

Study and Practice

IRMGARD SCHLOEGL

CHRISTIANITY IS PART of the Western cultural inheritance, and as such it is reflected in our ways of thinking and speaking, mirrored in the structure of our languages. Whether Christian or not, Christmas and Easter are traditional festivals, 'holy days'. Sectarian and/or national inflections, though significant, are but slight compared with the general background. However irreligious our times may seem, ways of thinking and language structure change slowly because they depend on basic assumptions that seem so self-evident and beyond question that they are deemed universal. Though cultural values may decline to the point of becoming obsolete, these basic assumptions remain ingrained. Thus the Westerner, even if he is not a professed Christian, holds or feels that religion is somehow connected with God. And Buddhism not being a theistic religion, having no creator-God, no revealed dogmas or commandments, appears more as a 'way of life' or a philosophy than a religion. This is one aspect of its appeal to the Westerner who is then pleased to ignore the rich traditions of religious observances, liturgy and worship; conversely, being attracted by their otherness, he may get attached to the exotic forms rather than the message—the Buddha's Way out of suffering.

This is a source of misunderstanding, an obstacle to fruitful dialogue in depth, and the cause of mistranslations, especially of basic terms which, once adopted, are hard to eradicate as they have already become part of the 'picture' formed of what Buddhism is. Western interest in Buddhism is still growing; on both the scholarly and the popular level, much more is now known about it—but enough? However great the interest, has Buddhism yet influenced our basic assumptions, moulded our ways of thinking?

Buddhism is a universal religion; it has shown that it can take root and grow in many different countries and climates, contributing to or even producing a flowering of native culture. But it is said that Buddhism cannot be considered as established in a country until there is a native Sangha

or community ordained and trained in an unbroken tradition. This is true for all schools of Buddhism. There is good reason for it, because during his religious practice and study, the native postulant encounters differences in basic assumptions. As his training continues, fundamental terms are clarified, earlier mistakes and misunderstandings can be corrected. A classic example of such gradual assimilation is the introduction of Buddhism to China.

It is encouraging to see this process of assimilation beginning to emerge in the West today, but it has a long way yet to go. This article seeks to contribute to it by examining two concepts that to the Western way of thinking are mutually exclusive—'religion' and 'mind'.

Religion emerged with humanity, which is to say that it is a basic need of the human heart, and all attempts at definition are really inadequate. We can interpret only to the extent that we 'see', i.e., understand. The late Master Sessō of Daitoku-ji once made that point succinctly. What can be described, he said, is the form, not the essence. For example, worshippers approaching a Shinto Shrine, offering a coin, pulling the rope, and then bowing. However, all this does not and cannot portray what happens in the heart of the sincere believer bowing in the Presence. Yet the essence, not to say the blessing, is in that.

Religious formulations themselves, in all ages and cultures, seem like so many different 'robes' that fittingly cloak and thus render perceptible what in itself is imperceptible and ineffable. Whether this is conceived of as immanent or transcendent is already elaboration, 'robe', but the proximity or touch of the ineffable enlivens and gives succour as well as meaning and place to the individual life, ensures a sense of partaking. The human heart yearns for this 'spiritual dimension' and strives towards it as its true home. And whenever the heart is deprived for too long of an adequate, valid 'pointer', it will either in despair grasp at any fetish or folly, or wither and dry out. The most cursory look at past—and present—history will confirm that reason alone has never been able to withstand this yearning fervour when it arises. Hence the crucial importance of an adequate rendering expressed in terms suitable for the period or epoch but not pandering to temporary trends or fashions. What is grave and constant in human experience is not subject to fluctuation.

The need for such correct rendering applies also to the translation of religious texts. Many specific Buddhist conceptions are foreign to the Western way of thinking, and need assimilation before an adequate trans-

lation is possible at all. The use of an approximate term with contrary connotations is likely to spawn a host of misconceptions. When the earliest translators used the term 'mind' for the basic Buddhist term 'citta' (Sanskrit)—Chinese 'hsin', Japanese 'shin'—there was sufficient cause for such mistranslation, but there is no need to perpetuate old mistakes.

