody said in a recent [FWBO] Newsletter - it was the title of an article - 'Beware the printed word'. This is very true. If we read a book by someone who is quite clearly unsophisticated and not very well educated, well, that's all right. We can ignore all that. We can quite easily go for what is essential in the book. But if we read something written by an intellectually very sophisticated person, then we must be much more careful; because the intellectually sophisticated person deceives himself before he deceives others.

What else have we learnt? What about the dialectic? I think we have seen how contradictory statements do point to the ultimate supra-logical truth, and why it is that some Buddhist thinkers - if 'thinkers' is the right word - do have so much recourse to study of this type, certainly the Perfection of Wisdom sutras do, many of them. You're being forced as it were to think - if that's the right expression - in supra-logical terms, or to become aware of some supra-logical dimension of things. All these self-contradictory statements point in that sort of direction.

But, as you said, you have to feel the force of both sides [120] of the statement. Otherwise you're not pointed anywhere. It all just falls rather flat. That's the great proviso: that if you're not utterly convinced that the goose is in the bottle and utterly convinced that it has got to be got out without breaking the bottle, you're not really going to work on that koan. If you're utterly convinced: 'Well, the Master says it can be got out without breaking the bottle, so it must be possible to get it out without breaking the bottle. But how? It can be done!' Unless you've got that sort of conviction, you're not going to get anything out of that koan. So if you don't have that sort of conviction, well, just don't bother with koans. Try some other



approach. There are other approaches.

Voice: (...Unclear...)

S: Ah right, yes, yes. As I said, for the likes of us there's no problem about the Tathagata's length of life. But in those days, for some people at least, it was a real problem; because they accepted, one, that the Buddha had only lived a very few years, but on the other [hand] they accepted that the Buddha had in previous lives accumulated these enormous masses of merit which quite obviously would have given him a life of millions of years. But he didn't have that. Why? It was a real problem because they believed both statements. It was a real problem for Ruciraketu, though it isn't a problem for us. We've got other problems, other koans.

I think that is the criterion: that you must fully identify with both statements and really feel the clash in yourself, [and really feel a] need to get beyond the opposition by hook or by crook. Otherwise, it's all just meaningless words, just a game; just word-play.

Manjuvajra: Is there any particular school that sees koans as developments in your own life? (...Unclear...)

S: I don't think so. Not as best I know. I've spoken in those terms, but I don't know that anybody else has done so before. But I think it is the life koans, the existential koans, that are the real koans, I think; where your whole being feels divided and you're pulled in two opposite directions at the same time. You can't go under - maybe you're too strong a character for that - well, you can only soar above, sooner or later ... The creative solution to the creative conflict.

All right, I won't keep you from lunch any longer.

Manjuvajra: This is the last one.

S: Oh, it is, isn't it? We haven't got really very far, but we have dealt with Buddhism as a Religion and Buddhism as a Philosophy. So perhaps we can safely leave it there for the present.

Voices: Thank you.

End of Cassette Six End of Seminar

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Appendix: Text used in seminar

Excerpt from Buddhism: Its Essence & Development

by Edward Conze, published by Bruno Cassirer, Oxford, 1951 and again by Harper & Row, New York, 1975. [Pages 11-18]

"Buddhism as a Religion

Buddhism is an Eastern form of spirituality. Its doctrine, in its basic assumptions, is identical

with many other teachings all over the world, teachings which may be called 'mystical'. The essence of this philosophy of life has been explained with great force and clarity by Thomas Kempis in his *Imitation of Christ*. What is known as 'Buddhism' is a part of the common human heritage of wisdom, by which men have succeeded in overcoming this world, and in gaining immortality, or a deathless life.

During the last two centuries, spiritual interests have in Europe been relegated into the background by preoccupations with economic and social problems. The word 'spiritual' seems vague nowadays. It is, indeed, not easy to define. It is easier to state by what means one gets to the spiritual realm than to say what it is in itself. Three avenues of approach to the spiritual are, I think, handed down by the almost universal tradition of the sages:

to regard sensory experience as relatively unimportant;

to try to renounce what one is attached to;

to try to treat all people alike - whatever their looks, intelligence, colour, smell, education, etc.

The collective effort of the European races during the last centuries has gone into channels which by this definition are not 'spiritual'.

It is often assumed that there is some fundamental and essential difference between East and West, between Europe and Asia, in their attitude to life, in their sense of values, and in the functioning of their souls. Christians who regard Buddhism as unsuitable for European conditions forget the Asiatic origin of their own religion, and of all religions for that matter. A religion is an organization of spiritual aspirations, which reject the sensory world and negate the impulses which bind us to it. For 3000 years Asia alone has been creative of spiritual ideas and methods. The Europeans have in these matters borrowed from Asia, have adapted Asiatic ideas, and, often, coarsened them. One could not, I think, point to any spiritual creation in Europe which is not secondary, which does not have its ultimate impulse in the East. European thought has excelled in the elaboration of social law and organization, especially in Rome and England, and in the scientific understanding and control of sensory phenomena. The indigenous tradition of Europe is inclined to affirm the will to live, and to turn actively towards the world of the senses. The spiritual tradition of mankind is based on the negation of the will to live and is turned away from the world of the senses. All European spirituality has [122] had to be periodically renewed by an influx from the East, from the time of Pythagoras and Parmenides onwards. Take away the oriental elements in Greek philosophy, take away Jesus Christ, Saint Paul, Dionysius Areopagita, and Arabic thought - and European spiritual thinking during the last 2000 years becomes unthinkable. About a century ago the thought of India has begun to exert its influence on Europe, and it will help to revivify the languishing remnants of European spirituality.

