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The Status of the Individual in Theravāda Buddhism

ONE OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT FEATURES of Buddhism is that its founder, the Buddha, was a man—an extraordinary one, it is true—and died as a man. Everything about him was unequivocally within the domain of Nature. What he had done, every other human being could do also, if he chose to and was prepared to make the requisite effort. The whole drama of salvation, as depicted by the Buddha, takes place on this earth, on the stage of life as lived in this world. "Within this fathom-long body," he declared, "are the world and the origin of the world, and the ceasing of the world, and the path leading to its cessation." The world in which the problem is posed and also the solution to it is found is none other than the familiar, everyday world, in which our mortal life completes its brief span. To the Buddha, the world is the scene of human endeavor; the significance that attaches to things derives from the meaning of human life. What is man, and what should he make of his life in this world so as to achieve the supreme value that life affords? These are the problems which the Buddha set himself to solve and to which he found the answer.

The Buddha was a ceaseless searcher for the truth about things as they really are. It was this intense desire to find out the truth that drove him from his father's palace, where the indulgence of luxury gave him no peace, to undertake the most austere penances that imagination could conceive. When these, too, failed to give him satisfaction, he turned his mental eye inward, resolved to find therein, in the depths of his own being, that which the outer world had denied him. He had the daring to demand to know of life itself its right to exist. Truthfulness toward oneself, seriousness of search regardless of consequences, an unfailing sense of reality—these were the qualities which brought an end to his quest, the discovery which became for him a unique teaching.

This teaching he gave to the world as a way of life, telling men and women how they should employ this existence in order to achieve supreme happiness. But he recognized that the question of how cannot be satisfactorily answered without a knowledge of the what—the question, What am I? I must know what I am and what are the things and beings outside me. I

must learn my relation to the external world. I must apprehend the meaning and significance of life before I can possess a genuine canon and standard for my behavior, for my morality. It is only in virtue of conscious cognition that any act, whether it be in doing or in leaving undone, acquires moral value. There can be no real morality without comprehension, without, in fact, a world conception.

Now, the essence of all cognition is the individual. Every act of cognition is always something individual, personal, pertaining to me alone. Even were all men to cognize alike, the content of the cognition would still be the possession of each and every single person. Thus cognition separates. The realization of this fact in its ultimate sense is in Buddhism called wisdom or insight (*paññā*), the understanding of reality (*tathatā*), i.e., that which it is, a fact.

But, besides cognition, there is another function of human nature which can be summarized as emotion. Considered from this point of view, morality, the good life, is founded upon the right feeling of correlation which finds expression in our attitudes toward others. Its proper cultivation is made manifest in every form of compassion, the instinctive feeling of kinship and identity with all that live and breathe, the perfection of compassion (*karuṇā*). These two qualities, wisdom and compassion, are in Buddhism mutually complementary, and their perfection culminates in enlightenment (*bodhī*), whose embodiment is the Buddha, the Enlightened or Awakened One.

An individual is a being, i.e., something that is, but, in the Buddha's teaching, the individual's being is, in fact, a *becoming*, a coming-to-be, something that happens, i.e., an event, a process. And, whenever there is process, whenever anything happens, there must be adequate cause for it to happen. It is in order to explain the adequate cause that the Buddha formulated his teaching of *kamma* (action), the law of cause and effect. And, since in the Buddha's philosophy every cause is itself the effect of an anterior, prior cause and comes to be only in dependence upon such anterior cause, the Buddha further expanded his teaching of *kamma* into what is known as the doctrine of dependent origination, or conditioned simultaneous arising (*paṭicca samuṃpāda*).

Buddhism includes all things that exist under one term, "*sankhāra*," a term considered the epistemological keyword of its philosophy. It means that which is compounded or conditioned; also their compounding and conditioning. All *sankhāra* are processes, divided into two categories, the living and the dead. The living processes are maintained while the living maintain themselves. Every process which we call existence can be analyzed into the

elements of which it is composed, such elements being given the name of *dharmā*, which etymologically means that which has or "bears" certain qualities. Nothing exists apart from *dharmā*.

In this analysis, the human being was found to consist of two parts, *rūpa* and *nāma*, loosely translated as corporeality (matter) and mind, *rūpa* representing the physical elements and *nāma* the mental ones. Matter is composed of the four "elementary" qualities of extension, cohesion, calorificity (temperature), and vibration. The mental elements are similarly divided into four groups: feelings, sensations, or "receptions" (*vedanā*); "perceptions" or ideas (*saññā*); "mental activities," "complexes," "confections," "discriminations," (*sankhārā*); and cognition, "conception," consciousness, (*viññāna*). Matter (*rūpa*) and these four divisions of mind (*nāma*) are never found singly but only in conglomerations or aggregates (*khandhā*).