Towards the end of the last century, in the wake of our 'Western enlightenment' and the consequent break-down of the established religion, a 'well-informed and well-regulated mind' was truly the ideal, all that could be wished and hoped for, and productive of the 'gentle-man'—not born, but made so by upbringing and education, and with deep faith in enlightened reason. Nowadays, after two devastating wars and their aftermath, with the threat of nuclear war, energy crises and disturbed ecology, the general outlook is both irreligious and pessimistic. Faith has turned into hope, invested either in science or in some form of 'modern age'. The religious faith in 'enlightened reason' has gone. For the modern Westerner, all connotations of 'mind' relate to thinking. However defined, 'mind' points to thought, and a postulated subject who *has* thoughts, who thinks, and is conscious of his thoughts. Hence 'my mind' which I think I know! To be mindful then means either my observing something, or bearing it in my mind, i.e., remaining conscious of it and acting accordingly. Though I flatter myself in thinking I can do just this, fact shows that I am 'constitutionally' unable to do so! A clear, cool mind is indeed a boon; but does it always remain clear and cool?

This is not to denigrate the mind, nor the precious and hard-won faculty of intellect and reason. But who can deny that there are vast areas of life-experience to which it is not applicable, and others which preclude its functioning correctly? The late Thomas Merton found that 'the intellect is only theoretically independent of desire and appetite in ordinary, actual practice. It is constantly blinded and perverted by the ends and aims of passions and the evidence it presents to us with such a show of impartiality and objectivity is fraught with interest and propaganda. We have become marvelous at self-delusion; all the more so because we have gone to such trouble to convince ourselves of our own absolute infallibility' (*The Seven Storey Mountain*, Sheldon Press, p. 205).

Further, 'mind' is something that I have; it is 'my' mind, possessed by me, and so has connotations of 'I' and 'I doing' on the one hand, and of thinking, head, on the other. 'Mind', however spelled, will always keep these connotations, thus the 'mind' of somebody or something who orders,

plans, controls—if not God, then ‘Universal Mind’. Whatever that might be, it is at least *something* that *does*. We are firmly back with the Western basic assumption of a planner without whom things go off the rails, and thus have misunderstood the Eastern basic assumption of self-regulating and total, without a planner and controller. This misunderstanding then detracts into philosophy or cosmology and away from the human aspect with which Buddhism is concerned: suffering as a part of the human condition, the cause of suffering, the cure of it, and the Way that effects the cure. The latter leads inevitably away from ‘mind’, for surely it is in the heart that I suffer. No reasoning, however lucid, will get me out of an emotional state; in depression or rage I am not amenable to reason, ‘my mind’ is somehow absent, has actually been taken over by something else as language aptly describes in phrases like ‘out of one’s mind’ or ‘beside oneself’. And in such a state, thus taken over, I literally no longer know what I do, or what I say once the argument has become ‘heated’.

All Buddhist teaching refers to such states as engendered by the ‘afflicting’ passions and aims at their irrevocable eradication as the cure. But the passions have always been connected with the heart which pumps our warm, mammalian blood that easily boils, often throbs with all kinds of lusts, freezes with fear or stands still in horror! No Westerner would connect the passions with ‘mind’. Yet ‘heart’ has also connotations other than the passions but different from ‘mind’, such as a good heart, a kind heart, and warm-hearted. So that actually ‘heart’ seems to present two aspects, a wild and primitive one connected with the ‘Fires’ that flare as the passions, and a warm and good one. This latter is also linked with truth and sincerity. When I thank you from the bottom of my heart, I really mean and feel it. From which finally come expressions like ‘the heart of . . .’, meaning the essence, the gist; not just the vital part but what, in short, that something really *is*. Hence the ‘Heart Sutra’ conveying *in toto* the whole of the *Prajna Paramita*.

