## ****佛法與不二論****(Dhamma and Non-duality By Bhikkhu Bodhi)菩提比丘著   梁國雄居士譯   V2.0  2017-9-5****譯者前言(1) 本版（V2.0）作了不少更新，在此感謝網上善知識的建議回饋，令此譯文得以改善。(2) 版權屬譯者所有，歡迎轉載，但未得同意前，不可修改內容或作任何營利的商業用途。(3) 倘若對譯文有疑惑者，請直接參考菩提比丘的英文原文。(4) 原載網站為〔佛法小品〕：****[http://bemindful.weebly.com](http://bemindful.weebly.com/) \*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

        近年來，上座部佛教要面對的其中一個最具挑戰性問題，是傳統的上座部內觀禪（Vipassana Meditation）與不二論的玄思傳統（Non-dualistic Contemplative Tradition）間的衝突。“不二論”的最佳代表是（印度正統哲學）“不二論吠檀多advaya（Advaita Vedanta）”與“大乘佛教”。面對這衝突的反應橫跨兩極：一極是激烈的對抗，另一極是各式各樣的綜合與混合。當中的對話變化多端，本文實無法解釋所有相關的複雜與微妙問題，然而，我想以上座部的經論立場來寫，希望可以提供些微貢獻。

        我的第一個意見：一個禪修系統是不會構成一門獨立學科的。任何一個真實的靈修系統，總是嵌在一個用來定義該靈修意圖解決的問題與目標的概念矩陣(按劍橋辭典，matrix 也有[事物成長發展的][條件](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/zht/%E8%A9%9E%E5%85%B8/%E6%BC%A2%E8%AA%9E-%E7%B9%81%E9%AB%94-%E8%8B%B1%E8%AA%9E/)，[環境](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/zht/%E8%A9%9E%E5%85%B8/%E6%BC%A2%E8%AA%9E-%E7%B9%81%E9%AB%94-%E8%8B%B1%E8%AA%9E/)之義項，就像電影matrix 母體之意。）（conceptual matrix）裡。因此，把互不相容的概念框架裡的技巧合併起來，實在是危險的。雖然這種合併可以安撫一些偏愛實驗或折衷主義人士，它的長期影響將帶來一定的“認知失調（Cognitive dissonance）”，且將迴盪至內心深處和激起更大的混亂。

        我的第二個意見：各種“不二論”的靈修傳統並非互相一致，相反地，所包含的諸種意見可說極之不同，且難免會被包含它們的哲學思想所污染。

        在吠檀多派的經典裡，不二論是指最內層的「我（Atman）」與「梵（Brahman）」並無本質上的分別，而「梵」又稱作神聖的真實、或世界的本體。從最高體證的觀點來看，只存在一個既是我也是梵的最終實相；靈性追求的目標是認識真我（atman）就是超越時間的實相──存在（Being）、覺知（Awareness）與大樂（Bliss）。由於所有佛教宗派都排斥「我（atman）」這個觀念，因此沒有一個宗派能接受吠檀多的不二論。從上座部傳統的角度看，任何尋求自我的舉動，無論是「常我」或是一個「絕對的、普遍的我」，都應被視為妄想（delusion）而加以駁斥，或被視為是一種形而上學的錯誤，產生於沒有適當地瞭解具體經驗的本性。根據巴利文經典，個人只不過是一個複雜的五蘊統一體，每一蘊均有無常、苦與無我等三種烙印（基本特性）。任何有關此類瞬息萬變、依賴因緣的五蘊現象所假設出來的「我」，都會被視為「身見（Sakkayaditthi）」，此「身見」正是繫縛眾生於生死輪迴中的最根本的「結」。佛教認為，獲得解脫不能通過體證（realization）一個「真我」或「絕對的我」，而是通過消除對五蘊有關的最微細的自我意識，消除所有製造「我」、「我所」等想法、潛在的「我慢」傾向等。

        大乘各派雖有很大的分歧，但都共同堅持一個論點，那就是宣稱輪迴與涅槃、染與淨、迷與悟沒有究竟上的差別。但從上座部的角度來看，幾近於荒誕不經。對大乘來說，大乘佛道要醒悟的正是這個不二論觀點的體證。大乘否決傳統的、對立的二元論，因為一切現象的本質是「空」。由於缺乏任何內在的實質或本質，因此在共性之「空」中，所有主流佛教所安立之各式各樣明顯相反的現象終於不謀而合：“諸法（現象）皆有一性（One nature），那就是「空性或無性（No-nature）」。” 〔參考《大般若經》：「諸法一性，即是無性。」〕