The five aggregates together constitute what is called the "I" or "personality" or the "individual." The aggregates are not parts or pieces of the individual but phases or forms of development, something like the shape, color, and smell of a flower. Even the sense organs and the organs of the body are likewise really forms of development or manifestations, since they all originate from one common source. There is no "stuff" or substratum as such but only manifestations, energies, activities, processes. In Buddhist thought, to speak of matter as apart from energy would be like speaking of one side of a sheet of paper imagined by itself.

Every living being, since it is a process, is described as a flux, a flowing, a stretching forth, a continuity (*santāna*), or, more frequently, as a combustion, a flame. There is no "substance," no "self" or "soul," underlying the process, unifying it. What we call the "I" or the "personality" or the individual, i.e., what appears to be unitary, is in reality not an entity but a function. It is like a burning flame in which one may distinguish a number of layers of color but these layers are not parts laid out after the fashion of pieces in a mosaic, alongside one another. They are a continuity of changes. So, also, with the five *khandhā*; they are a continuous, unbroken process of action, of which it is expressly said that they constitute a burning. In all of them an arising and a passing away are to be cognized; they are forms of action, processes of mental-corporeal "nutrition" or "sustenance" in which the corporeal as well as the mental forms of grasping (*upādāna*) fall together into one conceptual unity. A fire can burn only as long as it lays hold of new fuel; so, also, the process of individuality is a constant arising, an ever renewed laying hold, a grasping, of the objects of its attachment.

In theistic religions, every living being exists by virtue of the manifesta-

tion in him of a universal force, as a transcendent, an Absolute, called God or *Brahman*. In Buddhism, every living being exists by virtue of an individual force, peculiar to him alone. This force is called by the Buddha the *kamma* of each living being. *Kamma* means action, working, activity. It is, in quite a literal sense, an in-force, an energy, by virtue of which a living being manifests activity after its own unique fashion and in its own unique way reacts upon the external world, thus making him an individuality, a personality. Every living being is a singly determined existence. He is unique by virtue of his actions, his *kamma*. His *kamma* exists, possesses being, solely in dependence upon its material. In the case of *kamma*, the relevant materials are the *khandhā*, or aggregates, already described.

In every moment of the process which is called life or existence, I am the force of *kamma* itself, wholly and entirely the embodiment of my *kamma*, my actions of body, speech, and mind. There is no being, no enduring substantial self or soul, beyond and beneath these happenings, these activities, which constitute my experience. The teaching of "becoming" is the principle which the Buddha emphasized from the very start. He taught a phenomenalistic philosophy very much like that which more than twenty centuries later David Hume expressed in almost identical terms: "I never can catch myself at any time without a perception and never can observe anything but the perception. . . . What we call mind is nothing but a heap or bundle of different perceptions united together by certain relations."¹ There is no enduring entity, no "constant" derived from some external source, but only out-and-out processes constantly in motion, representing at every moment of their existence a fresh biological value. As in a flame there is nothing hidden or concealed, its activity constituting its entire being, so in the I-process there is nothing concealed, nothing standing behind it, no "sub-stance." Its activity constitutes its entire being and this activity in its entirety is disclosed in consciousness to the individual himself and to him only.

Generally speaking, things are so constituted that with them concept and object are separable; it is possible to manipulate the concept apart from the object. But, there is one thing in the world in which, according to Buddhism, no such separation is possible—I myself. That which I conceive myself as, that even I myself am, and every attempt to form a concept is just a form of myself. I myself am the unique, pure reality of the world. This is the basis of the whole teaching of "no-soul" (*anatta*) in Buddhism.