Though I *think* I am because I think, when indicating myself, the finger goes unerringly to the chest-heart rather than the forehead. I easily forget what I know in my mind only; not so what has been impressed on the heart. Terms like ‘pondering’ or ‘contemplating’ something, though not exclusive of mental processes, have wider connotations, and so has ‘reflecting’. Pondering in the heart can be akin to deep thought, especially ‘lost in thought’ though the latter can also mean daydreaming. But lost in deep thought, or pondering in the heart, is other, weightier and more compre-

hensive than 'mere thinking' however concentrated.

Such reflections indicate the difficulties faced in translation. In context, 'mind' may sometimes be the only possibility, but mostly 'heart' will convey a wider and/or deeper comprehension. As for consistency, when 'mind' is used, it could be followed by the original term in brackets. Ordinary use confuses mind, thinking, consciousness, awareness, etc. The Yogacara-Vijnaptimatra School has examined this whole field in detail, and its differentiations might be helpful. The still popular translation as 'Mind-Only' School again confuses the issue, though recently the correct translation as 'Consciousness-Only' has come into use. Or should it be better 'Awareness-Only'? The awareness that arises *of itself*, total and instantaneous, when I prick my finger on a thorn? Reaction and thinking only come after, are secondary, and in that order. The reaction is still total—outch, and jerk; then awareness of the smart, and conscious assessment: pricked, thorn; and consequent action: pull it out. The Buddha's parable of the man shot by a poisoned arrow illustrates also the 'unskilful' but more usual pattern of the I-deluded (passion-afflicted) sequence. The reaction, while still total at the moment of perception, awareness, then flares as anger that strives towards discharge, hence seeks a cause to punish or annihilate, wanting to know what man shot what type of arrow. But this is the reaction of a little child who, when knocking himself against the corner of the table, slaps it, 'naughty table'; it has done it to *me*. Neither man nor arrow, but *I* am the cause of this reaction. That is Buddhist 'thinking'.

How does this tally with the basic Buddhist teachings, such as the Three Signs of Being? Though I know that everything is subject to change, yet when something I hold dear is lost, do I remain unaffected? And do I get upset if something occurs that does not suit me at all? What happens? From underneath the 'Fires' flare up, burning as the passions and afflicting me or even carrying me away by their compulsion. This applies not only to the obvious, crude passions like rage and lust, but especially to their more subtle and hence unsuspected versions that burn just as fiercely in my ingrained views and considered opinions, and which are the source of all intolerance and fanaticism. Are these connected with my reasonable mind? I shy away from such considerations, for in 'cold blood' it is hard to believe that I can say and do what hurts or harms another. We need to be very open, very honest and very courageous to look into our hearts, to find out what is there. The mind deceives and is at the mercy of the 'Fires'.

Quoting the Third (Chinese) Zen Patriarch, 'The Great Way is not difficult, it only avoids picking and choosing.' But who is the picker and chooser? If I postulate a 'doer', an I that picks and chooses, I now want to get rid of the picking and choosing—which is only choosing again. But in fact *I am* just this picking and choosing and the urge to manipulate according to choice. Hence the Buddha's insight into the voidness of I is fundamental to all Buddhism. The notion of 'I' who cannot accept impermanence when it does not suit me (picking and choosing!) constitutes my suffering. Yet these my reactions against undesired change, or lack of desired change, are the compounded result of 'I' picking and choosing and the concomitant 'Fires', the passions that flare up as emotional reactions. We suffer ourselves and make others suffer when thus afflicted.

'I' being picking and choosing, am thus also the hapless agent as well as victim of the afflicting passions. That is why I cannot get rid of them, or of suffering, by an act of will. The Buddha clearly saw into this nexus. He perceived the notion of I as mistaken, deluded—and taught the Way out of suffering. All Buddhist practice is based on that insight and geared to that end. Buddhism is not a teaching to be learned sitting in an armchair, but a Way actually to be trodden, step by step. Thus learning accrues from familiarity with the treading of the Way rather than from cramming the mind, already full of notions, with still more. All Buddhist schools warn against this. They advocate a way of practice which is conducive to a weaning from the deluded notion of 'I' and thus from the afflicting passions engendered by picking and choosing. It is *not I* who need to be changed—a deluded notion is not in need of change into another one, but needs to be shed. What changes proportionally with this shedding process is the nature of the 'Fires'. As the picking and choosing—I—decreases, the 'Fires', too, lose their elementary compulsion and primitivity; they become more human in the best sense of the word and finally spiritualized, yet with their tremendous energy always remaining constant. 'The Buddha-Nature is the passions; the passions are the Buddha-Nature.' Thus the eradication of the afflicting passions is actually the transformation of the energy, strength or power inherent in the 'Fires', and yes, this is a formidable task.