        在巴利文的藏經中，並無發現佛陀的教導有贊成過任何形式的不二論；我想補充一點：也沒有發現不二論的觀點被含藏於佛語之中。同時，我也不主張巴利經典有安立一個形而上的二元論假設，作為它知性認可的目標。我認為佛陀的教導特色，本質上是務實的（Pragmatic），不是思辨的（speculative）。但我也要對此一說法加以限定：這種實用主義並不是在空泛的哲學概念中運作，而是以佛陀覺悟時澈見的實際為根據。相對於不二論系統，佛陀不是要發現隱藏於世間經驗背後或下面的一個統一原則，相反地，它的出發點和架構是伴隨著對立與緊張的生活經驗裡的具體事實，試圖（在此一具體事實內）診斷人類存在核心的主要問題，並提供解決之道。因此，佛教修道的指導原則不是最終的統一，而是滅絕苦痛，俾能從根本上解決存在的困境。

        當我們如實地審查當下的經驗時，我們會發現，它貫穿著許多極為重要的二元性，對靈修的追求上有深刻的含義。佛陀在巴利文經藏中教導我們，堅定不移地專注著這些相對現象，並且確認它們，才是忠實地尋找解脫智慧所必須的。正是這些對立（善與惡、苦與樂、智與癡）的存在，使追求覺悟與解脫成為那麼一個極其重要的關注。

        高居所有對立頂端的是有為法與無為法：無常、變易、痛苦的生死輪迴，與不生、不老與不死的最後解脫狀態──涅槃。在早期的文獻裡，雖然涅槃含有最終真實的意義，而非僅是一種道德或心理狀態，但沒有些微暗示過，此真實在某深層次中，與它示現的對立面 ── 生死輪迴有著形而上學的不可分辨性。與此相反，佛陀一再教導，生死輪迴是受貪瞋癡影響的痛苦境界，在輪迴中，我們累積起來的眼淚遠遠超過所有的海洋；而涅槃是不可逆轉之生死輪迴的解脫，要實現就必須完全消除貪瞋癡與捨棄一切有為的存在（conditioned existence）。

因此，上座部以輪迴與涅槃的對立為全面追求解脫的出發點，更有甚者，它把這種對立作為達至最終目標的決定因素，那正是超越輪迴與實現解脫的涅槃。上座部與大乘還有一點顯著的不同：大乘僅把輪迴與涅槃的對立視為專為鈍根眾生而設的初步教導，最終要由較高層次的實現不二論所替代；但上座部並不同意，因為，從巴利文的藏經來看，即使是佛陀與阿羅漢，他們的苦與苦的止息、輪迴與涅槃等仍然是涇渭分明的。
(善那按：梁居士將distinct譯為「不同的」，可能引起誤解，以為佛陀和阿羅漢證的涅槃有所不同）
仍在探索不同玄思傳統的求道者，普遍地認為，最高的靈修教導必須安立一種形而上學的（玄奧的）統一，作為哲學的基礎與追求覺悟的最終目標。若以此假設為公理，他們自會得出這樣的結論：根據巴利文經藏的佛教，與伴之而來之堅持對二元的對立面作嚴肅的評估，是有缺陷的與暫時性的，有需要通過實現不二論來完成始得。對傾向此想法的人士，以終極的統一來消除二元的對立面，自然覺得更為深刻與完整了。

然而，這種假設正是我想挑戰的。我參照佛陀原始法教提出的主張是，那種深刻性與完整性不必以區別為代價來換取。我們能夠達到最高度的深刻性與完整性，同時又保留在成熟的反思下昭然若揭的二元對立與多樣性。此外，我想補充一點，此種堅持確認真正的二元對立面的教導，最終會比較令人滿意。此一法教雖然否定了人對全面統一的渴望，但仍然是比較令人滿意的，原因在於它考慮了另一個比追求統一更重要的因素──立足於實際的需求。

我之所以認為保存在上座部傳統裡的佛教，遠遠超過任何解決人類心靈困境的企圖，在於它堅持拒絕為了統一而犧牲實際。佛法不是指導我們走向一個無所不包的絕對，在那裡日常的緊張與壓力可消融於形而上學的統一，或莫測高深的「空」性之中。相反地，它指導我們面向現實作為最終的理解領域，以及如實地面對事物本身。最重要的是，它為我們指出苦、集、滅、道四聖諦，作為如實的解脫宣言。佛陀宣稱，這四個真理，是崇高的真理（聖諦），而導致它們的崇高，正因為它們是現實的、不離正道的與不變的。就因為不能如實地面對這些聖諦，我們便在生死輪迴中流浪了這麼久，也只有通達這些如實的真理，才能令人達致真正完美的靈修境界：一切苦惱的止息。