Existence is action itself in process. Action (*kamma*) is that which gives to the process its coherence and its continuity. As such, it presents itself to

¹ *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Book I, Part 4.

me, the individual, as consciousness. Consciousness, however, is not *kamma*, but *kamma* in the course of its self-acting development becomes consciousness. Consciousness is the ultimate value in which at every moment of its existence the form of the energy and the energy itself merge and mingle. Consequently, it is that which gives to the I-process not only conceptual but also actual continuity. It is in this sense that the Buddha says, in one context, that *cetanā* (thinking or consciousness) is *kamma* (action), and *kamma* is *cetanā*. It is in this sense also that the oft-recurring formula has to be understood: "In dependence upon individuality (*nāma-rūpa*) arises consciousness (*viññāna*); in dependence upon consciousness arises individuality."²

The I-process in all its activities, corporeal and mental, is a constant growing-up of life itself, an arising and a perpetual refreshing. It is a self-charging process. In a flame, each moment of its existence represents a specific degree of heat which is the power to set up a succeeding moment of ignition. This continues for as long as inflammable matter, fuel, continues. With the calling into life of a new ignition-moment a new degree of heat is produced which passes anew into living energy, thus forming a repetition of the whole procedure.

The process of life in an individual is likewise a self-sustaining process. *Kamma* (action) does not have to receive an impetus from outside to come into activity; it is activity itself. *Kamma* does not, like a cord of some solid substance, thread itself through this process, constituting what might be called a soul, any more than the lightning in the firmament has a cord to join the flashes together. In life, there is no I that experiences, no I that thinks, speaks, does. I do not have these as my functions, but this doing, speaking, thinking, itself I am. Buddhism does not deny the existence of a personality or a "soul" in the empirical self. What it does deny is a permanent individuality, an unchanging "self." A man's personality is at any given moment a fact (*sacca*), but it does not correspond to any fixed entity in man, something that persists while all else changes. In Buddhism, to be real does not mean to be permanent in that sense.

It is the thirst for life, the craving for it, which upholds life, causing it again and again to spring up anew, and which is life itself. In the flame, it is the heat of the flame which upholds the flame and is the flame itself. This thirst for life (*taṇhā*) manifests itself as clinging or grasping (*upādāna*). "Personality, they say. But what does the Exalted One say is the person?" To which the answer is given: "The five forms of clinging is the personality, the Exalted One has said — the clinging to body, to sensations, to perceptions, to

²*Sāmyutta-nikāya*, Part II, Book II, chap. XII, secs. 3-4.

mental activities, to consciousness." And, when asked how this personality arises, the answer is, "The thirst for life that leads to rebirth, bound up with lust and craving, now here, now there, reveling in delight. This, the Exalted One has said, is the arising of personality."

Thus, in every moment of my life I myself fashion the next moment with the present life and the life that shall follow it. I am, and I become, in the most literal sense, the architect of my own fate, of my destiny. "The self is Lord of the self, who else is the Lord?" Every individual is a thing unique by virtue of his actions and the result of these actions.

What happens at the death of an individual? In Buddhism, death is nothing but living in a new environment. Whenever an existence disintegrates, the *kamma* by virtue of which it has been "burning" takes hold anew in a new location, and there sets alight a new I-process that unfolds itself into a new personality which is neither the same as the old one nor yet another but is a continuance from which both absolute diversity and absolute identity are excluded. As fuel is necessary for the flame, so a new existence needs new "fuel." What is the "fuel" when the flame is carried by the wind? The wind itself, says the Buddha. When a being leaves one body and arises in another, the "fuel" is the craving for life itself.³ As the igniting spark becomes the flame by developing itself, so does *kamma* become the new form of existence.

This continuance is again a unique process in the case of each individual. The fact of my birth derives not from parents nor from God but from my own previous dying. Dying is nothing but a backward view of birth, and birth nothing but a forward view of death. I take rise in my parents only in the same sense as the fountain takes its rise in the hill. Heirs of deeds, the Buddha calls living beings, not heirs of father and mother. They spring from the womb of *kamma*. At every moment of my existence I am the final member of a beginningless series in a self-sustaining process. "A world without end is this round of birth and death," says the Buddha. "No beginning can be seen of those beings hindered by ignorance, bound by craving, running the round of birth and death."

Such a process can never have a beginning, because then it would not be a self-sustaining thing but a product of something else. To seek a beginning of life is like chasing after a horizon which ever recedes. But, can we say there is a first beginning to life? Yes, in the same way as we can say the spring welling from the rock is the first beginning of the river. It is the first beginning when one objectifies the river as an identity. It should sound no

³*Ibid.*, Part V, Book II, chap. XLV, sec.9.

more strange to say that life is beginningless than to say, as all theistic religions do, that God is beginningless.