Terms like 'mind', or 'rational', lead the Westerner to neglect the very real and formidable problem of the 'afflicting passions', and thus to miss the central message of Buddhism. For if 'I' have to cut off the passions, then I cannot make head or tail of the second of the Three Signs of Being, Not-I. Yet this becomes self-evident when it is realized that I cannot drop

picking and choosing because I am it, and thus I also give rise to the 'Fires'. Hence, 'No-I' equals 'No Fires'—which is the cure.

A further complication derived from the term 'mind' is my conviction that I can observe myself. But to observe something, distance is needed. I can see the lines in the palm of my hand when there is sufficient distance; when this hand slaps my face, I experience the impact but no longer see the lines. I cannot observe myself; 'the eye that sees but cannot see itself'. Notionally, 'in the mind' (fortunately, not factually), I can split myself and am then perplexed as to who observes whom. This is futile. Nature abhors a vacuum. Into the 'gap' necessary for observation slip my notions and reactions (see the Merton quotation above) and there 'paint a picture'—the deluded seeing. Thus what I see are my notions, etc. Obviously this process differs radically from direct awareness, or direct seeing which is rather like stubbing one's toe; it arises of itself, instantaneous and complete, and needs no observer or act of observing.

Neither can I, or 'my mind', observe the 'Fires'; awareness of the 'Fires' roaring inside without being carried away by them into picture-making and concomitant action is not an act of observation but an act of endurance of their burning—and this is what purification means in the religious sense. This demands the inner strength to just endure an onslaught of the 'Fires'. To be precise, if the energy of the 'Fires' is neither refused nor discharged, energy being dynamic, it will burn what is there—the notion of I, picking and choosing, which I experience as great affliction. I am the sufferer. The container of the energy is the body in which the 'Fires' rise and burn. Willing and aware endurance and suffering the burning away of the notion of 'I' constitutes the purification, the transformation of the 'raw' energy of the 'Fires'. The inner strength to step again and again into the 'Fires' and endure their burning is the opposite of the brute strength of the bully. Religious practice is geared to cultivate this inner strength, the other side of which is warmth of heart.

'Mind', missing the religious quality and warmth of heart, does not satisfy the heart. Hence it is often questioned whether Buddhism is a religion; 'mind' makes it seem 'reasonable', something I can study, grasp, and possess myself of. Any demands for training are then understood as 'mind-training' for which meditation is mistaken. Though exaggerated, the following picture is not unfamiliar: I, coveting 'higher states of consciousness' or perhaps just wanting to be healthy and wealthy, set out to find the quickest and most efficient 'technique', and preferably one that 'suits me'.

True also, the meditation manuals do rather read like engineering instructions, 'place the mind here, there, make it do this or that', etc. I am then so busy following all these instructions, many contradictory, that I have no time to be calm and relaxed! Surely it all panders to the busy planner and doer, I, and I have not moved away an inch from my old attitude, only more away from the Buddha's Path. Since the latter often differs from what *I want*, following the Buddha's Path is concerned less with me and more with the Buddha. For that, a true change of heart is needed, not just changing my mind.

With these considerations we can now look afresh at religious practice, the religious discipline with which the religious life starts, and continues, and without which the religious exercise of meditation is not only ineffective but (see above) actually increases I-activity and preoccupation with myself. Since a surfeit of I is the main cause of my suffering, my difficulties then also increase. 'When the cart sticks in the mire, do you whip the cart or the ox?' Do I then blame the 'method' or my ignorance? Do I blame the drinks when, having inordinately mixed them, I suffer from a hangover?