        繼續下來，我打算討論佛教中的「聖法（Ariyan Dhamma）」與不二論思想間的三個主要不同領域，這三個領域對應於佛教的戒、定、慧三學。

        有關戒律（美德）方面，兩者的分別並非立即可見，因為兩者在開始修習時一般都會強調戒律的重要性。它們的分別不是在開始，而是在後期，即在進階時對戒律的功用有不同的評估方式。對於那些不二論系統，所有二元的對立面最終都會在實現不二、絕對、或本體時被超越，由於絕對包含並超越了所有的多樣性（Diversity），實現了它的人士即可泯滅「好」與「壞」、「善」與「惡」等之間的區別。不二論者認為，二元對立面的區別只適用於世俗諦的水平，並不適用於已達終極實現的水平，它們只對學員，而非對熟練的行家有約束力。因此，我們可以在他們的歷史形態（特別是在印度教與佛教的密宗）中找到如下的不二論哲學特色：已”覺悟”的聖者行為是不受道德所規範的。聖者已超越所有世俗諦的「好」與「壞」的區別，他的行為自發於對終極的直覺，因此不再受道德規條所限，那些道德規條只對那些向著光明掙扎的人士有效而已，他的行為是一股難以捉摸的、難以理解的流動，從所謂“瘋癲智慧（Crazy Wisdom）”中流出。

        對於聖法來說，道德與不道德的兩種行為區別，是鮮明和清晰的，就算修道至最高境界，這種區別依然會存在，就如南傳《中部》第114經所言：「身體行為有二種：應修習的與不應修習的，不是前者便是後者。」佛教之完美聖者阿羅漢的行為，在精神上和形式上，必然已體現了最高的道德標準，對他而言，奉持字面上的戒律是自發與自然的。佛陀說過，解脫者能依戒律生活，於微細的犯戒中看到危險，他不會故意違反道德戒律，也不會從事被貪、瞋、癡或恐懼所驅使的行為。

        在禪修或禪定的領域中，我們又發現不二論系統與聖法在看法上的顯著差異。對於不二論系統來說，由於任何區別最終皆非真實，禪修目標當然就不會著重消除內心的煩惱與培養良善的心態了。這些系統會說：煩惱只是虛有其表，沒有內在的實質，甚至說成是絕對的不同示現，因此，進行任何消除煩惱的實踐，都是徒勞無功的，就像逃避一隻虛幻的惡魔，設法消除煩惱只會加強二元對立面的幻象而已。在不二論者心中波動著的禪修主題宣稱：「沒有污染，也沒有清淨」；「煩惱與超越的智慧在本質上是一樣的」；「只有用激情才能消除激情」。

        在聖法之中，禪修實踐從開始到結束，都是以一種清淨心靈的過程來展開的。此過程從認知不善念的危險開始，這些不善念是我們的真正污染物，是我們需要降伏與消除的。培育對治它們的善念，才能徹底銷毀這些污染性煩惱，達致完善的境界。整個過程皆需要明辨心念的善與惡、黑與白等品質，以及依賴努力和勤奮，就如南傳中部第2經（MN 2）所言：“修行者不可容忍任何一個出現的不善念，要拋棄它，驅散它，取消它，廢棄它“。又如南傳相應部第46:40經（SN 46:40）所言：障礙是“盲目的原因，無明的原因，會破壞智慧，不利於涅槃”。實踐禪修可排除心內的污垢，為銷毀諸漏（煩惱）作出最好的準備。

        最後，在智慧的領域上，聖法與不二論系統又再各走極端。在不二論系統裡，智慧的任務是要突破繁複多變的表相（或多元的表相），以發現他們的統一真實基礎。有分別和多樣性的具體現象，只不過是外表的狀況而已，真正的實在是一個實在的絕對（大我、梵、神性等），或是一種形而上學的零（空性、空的心性等）。對這些系統來說，只有達致根本的統一，即一切對立泯滅無餘、一切分別煙消雲散，解脫才會降臨。