Every single moment of existence is something unique. It is a mathematical instant (*khana*), the moment of an action's efficiency. Although the moments that constitute an individual's life are not connected with each other by any pervading stuff, there is, nevertheless, as has already been shown, a connection between them. It is the fact that their manifestations are subject to definite laws, the laws of causation. The flow of life is not a haphazard process. Every single moment in it is a "dependently-originating" moment, i.e., it depends for its origin on the moment that precedes it. Thus, existence becomes dependent existence and is expressed by the formula, "If there is this, there comes to be that."⁴ Strictly speaking, there is no causality at all, no production of one from the other. The relation is one of "consecution," in which there is no destruction of one thing and no creation of another, no influx of one substance into another, but only a constant, uninterrupted, infinitely graduated change. In the case of each individual, his individuality persists, and he is a separate personality, his separateness consisting in the individualism of the sequence of *kamma*—causation.

Discrimination between individuals is recognized by the Buddha when he says: "And I saw, looking at the world with the awakened eye, beings of noble kind and of common kind, acute of mind and obtuse of mind, well endowed and ill endowed, quick to understand and slow to understand. . . ." And he goes on: "It is like some Lotus flowers which grow in deep, muddy water, while others push up toward the surface of the water, and yet others emerge from the water and stand up free from the water."⁵

One of the Buddhist texts is called *Puggala-paññatti* (Designation of Human Types) and deals with the various types of individuals that exist in the world. But such discrimination is between different natures, on the basis of achievement and spiritual development, and not on such adventitious things as caste or class. "Not by birth does one become noble or lowly but by actions" was the Buddha's "lion roar."

Not only is man his own master and the master of his fate and destiny, but, in his capacity for attaining the highest spiritual development, that of enlightenment, man is higher than even the gods. It is his sole responsibility to work out his own emancipation from the fetters that bind him. This life has value in itself, independently of any life hereafter or even a belief in it, because it is as a human being in this world that *nibbāna*, the Buddhist goal

⁴*Majjhima-nikāya*, Part II, sec. 32; *Samyutta-nikāya*, Part II, Book II, chap. XII, sec. 23.

⁵*Mahāvagga-vinaya*, Book I, chap. V, secs. 2ff.

of supreme happiness, can be won. No man is so debased that he is beyond redemption. Well known is the story of the brigand, Angulimāla, who, having committed ninety-nine murders, met the Buddha while on his way to kill his own mother. The Buddha rescued him from his evil ways, and Angulimāla became an *arabant*, a perfect saint, and one of the most famous of the Buddha's disciples. The Buddha, in judging human individuals capable of realizing a perfected humanity, independent of any transcendental outlook, raised life to a very high value. It is the qualitative estimate of life, however, that is emphasized, the life of individuals ever lifting the world to higher insights and nobler issues.

The world into which we are born as individuals is, according to Buddhism, a world full of *dukkha*. "*Dukkha*" is most frequently but misleadingly translated as pain, sorrow, suffering, misery, the opposite of well-being. It is true that there is a very great deal of unhappiness in the world, and that fact has to be accepted by everyone. But the Buddhist conception of *dukkha* involves more than mere suffering and pain. It involves also the element of imperfection, the incompleteness that life exhibits, the conflict between our wishes and our attainments. It is not merely the intermittent frustration of our desires but a quality permeating experience even for the most fortunate of us, the sense of our alienation from the world, what some call "anguish" and Thoreau describes as "quiet desperation."

But, in accordance with the law of cause and effect, enunciated by the Buddha as a universal principle, *dukkha*, too, has a cause which can be controlled and ultimately eliminated. The cause of *dukkha* is called "*tanhā*," generally, but wrongly, translated as desire. *Tanhā* is, rather, what might be called thirst, the craving of the limited, individual, living creature seeking to gratify itself in its separateness and to use the external world as a means to satisfy its self-centered needs. The evil in man's life is man-made and, therefore, eradicable by man, without outside interference. In Buddhism, there is no such thing as original sin, no innate depravity, and no one is fore-ordained to be doomed. There is, likewise, no atonement and no forgiveness of sins, because there is no one who can forgive, and because a transgression, once committed, cannot be redeemed. Every cause has its inevitable effect; all we can do is to find out and understand the cause and take steps to remove it, if we want it removed.

The morality of Buddhism consists of the path prescribed by the Buddha. The individual, however, is completely free to follow whatever path he chooses. The Buddha claims no monopoly as guide; he is only a *kaliyāna mitta* (good friend) to those who seek his advice and are willing to profit by his

experience. The need of the four freedoms for human happiness was recognized by the Buddha many centuries before the Atlantic Charter. Freedom of worship, freedom to question the efficacy of any dogma whatsoever, should be a basic human right. He called his own teaching the "come-and-see" doctrine, the teaching which invites investigation before approval. Hence the absence of religious persecution in Buddhist lands. A man should also be free to speak his thoughts, provided his speech is free from hatred and slander, truthful, in proper time and place, and likely to be of profit to himself or to others or to both.