The Buddha taught from the insight to which he awoke and which made him Buddha. If we wish to follow his Way, we need first to acclimatize ourselves to it or we go astray. We also need a scrupulous and courageous honesty, and a willingness to learn. Buddhism has no commandments as such—it points the Way. Thus the inevitability of change is emphasized; nowhere is it stated that *I must* take it with equanimity, for the fact is that I cannot do so. No 'I' can—and thereby hangs the story. So I honestly admit that if something dear to me recedes I do feel upset or unhappy—for a while. That is natural and human. But this can and does have overtones of other reactions—bitter anguish that just cannot let go, or fierce resentment that can turn quite vicious; and above all there is the reiterated refrain of 'Why must it happen to *me*?' With this I have lost sight of the way things are—'coming to be and ceasing to be'—and because of attachment I suffer, resenting the loss rather than the natural sorrow that is part of the human state. Such things befall us all, are grave and constant in human experience, and though sad are yet without bitterness and anguish. And just because we thus all share in our common lot rather than 'mine only', there is a heartwarming, healing quality that binds us together, forms the root of understanding compassion, and delivers us from the excess of 'my' sorrow which, being excessive because exclusive, is experienced as intolerable.

Naturally this does not only apply to loss of what is dear. The classical Buddhist formula for suffering is, 'parting from what is dear, having what is not dear; not having what one wants, having what one does not want'. In short, suffering is non-acceptance of what actually is, of the way things are.

At that moment, the mind rears up, 'And if one would just meekly accept everything, one would have been trampled down and rotted away long since'. But surely this is deluded reasoning, and the Buddha's Way leads out of that, too, because it awakens the pilgrim from the primordial delusion from which I—every I—suffer. A concrete example of accepting what is: I develop a tooth-ache in the middle of the night, and it is pretty painful. Do I now 'accept' it and go on suffering ever-increasing agony for days on end, with the prospect of blood-poisoning? Or do I decide to go to the dentist as soon as possible? Meanwhile, to alleviate the pain, I may take some medicine but will otherwise have to resign myself to bearing with it till the morning when I can see the dentist. The more I fret and do not accept the situation as it is, the more I have to bear; not only the pain but my fretting, my resentment, my restless worrying to do something, anything, without knowing what. Not only does this add to the physical pain but it exhausts me and so makes me even less able to bear what, for the time being, is factually there—an aching tooth.

We all know that 'in the agitation of the moment'—afflicted by the 'Fires' and thus driven by blind compulsion—we are not really capable of meeting the situation; our attempts to do so are inevitably exaggerated. Why? The 'Fires' are a flare-up of elemental energy, primitive and a-human, thus afflicting and causing harm in the human realm. What do we do if really angry? Even if the energy does not discharge itself directly but is 'kept in', we are now charged with it; we do not walk but stomp, do not close a door but slam it, etc. Great restraint is called for if thus afflicted, neither repression nor discharge.

In all this we may find a first vague inkling of the Buddhist teaching of No-I. Only I can be afflicted, and inevitably I am afflicted if I cannot take things the way they are, now, at this moment. Like the toothache in the middle of the night.

We can now go still further and deeper. The more strongly I feel 'I', or the more preoccupied I am with me, mine, my concerns, with my likings and loathings, the more these will hold sway over me; and consequently the more separate, unhappy, insecure or misunderstood I feel, until what is

other than I begins to assume threatening proportions. So I, cut off from you, set myself up against you because I am afraid; the more 'I', the greater the fear. Even if I band together with a few like-minded, or many like-minded, to alleviate my isolation and now think 'we' instead of 'I', 'we' irrevocably are against 'you', because you are other than we. And being naturally prone to the 'Fires' as every 'I' is, the more so if subsumed in a collective 'we', intolerance and aggression are the consequences. What is aggression at root if not fear? Yes, the other side of 'I' is fear—fear of loss, fear of diminution, fear of you, fear of death—FEAR.