Some features distinguish Buddhism from other forms of wisdom. They are of two kinds:

Much of what has been handed down as 'Buddhism' is due not to the exercise of wisdom, but to the social conditions in which the Buddhist community existed, to the language employed, and to the science and mythology in vogue among the people who adopted it. One must throughout distinguish the exotic curiosities from the essentials of a holy life.

There are a number of methods for winning salvation by meditation, of which Buddhist tradition give a clearer and fuller account than I have found elsewhere. This is, however, largely a matter of temperament. Properly studied, the literature of the Jains, of the Sufis, of the Christian monks of the Egyptian desert, and of what the Catholic Church calls 'ascetical' or 'mystical' theology, yields much of the same kind.

To a person who is thoroughly disillusioned with the contemporary world, and with himself, Buddhism may offer many points of attraction - in the transcending sublimity of the fairy land of its subtle thoughts, in the splendour of its works of art, in the magnificence of its hold over vast populations, and in the determined heroism and quiet refinement of those who are steeped in it. Although one may originally be attracted by its remoteness, one can appreciate the real value of Buddhism only when one judges it by the results it produces in one's own life from day to day.

The rules of wholesome conduct which are recommended in the Buddhist Scriptures are grouped under three headings: Morality, Contemplation and Wisdom. Much of what is included under Morality and Contemplation is the common property of those Indian religious movements which sought salvation in a life apart from ordinary everyday society. There we have, in addition to rules of conduct for the laity, regulations for the life of the homeless brotherhood of monks; many Yoga practices - rhythmical and mindful breathing, the restraint of the senses, methods for inducing trance by staring at coloured circles, stages of ecstasis, the cultivation of unlimited friendliness, compassion, sympathetic joy and even-mindedness. Further, meditations of a generally edifying character, which could be found in any mystical religion, such as meditations on death on the repulsiveness of the functions of this material body, on the Trinity of the Buddha, the Dharma (Truth), and the Sangha (Brotherhood). Few could be expected to practise all those methods in one life-time. There are many roads to emancipation. What is common to all them is that they aim at the extinction of the belief in [123] individuality.

When taken in its present-day vagueness, the word 'individuality' does, however, fail to convey the Buddha's meaning. According to Buddhist teaching, as we shall see in more detail later on, man, with all his possible belongings, consists of five 'heaps', technically known as Skandhas. They are:

The Body

Feelings

Perceptions

Impulse and Emotions

Acts of Consciousness

Anything a person may grasp at, or lean on, or appropriate, must fall within one of those five groups, which make up the stuff of 'individuality'. The belief in individuality is said to arise from the invention of a 'self' over and above those five heaps. The belief expresses itself in the assumption that any of this is 'mine' or that 'I am' any of this, or that any of this 'is myself'. Or, in other words, in the belief that 'I am this', or that 'I have this', or that 'this is in me', or

that 'I am in this'. The fact of individuality disappears with the belief in it, since it is no more than a gratuitous imagination. When the individual, as constituted by an arbitrary lump taken from those five heaps, ceases to exist, the result is Nirvana - the goal of Buddhism. If one wishes to express this by saying that one has found one's 'true individuality', the word 'individuality', as understood at present, is elastic and vague enough to permit this. The Buddhist Scriptures do, however, distinctly avoid this, or any equivalent, expression.

The various schools of Buddhism spring, as I will try to show, from differences in the approach to the Buddhist goal. Already in the early Order, men of different temperament and endowment are reported to have reached the goal by different roads. Sariputra was renowned for his wisdom, Ananda for his faith and devotion, Maudgalyayana for his magical potency. In later times, different-minded people formed different schools, and, in addition, the spread of the doctrine led to geographical separation and to separate organizations. Some of the methods for achieving de-individualization, which we shall discuss in the later chapters of this book, are not mentioned at all in the oldest strata of the tradition as it has come down to us, or are no more than dimly foreshadowed. But, as many of the later Buddhists would have argued, in his love for beings the Buddha would have excluded nothing that could help anyone who wanted the right thing. A great deal of this book will be devoted to explaining what each of the chief schools stood for, what method it chose as its own particular way, how it can be thought to lead to the same goal as the others, and how it fared in the world of history.