        在聖法之中，智慧的目的是要如實地了知事物真相。因此，要如實地了知事物真相，智慧必須尊重現象精確的特殊性。智慧不會干預多樣性與多元化的存在，相反，它只會揭示諸法（各種現象）的共同特性，希望深入洞悉它們的性質與結構。它不是向著認同無所不包的一切（All）方向移動，而是朝著捨離、不執取和解放一切的方向前進。智慧的培育，不會藉由把具體現象化約為（reduce to）表相而「破壞」它的基礎，也不會把它當做通往基礎的窗口。相反，它審查與辨識，以了解事物的真相，如佛經所言：“什麼是如實的了知？行者會了知：那是色，那是色的生起與消失；那是受 … ；想 … ；行 … 識，識的生起與消失。”“當一位行者看到「諸行無常，諸行苦，諸法無我」時，他就會遠離痛苦，這便是清淨之道。”

        靈修系統被它偏愛的比喻所渲染的程度，與該系統的定型化教義一樣多。不二論系統有兩個突出的比喻：一個是虛空（Space），它包含一切，也同時滲透一切，但其本身卻全無實體。另一個是海洋（Ocean），在眾多變幻莫測的波浪下面，海洋仍能保持其自身的特性。聖法中所用的比喻則甚為多種多樣，但多數都被「敏銳的知見」這個主題統一了。在萬象的全貌中清晰、精確地明辨事物個別性的知見，如南傳中部第39經（MN 39）所言：「那好像在深山中一個清澈、寧靜的湖邊站著，一個有好視力的人會看見貝殼、砂礫、卵石，以及游動和休息的魚群。他可能會想：『這裡有一個湖，它清澈、寧靜，這裡還有貝殼、砂礫、卵石，在這些淺灘中有些魚在游來游去和休息。』一位比丘也會如實地理解到：『這是苦，這是集（苦因），這是苦滅，這是導致苦滅之道。』當他如是知，如是見時，他的心便從煩惱中得到解脫，隨著心解脫，他知道自己解脫了。」

【完】

**【譯者附錄】**

[1] 原文名稱與作者：Dhamma and Non-duality By Bhikkhu Bodhi
       (1) <http://www.vipassanadhura.com/nonduality.html>
       (2) <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/bodhi/bps-essay_27.html>
       (3) [Dhamma and Non-duality-A Theravadan Point of View \_ Metta Refuge.htm](http://mettarefuge.wordpress.com/2010/09/07/dhamma-and-non-duality-a-theravadan-point-of-view/)
           〔(3) 的作者是 [Steven Goodheart](http://mettarefuge.wordpress.com/author/mettarefuge/)。文章後面有 Bhikkhu Bodhi's comment。〕

[2] 不二論（Non-duality）：根據維基百科（Wikipedia），不二論（Advaita Vedanta）是印度哲學中吠陀思想的主要流派之一，屬唯心主義思想。 Advaita，字面解非二元，是一種一元思想體系。Advaita主要指自我（Atman）和完整（Brahman，即梵）同一。第一個有系統整理不二論的哲學家是商羯羅（Adi Shankara）。商羯羅將吠陀文獻及喬荼波陀（Gaudapada）所倡導的不二論理念整理出來。與部分奧義書導師及喬荼波陀一脈相承，商羯羅將不二論的理念（非二元的現實）詳細地加以說明。以下的箴言總結了他的哲學思想：

* 梵是唯一真理，世界是幻象，梵與自我終究是沒有分別的。
* 梵是唯一的、是全部、是唯一的真實。除此以外，包括宇宙、物質都是虛假的。物質世界只是梵轉化成的幻象。梵沒有性質、沒有形狀，是自有、絕對及不滅。

## Dhamma and Non-duality

**by Bhikkhu Bodhi**

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One of the most challenging issues facing Theravada Buddhism in recent years has been the encounter between classical Theravada vipassana meditation and the "non-dualistic" contemplative traditions best represented by Advaita Vedanta and Mahayana Buddhism. Responses to this encounter have spanned the extremes, ranging from vehement confrontation all the way to attempts at synthesis and hybridization. While the present essay cannot pretend to illuminate all the intricate and subtle problems involved in this sometimes volatile dialogue, I hope it may contribute a few sparks of light from a canonically oriented Theravada perspective.

My first preliminary remark would be to insist that a system of meditative practice does not constitute a self-contained discipline. Any authentic system of spiritual practice is always found embedded within a conceptual matrix that defines the problems the practice is intended to solve and the goal toward which it is directed. Hence the merging of techniques grounded in incompatible conceptual frameworks is fraught with risk. Although such mergers may appease a predilection for experimentation or eclecticism, it seems likely that their long-term effect will be to create a certain "cognitive dissonance" that will reverberate through the deeper levels of the psyche and stir up even greater confusion.