The Buddha teaches the Way out of this fear, the suffering from it, and the suffering that it engenders for I and others. The hope he holds out for all of us is that by actually treading his Path we, too, may find deliverance from this oppression. Geared to wean us from our attachments, delusions and fears—in short from the notion of I—its practice can and often does go 'against my grain'. As I cannot remove myself, nor change my reactions all at once, religious practices are designed to effect just this, but demand an inner willingness. Thus they are an 'affair of the heart', cannot be wished or forced on one from outside, and need to be undertaken voluntarily, the way of practice. Along this way is cultivated an inner attitude of restraint, which brings awareness of the presence of attachments and aversions but prevents being carried away by either.

In my daily life, I have got used to certain things and actions and have learnt by and large to accept them, perhaps grudgingly, because I have no choice in the matter. Such as having to go to work at a certain time, etc. But really looking at my actions and reactions, it is almost stunning to see how I deceive myself with evasions and subterfuges in order to keep up the illusion that I nevertheless can do or order things as it suits me, and how much or how hotly I react against any categorical 'must, now'. This 'contrariness' of 'I' is really my need for I-assertion, I-affirmation; I may suffer because of it, but it keeps up the illusion of 'I'.

A religious practice goes straight against all that, though it is laid on gently to begin with. Discipline and restraint are the means to gradually weaken the overwhelming sense of 'I'. As it becomes less assertive, less obtrusive, in its place arises an inner strength that is not 'mine', not subject to my vagaries, and capable of 'right action' in a given situation because it is not dependent on 'I', on my attachments or aversions. The cultivation of this inner strength—which is the transformation of the passions—is decisive for all spiritual development. Only it, rather than I, is *strong*

enough to accept the moment as it is with but little ado, to make do with little, not to give in to an untoward want or aversion, and capable of sustained application when the situation demands. By virtue of this inner or moral strength, when sufficiently cultivated, even a full flare-up of the 'Fires' can be endured—the strength to refrain when everything inside roars 'I must or I die', or the strength to continue though 'I won't'. Ever continued, the practice matures.

To ignore religious practice as out-moded and not fitting modern times is to miss its purpose—to help the trainee be less I-ridden and so less afraid, to become more human, more solid and dignified. As a practice, it takes account of the body in which the 'Fires' erupt. Their energy, 'confined' or 'restrained' in the body and endured, is there transformed into this inner strength, which is further refined and increased by the religious discipline of meditation. Today we seem to be doubly in need of such training, for we have become so unbridled that we are in danger of being constantly exploded and debilitated by our emotions; any discipline seems frightening. In a way this is also true, for it is not a mass discipline laid on from outside that counts, but the individual inner discipline of restraint which is the religious practice. There is today a very real need to understand this ignored sector, all the more so as there is a true and ever-increasing urge towards the religious life in our bewildered times of strife and stress. Human beings have always been able to make tremendous efforts if we but put our heart into what to us makes sense. The religious exercise of meditation is itself a discipline that demands a somewhat bridled or gentled 'I' to be fruitful and effective. All 'group spirit', all striving, even all sitting for hours—or days—and then returning again to my usual divertissements and distractions will be in vain. As for every endeavour, a solid discipline is needed, not chosen by 'I' as it suits me, but one resulting from generations of living experience. Inner strength is not a dependence on something, and is the opposite of enthusiasm or group spirit. Again, demands for 'modernisation' are ill-considered because they usually mean giving up just such 'irksome' discipline. True modernisation would rather involve an exhaustive discussion of the reasons why discipline is essential.

All this and much more, if pondered, are the ramifications of misunderstanding 'mind' for 'heart', thus 'mental exercises', 'all in the mind'. It is therefore truly encouraging that some modern translators are beginning to use 'heart' instead of 'mind'. Though still not an exact translation, with all its connotations 'heart' is much closer to the original meaning, opening

up the realm of the heart, of feelings and emotions, all of which 'mind' excludes. In time and with practice as well as with study, this will hopefully bring about a deeper understanding of the venerable religion of Buddhism.