Fear, according to the Buddha, results from the feeling of bondage. Freedom is every man's birthright, freedom from bondage both physical and spiritual. The whole purpose of the Buddha's teaching is, according to him, to teach men how to be free, perfectly, supremely free, in every conceivable way. "Even as the great ocean has but one taste, the taste of salt, so has this doctrine and discipline but one taste, the taste of freedom."⁶ The injunction everywhere is for men and women to "get free."

The Buddha was a great believer in democracy. The Order of Monks which he founded is the oldest democratic institution in the world. Every decision taken therein is guided by the votes of those present. No one can be made to suffer a penalty for any offense, even after he is found guilty by a committee of his peers, unless the offender admits his guilt of his own free will. In the Order, the Buddha claimed no greater privilege than was voluntarily afforded to him as teacher. When the time came for him to leave this life, he stoutly refused to appoint a successor, leaving it to the monks themselves to choose their own head, if they so desired.

What does Buddhism have to say regarding free will? The question does not seem ever to have been asked of the Buddha, but, if he had been asked, he would probably have answered that the question does not arise or that it is inaccurately put. There can be no such thing as a free will outside the causal sequence which constitutes the world process. All that can be said in this connection is to ask, when an individual acts, does he do so through deliberate choice or through whim or caprice? Our actions are generally impulsive; desires are often immediately translated into deeds without a thought of the implications involved. What the Buddha would have us do is to act with mindfulness, analyzing motives before allowing them to influence conduct, thus allowing an interval of inactivity between thought and deed, intention and execution. The cultivation of this quality of awareness (*sati*) is one of the basic principles of Buddhist meditation. It is freedom of choice which

⁶ *Dīgha-nikāya*, Part III, secs. 180-193.

such awareness will help to achieve that makes us free and enables us to achieve emancipation from all bondage. Self-discipline and mindfulness are the virtues that give to an individual confidence, dignity, and decorum and make him a true nobleman (*ariya*).

Though every individual is, in Buddhism, a unique phenomenon, no individual can be an island unto himself in the sense that he can exist alone, without being a member of the human community. The very word "*kula-putta*," clansman, used to indicate the layman, is an acknowledgment of this fact. There are four basic needs which have to be supplied for anyone to have even the barest minimum necessary for existence: clothing, food, shelter, and medicine. In normal life, these can be obtained only through communal living. Even the ascetic, living far away from the haunts of men, like the "lone-dwelling rhinoceros," has occasionally to visit human habitation in search of salt and acid foods.

Because of this essential dependence on society, the individual develops social relationships and obligations which he has to honor and satisfy. But, because society is nothing apart from the individuals that constitute it, society, too, has its obligations to the individual. Six such mutual relationships are specifically mentioned in a discourse of the Buddha. They are the relationships between parents and children, between the educator and the educated, between husband and wife, between friends, relatives, and neighbors, between employer and employee, between the religious and the laity. To give but one example of such a relationship—that between husband and wife: the husband should always honor his wife and never be wanting in respect to her; he should love her and be faithful to her; he should secure her a dignified position and a comfortable life; and he should win her goodwill by timely gifts, including jewelry. The wife, in her turn, should supervise and look after household affairs; she should entertain guests, visitors, friends, relatives, and employees; she should love her husband and be faithful to him; she should protect his interests and safeguard his welfare; she should be skilled and energetic in all her activities. Love between husband and wife is called "*sadāra brahme cariya*," sacred family life, such a relationship being considered almost religious or sacred.

It should be mentioned in passing that in a truly Buddhist society, though a husband, as head of the household, has certain privileges, there is no discrimination between men and women. There has never been any system of seclusion of women in Buddhist lands. The Buddha declared that what a man can do a woman can do equally well, sometimes even better.⁷

⁷A practical example of this is that the first female prime minister in history comes from the Buddhist country of Ceylon.