My second remark would be to point out simply that non-dualistic spiritual traditions are far from consistent with each other, but comprise, rather, a wide variety of views profoundly different and inevitably colored by the broader conceptual contours of the philosophies which encompass them.

For the Vedanta, non-duality *(advaita)* means the absence of an ultimate distinction between the Atman, the innermost self, and Brahman, the divine reality, the underlying ground of the world. From the standpoint of the highest realization, only one ultimate reality exists — which is simultaneously Atman and Brahman — and the aim of the spiritual quest is to know that one's own true self, the Atman, is the timeless reality which is Being, Awareness, Bliss. Since all schools of Buddhism reject the idea of the Atman, none can accept the non-dualism of Vedanta. From the perspective of the Theravada tradition, any quest for the discovery of selfhood, whether as a permanent individual self or as an absolute universal self, would have to be dismissed as a delusion, a metaphysical blunder born from a failure to properly comprehend the nature of concrete experience. According to the Pali Suttas, the individual being is merely a complex unity of the five aggregates, which are all stamped with the three marks of impermanence, suffering, and selflessness. Any postulation of selfhood in regard to this compound of transient, conditioned phenomena is an instance of "personality view" *(sakkayaditthi),* the most basic fetter that binds beings to the round of rebirths. The attainment of liberation, for Buddhism, does not come to pass by the realization of a true self or absolute "I," but through the dissolution of even the subtlest sense of selfhood in relation to the five aggregates, "the abolition of all I-making, mine-making, and underlying tendencies to conceit."

The Mahayana schools, despite their great differences, concur in upholding a thesis that, from the Theravada point of view, borders on the outrageous. This is the claim that there is no ultimate difference between samsara and Nirvana, defilement and purity, ignorance and enlightenment. For the Mahayana, the enlightenment which the Buddhist path is designed to awaken consists precisely in the realization of this non-dualistic perspective. The validity of conventional dualities is denied because the ultimate nature of all phenomena is emptiness, the lack of any substantial or intrinsic reality, and hence in their emptiness all the diverse, apparently opposed phenomena posited by mainstream Buddhist doctrine finally coincide: "All dharmas have one nature, which is no-nature."

The teaching of the Buddha as found in the Pali canon does not endorse a philosophy of non-dualism of any variety, nor, I would add, can a non-dualistic perspective be found lying implicit within the Buddha's discourses. At the same time, however, I would not maintain that the Pali Suttas propose dual*ism,* the positing of duality as a metaphysical hypothesis aimed at intellectual assent. I would characterize the Buddha's intent in the Canon as primarily pragmatic rather than speculative, though I would also qualify this by saying that this pragmatism does not operate in a philosophical void but finds its grounding in the nature of actuality as the Buddha penetrated it in his enlightenment. In contrast to the non-dualistic systems, the Buddha's approach does not aim at the discovery of a unifying principle behind or beneath our experience of the world. Instead it takes the concrete fact of living experience, with all its buzzing confusion of contrasts and tensions, as its starting point and framework, within which it attempts to diagnose the central problem at the core of human existence and to offer a way to its solution. Hence the polestar of the Buddhist path is not a final unity but the extinction of suffering, which brings the resolution of the existential dilemma at its most fundamental level.

When we investigate our experience exactly as it presents itself, we find that it is permeated by a number of critically important dualities with profound implications for the spiritual quest. The Buddha's teaching, as recorded in the Pali Suttas, fixes our attention unflinchingly upon these dualities and treats their acknowledgment as the indispensable basis for any honest search for liberating wisdom. It is precisely these antitheses — of good and evil, suffering and happiness, wisdom and ignorance — that make the quest for enlightenment and deliverance such a vitally crucial concern.

At the peak of the pairs of opposites stands the duality of the conditioned and the Unconditioned: samsara as the round of repeated birth and death wherein all is impermanent, subject to change, and liable to suffering, and Nibbana as the state of final deliverance, the unborn, ageless, and deathless. Although Nibbana, even in the early texts, is definitely cast as an ultimate reality and not merely as an ethical or psychological state, there is not the least insinuation that this reality is metaphysically indistinguishable at some profound level from its manifest opposite, samsara. To the contrary, the Buddha's repeated lesson is that samsara is the realm of suffering governed by greed, hatred, and delusion, wherein we have shed tears greater than the waters of the ocean, while Nibbana is irreversible release from samsara, to be attained by demolishing greed, hatred, and delusion, and by relinquishing all conditioned existence.