'Heart' instead of 'mind' points at the connection with the 'afflicting passions', with the emotional energy that flares in the 'Fires'. Thus the link with the body becomes obvious, and so does the need for practice with the body in order to transform, humanize and spiritualize this energy. 'Heart' instead of 'mind' may reveal aspects of Buddhism not treated in books but which, being of the heart, are found in all religions.

Impermanence applies to all compounded things, whether physical or mental. 'It cannot last' can be a tremendous solace when suffering befalls us. However, we rarely remember it at times of loss, even less so when 'having what one does not want', for surely we then feel that this unhappy state is going to last forever, thus triggering off excessive reaction. Impermanence means change, thus also birth and death, creation and destruction, equally. Yet we cling to the 'coming to be', to unfolding and growing, to light and day, and we shy away from the 'ceasing to be', from decline, decay and death. But we live in a diurnal world of night and day, of dark and light, of joy and sorrow; we ourselves are part of it, of the same nature. Holding to one half only of life, of what is, we are but half alive, half human. Refusing to live the other half or resenting living it, this neglected, un-lived part of life assumes ever more fearsome proportions, even a life of its own, brutish and violent. There seems to be nothing to set against it, for all our efforts, however well-meaning but naive, are mere surface-tinkering, or soon fall into the same error of meeting force with force. So fear increases, and with it fear of death. This is further exacerbated when we place the sick and the old into hospitals to die. 'Natural death' is no longer in our experience, and the media portray only the violent, gory side. Few of us have seen the serenity, the dignity, the majesty of a dead face after a peaceful 'going into change'. Yet less than a century ago this was still a common experience—not only the sorrow that it brought for those left behind, but also the mystery, the awe, and the reverence in its presence.

In our irreligious and frightened times we shy away from the other side of life; small wonder we thirst for 'something more'. We are no longer capable of awe, attempt to 'explain' mysteries, and as for reverence—the essence of which is dignity—we no longer know it. So we get caught up in power-games to cover our insecurity, or wallow in sloppy, blind enthusing and emoting. But if I insist on everything being dragged down to 'me',

'my' level of understanding, that is truly destructive. For then, in times of adversity, I have only 'I' to fall back on and so am truly forsaken. And if the warmth that is in the human heart is encapsulated by I and my concerns only, then it cannot flow and quicken but is stifled—or, to put it bluntly, if I have only myself to love and care about, then in truth I love and care too little. I may think otherwise in my head, but the heart knows and aches for 'more', which the deluded I misconceives as 'pictures' to rush after and possess myself of—more wealth, more fame, more fun, or whatever.

It seems that we rob ourselves of the sap of life by our arrogant, irreverent attitude that precludes, actually shuns, the sense of awe and wonder, of being deeply moved. We think we know so much today—but do we? Why does spring, the first buds, a little baby, or the setting sun, 'touch' us, often surprisingly so? We may not know it, but in this being deeply moved is the sense of awe and wonder that overcomes us when confronted with a mystery. These are the 'great' moments, when the heart is fully open. A mystery cannot be known, only revered. The heart thus opened in reverence is for that moment released from the narrow confines of 'I' and partakes in the mystery. Just this is what the heart truly yearns for, this partaking in—rather than being apart from—the source of life which is a mystery in us and around us; in it we have our being. The act or gesture of reverence not only expresses but also engenders the state of being moved and of partaking. In this partaking is the epiphany of acceptance—wholly being in what at this moment is. It exacts the folded hands and bowed head, for to be total, the body is needed. We can experiment with this—in moments of deep distress, just bowing with folded hands, without thought, will somehow comfort us a little.

Though reverence can be cultivated, it is not something that I can possess but is a quality of the heart, as are faith, real love, and gratitude. Being qualities of the heart, they need no objects, as the sun needs no objects to shine upon for shining is its nature.