The individual is told that in his actions he should always be mindful of their effects on those around him. Happiness, declares the Buddha, can never be the result of selfishness. "Work for the welfare both of yourself and of others" (*ubhinnaṃ atthaṃ caratha*) is a constantly recurring theme. Basic morality consists in abstaining from five wrong actions: killing and hurting life, theft, wrong indulgence in sensual pleasures, speech that is false or otherwise wrong, and intoxicants and drugs that cause heedlessness. All these things are considered evil because of the harm they do, not only to oneself, but also to others. Abstinence from them is called observance of the Five Precepts. This is regarded as the minimum requirement of the good life. The first precept deals with the sanctity of life, both one's own and that of others. The second precept enjoins due regard for the rights of others, with regard to both their property and also everything else that is rightfully theirs. The third is to prevent men, not only from overindulgence, but also from being a burden on society by appropriating more than their proper share of the good things of life. The fourth is essential for the maintenance of trust and confidence and good relationship with others. The fifth is, among other things, to prevent oneself from being a nuisance to others.

Because one has to depend on the community of fellow men for one's welfare, the debt one incurs thereby is immense. The only way of repaying it is by service to humanity. This is a duty enjoined on monk and layman alike. The monk discharges this duty by being an exemplar of the good life and acting as counsellor and friend in solving human problems, the layman in various other ways open to him. The good man's life should be a life of dedication, both to himself and to others. When, soon after the Buddha's enlightenment, the Great Brahmā appeared before him to salute him and sing his praises, among the things he said was that the Buddha could now consider himself as being *anana*, completely free from his "debt" to the world. The path to this "debtlessness" has to be trodden for a long time with unceasing earnest effort. It is not a path already created for someone to tread on it. Each step has to be created by the traveler by his own treading.

Religion has sometimes been defined as an estimate of human life based on a hypothesis and suffused by an aspiration. What, then, in Buddhism, is the aspiration of the individual? The ultimate goal of the good life is supreme happiness, to be achieved here on this earth, in this human life, and not after death in some faraway heaven. This goal is called *nibbāna*.

"*Nibbāna*" literally means ceasing to be, extinction, like the blowing out of a candle. Extinction it undoubtedly is, of the fires of lust, hatred, infatuation, and all other passions and torments. What is extinguished is selfish desire and the craving for and the need of continued rebirth. But it does not

mean either a state of escape from the unbearable sorrows of life into nothingness or sheer annihilation. It includes the realization that one has achieved an ardently sought emancipation, a hitherto unexperienced freedom. It is a conscious, positive experience, having in it the qualities of peace, joy, insight, and love. The freedom and the joy come from the realization that all bondage has been destroyed. The insight comes from the true understanding of reality made possible by the destruction of cramping desires and attachments. The love is the free and compassionate outpouring of ourselves to others without asking anything in return, an all-embracing love that knows no bounds, love for "all the universe in all its heights and depths and breadth," free from all possessiveness and making no demands on the person or object that is loved, a loving oneness with others with the releasing joy that it brings.⁸

The individual who has attained *nibbāna* is described as "*brahma-bhūta*," become divine or one with the highest (God) and "*damma-bhūta*," one with the Absolute or with Actuality.⁹ *Nibbāna* is the only thing which is not a *sankhāra*, a compound, a complex of elements. It is, therefore, the only thing that is unchangeable and eternal. It is, however, a *dhamma*, and, since the old formula says all *dhammā* are devoid of self (*sabbe dhammā anatta*), there is no abiding self either.

What happens to the individual who has attained *nibbāna* when he dies and his body is cremated? He is described as having gone into *parinibbāna*, i.e., *nibbāna* without any residue whatsoever of the *khandhā*, the aggregates. *Parinibbāna* is *nibbāna* without corporeality, the transition of sorrowlessness into timelessness, changelessness, perfect peace. While *nibbāna* is still colored by the last dregs of individuality, *parinibbāna* is not so besmirched. It is a condition "where there is neither arising, nor passing away, nor dying; neither cause nor effect; neither change nor standing still."¹⁰ And yet, it is not complete annihilation. When the Buddha was charged with being a nihilist, he said that nihilism was one of the extremes which he emphatically condemned. Even to the man of knowledge it has never been raised—the curtain that conceals the "other side." It is revealed only to him who has gone there. By no stretch of thinking can it be reached, because it lies beyond all thought.

According to the teaching of the Buddha, every man makes his own *nibbāna* and his own *parinibbāna*. All indeed lies in us: the entire world, with its arising and its passing away. As the beginning of the world is individual, so also is its ending.

⁸ *Sutta-nīpata*, verse 1076. ⁹ See *Udāna*, VIII. 1. ¹⁰ *Ibid.*