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#### Buddhism as a Philosophy

Philosophy as we understand it in Europe, is a creation of the Greeks. It is unknown to Buddhist tradition, which would regard the enquiry into, reality for the mere purpose of knowing more about it, as a waste of valuable time. The Buddha's teaching is exclusively concerned with showing the way to salvation. Any 'philosophy' there may be in the works of Buddhist authors is quite incidental. In the ample vocabulary of Buddhism we find no word to correspond to our term 'philosophy'. An analogy may clarify the position. The Chinese language, as the Chinese understood it, did not contain any grammar, and it was taught in China without any grammatical instructions. Some European philologies, on the model of our Latin grammatical categories, have constructed a 'grammar' for the Chinese language. It does not fit particularly well, and the Chinese continue to dispense with it. The Latin-style grammar, with its familiar categories, may, however, help some Europeans to learn the Chinese language more easily. In a similar way, an attempt to define Buddhist thought in the philosophical terminology current in Europe may facilitate the approach to it. Buddhism, as a 'philosophy' could then be described as a "dialectical pragmatism" with a "psychological" turn. Let us consider these three items one by one.

In its origin and intention a doctrine of salvation, Buddhism has always been marked by its intensely practical attitude. Speculation on matters irrelevant to salvation is discouraged. Suffering is the basic fact of life. If a man were struck by an arrow, he would not refuse to have it extricated before he knew who shot the arrow, whether that man was married or not, tall or small, fair or dark. All he would want, would be to be rid of the arrow. The Buddha's last injunction to his disciples ran: All conditioned things are impermanent. Work out your salvation with diligence. In their long history, the Buddhists have never lost this practical bent. Innumerable misunderstandings would have been avoided if one had seen that the

statements of Buddhist writers are not meant to be propositions about the nature of reality, but advice on how to act, statements about modes of behaviour, and the experiences connected with them. 'If you want to get there, then you must do this.' 'If you do this, you will experience this.'

We can, therefore, say with some truth that Buddhist thinking tends in the direction of what we call Pragmatism. The value of a thought is to be judged by what you can do with it, by the quality of the life which result from it. Wherever one finds evidence of such qualities as detachment, kindness, serene self-confidence, etc., one would be inclined to believe that the 'philosophy' behind such an attitude had much to say in its favour. Of whatever teachings you can assure yourself that they conduce to dispassion, and not to passions; to detachment and not to bondage; to decrease of worldly gains, and not to their increase; to frugality and not to covetousness; to content and not to discontent; to solitude [125] and not to company; to energy and not to sluggishness; to delight in good and not to delight in evil, of such teachings you may with certainty affirm: This is the Norm. This is the Discipline. This is the Master's Message.

As Buddhism developed, its pragmatism became even more explicit. One came to see that anything one may say is ultimately false - false by the mere fact that one says it. Those who say do not know; those who know do not say. The Aryan silence alone did not violate the Truth. If one says something - and it is astonishing to find how much the supporters of the Aryan silence had to say - it is justified only by what they called "skill in means". In other words, one says it because it may help other people at a certain stage of their spiritual progress.

The holy doctrine is primarily a medicine. The Buddha is like a physician. Just as a doctor must know the diagnosis of the different kinds of illness, must know their causes, the antidotes and remedies, and must be able to apply them, so also the Buddha has taught the Four Noble Truths, which indicate the range of suffering, its origin, its cessation, and the way which leads to its cessation. If one, however, isolates the Buddha's statements from the task they intend to perform, then they become quite meaningless, and lose all their force.

Meditation is in Buddhism easily the chief means of salvation. The stress is throughout far less on "doing something" by overt action, than on contemplation and mental discipline. What one aims at is the control of mental processes by meditation on them. In consequence, Buddhist thought is impregnated with what we call Psychology. It mixes metaphysics and psychology in a way to which we have no parallel in the West.

In addition to pragmatism and psychological emphasis, Buddhist thought is inclined to what we may call Dialectics. Dialectics is a form of logic, associated in Europe with such names as Zenon of Elea and Hegel. It stands for the belief that, if you think properly and deeply on anything, you arrive at contradictions, i.e. at statements which to some extent cancel each other out. Buddhist thinkers loved paradox and contradiction. I may illustrate this by two quotations from the Diamond Sutra, a treatise written probably about 350 AD., which has had more readers than any other metaphysical work. There the Buddha says: "'Beings', 'beings', O Subhuti, as 'no-beings' have they been taught by the Tathagata. Therefore are they called 'beings'." Or again: "As many beings as there in these world systems, of them I know, in my wisdom, the manifold trends of thought. And why? 'Trends of thought', 'trends of thought', O Subhuti, as 'no trends' have they been taught by the Tathagata. Therefore are they called

'trends of thought'. And why? Past thought is not got at; future thought is not got at; present thought is not got at."

By defeating thought, contradictions are set free. Another fetter of existence has been cast off, and the vastness of the [126] unlimited space of truth opens itself up. In a more secular way, some people get a similar feeling from reading nonsense literature. In Buddhism, the ordinary rules of logic are defied in the name of freedom of the Spirit which transcends them. In addition, it is the introduction of the notion of the Absolute which here, as also with Zenon, Nicholas of Cues and Hegel, makes self-contradictory statements appear permissible."

Transcription completed by Prajnananda on Dharma Day, 14 July 1992

Checked and Printed by Silabhadra September 11-12 (Full Moon Day) 1992

Spellchecked and put into house style Shantavira January 1999