In our modern age, the quality of faith in the heart is no longer known. Even if I wish for it, I cannot summon it up by an act of will; it is not mine to do so. But I can start with a 'healthy' respect for what is, can cultivate the attitude of reverence which starts with the admission that I cannot know everything. I can be open to the wonder of both birth and death, to the mystery that life is; and I can learn to bow the head and the stiff neck! In time, this will liberate other qualities of the heart, free them from the stranglehold of 'I' and my notions. The full liberation of the heart, of its

inherent qualities, is also the end of all fear because 'I' is subsumed in partaking. Thus relationship with all that is has been re-established. To that end, all religions demand and foster faith in the heart. Their ways of practice aim at the full liberation of the qualities of the heart, thus right from the start have recourse to acts of reverence. In the course of practice, these also counteract the tendency of I to grasp and possess myself of the developing inner strength, which calamity is a very real danger in the middle reaches of the training. On the analogy of the well-known 'Bull-Herding Pictures', the bull, if not truly gentled, then rides the man, and finally 'man gone, bull remains'. Political and religious history afford us plenty of examples of such disastrous careers, but 'bull-people' are not unknown in family or professional circles either.

However, along the Buddha's Path is developed the whole but gentle strength with its concomitant clear seeing, free of the red veils of passion which the bull charges, and free of the delusions of I, as I have imagined myself in my delusion, and thus also the end of fear. And since my attachments and aversions are the cause of the afflicting passions, this is also their eradication, and the end of suffering.

Though we are far from such a blissful state, even to begin to cultivate the attitude of reverence, or at least of respect, has direct application to today's mass and consumer societies. Expendable goods with corresponding waste problems, pollution, affected ecology, and heedless overpopulation reflect our unrelatedness, hence the disregard and disrespect we have for all that is not directly and immediately 'my' or 'our' concern. Thus conflict and strife increase. Further, all mass societies reduce their numbers to units, mere figures—and without the dignity of being an individual we lose our sense of identity and responsibility, and become ever more unrelated and have communication problems. In such a state, insecure if not downright frightened, I disrespect you, turn against you if you seem 'other', or try to swallow you, 'incorporate' you if you seem compatible. If we cannot respect people, we cannot respect things. The quality of reverence has extremely wide ramifications, and is related to true responsibility as distinct from interference. Nor is it a mass-emoting, which misses these very qualities and so is either ineffective or turns aggressive.

The cultivation of the heart's inherent qualities is the concern of religion. Thus however religious formulations may differ, their ways of practice are remarkably similar, for the human heart is the heart we all have. This is why the mystics of all religions and of all ages speak the same language.

Another practice common to all religious ways, but of which books on Buddhism remain strangely silent, is repentance. Not the false, hypocritical, I-assertive type of 'behold me, the great sinner', nor its opposite, the laming, silent sense of guilt; both are born from an excess of I-feeling. Real repentance is humbly admitting that one is but human with all the human failings and frailties, for few of us are saints, yet is human enough to hold to human values. It is humbly admitting when once again one has fallen flat on one's face, or was foolish and failed once more; and feeling genuinely sorry rather than making somebody or something else a scapegoat. Yes, that needs inner strength in the first place, and leads to the spiritual strength of true humility. For genuine repentance is being truly sorry without wallowing in it, but picking oneself up and getting on with the practice. Thus it can act as a warning light that will help to avoid making the same or a similar mistake again; so there is something very positive in it. Not only do we learn to admit our mistakes, but by doing so we can actually learn from them. Further, being aware of how easy it is to go astray ourselves makes us more tolerant and understanding of the failings of others; it makes us less selfish and thus more warmhearted—which means neither blind nor sloppy but truly compassionate.

In this lies the approach to the heart of Buddhism. The Buddha's Way leads out of suffering, out of delusion into clear seeing, out of the narrow 'I' concerned with itself alone to a warm-hearted and understanding relationship with all that is. This lights up of itself, or opens up, the spiritual dimension which the heart yearns for and in which it comes to rest in fulfillment and service. The ineffable is ineffable; but to a heart forged whole again and thus reverent, it shines in the most ordinary, everyday things and actions. An old Zen master exclaimed, 'How wonderful, how miraculous—fetching wood and carrying water.'