Thus the Theravada makes the antithesis of samsara and Nibbana the starting point of the entire quest for deliverance. Even more, it treats this antithesis as determinative of the final goal, which is precisely the transcendence of samsara and the attainment of liberation in Nibbana. Where Theravada differs significantly from the Mahayana schools, which also start with the duality of samsara and Nirvana, is in its refusal to regard this polarity as a mere preparatory lesson tailored for those with blunt faculties, to be eventually superseded by some higher realization of non-duality. From the standpoint of the Pali Suttas, even for the Buddha and the arahants suffering and its cessation, samsara and Nibbana, remain distinct.

Spiritual seekers still exploring the different contemplative traditions commonly assume that the highest spiritual teaching must be one which posits a metaphysical unity as the philosophical foundation and final goal of the quest for enlightenment. Taking this assumption to be axiomatic, they may then conclude that the Pali Buddhist teaching, with its insistence on the sober assessment of dualities, is deficient or provisional, requiring fulfillment by a nondualistic realization. For those of such a bent, the dissolution of dualities in a final unity will always appear more profound and complete.

However, it is just this assumption that I would challenge. I would assert, by reference to the Buddha's own original teaching, that profundity and completeness need not be bought at the price of distinctions, that they can be achieved at the highest level while preserving intact the dualities and diversity so strikingly evident to mature reflection on the world. I would add, moreover, that the teaching which insists on recognizing real dualities as they are is finally more satisfactory. The reason it is more satisfactory, despite its denial of the mind's yearning for a comprehensive unity, is because it takes account of another factor which overrides in importance the quest for unity. This "something else" is the need to remain grounded in actuality.

Where I think the teaching of the Buddha, as preserved in the Theravada tradition, surpasses all other attempts to resolve the spiritual dilemmas of humanity is in its persistent refusal to sacrifice actuality for unity. The Buddha's Dhamma does not point us toward an all-embracing absolute in which the tensions of daily existence dissolve in metaphysical oneness or inscrutable emptiness. It points us, rather, toward actuality as the final sphere of comprehension, toward things as they really are *(yathabhuta).* Above all, it points us toward the Four Noble Truths of suffering, its origin, its cessation, and the way to its cessation as the liberating proclamation of things as they really are. These four truths, the Buddha declares, are *noble* truths, and what makes them noble truths is precisely that they are actual, undeviating, invariable *(tatha, avitatha, anannatha).* It is the failure to face the actuality of these truths that has caused us to wander for so long through the long course of samsara. It is by penetrating these truths exactly as they are that one can reach the true consummation of the spiritual quest: making an end to suffering.

In this sequel to the previous essay, I intend to discuss three major areas of difference between the Buddha's Teaching, which we may refer to here as "the Ariyan Dhamma," and the philosophies of non-duality. These areas correspond to the three divisions of the Buddhist path — virtue, concentration, and wisdom.

In regard to *virtue* the distinction between the two teachings is not immediately evident, as both generally affirm the importance of virtuous conduct at the start of training. The essential difference between them emerges, not at the outset, but only later, in the way they evaluate the role of morality in the advanced stages of the path. For the non-dual systems, all dualities are finally transcended in the realization of the non-dual reality, the Absolute or fundamental ground. As the Absolute encompasses and transcends all diversity, for one who has realized it the distinctions between good and evil, virtue and non-virtue, lose their ultimate validity. Such distinctions, it is said, are valid only at the conventional level, not at the level of final realization; they are binding on the trainee, not on the adept. Thus we find that in their historical forms (particularly in Hindu and Buddhist Tantra), philosophies of non-duality hold that the conduct of the enlightened sage cannot be circumscribed by moral rules. The sage has transcended all conventional distinctions of good and evil. He acts spontaneously from his intuition of the Ultimate and therefore is no longer bound by the rules of morality valid for those still struggling toward the light. His behavior is an elusive, incomprehensible outflow of what has been called "crazy wisdom."

For the Ariyan Dhamma, the distinction between the two types of conduct, moral and immoral, is sharp and clear, and this distinction persists all the way through to the consummation of the path: "Bodily conduct is twofold, I say, to be cultivated and not to be cultivated, and such conduct is either the one or the other" (MN 114). The conduct of the ideal Buddhist sage, the arahant, necessarily embodies the highest standards of moral rectitude *both* in the spirit *and* in the letter, and for him conformity to the letter is spontaneous and natural. The Buddha says that the liberated one lives restrained by the rules of the Vinaya, seeing danger in the slightest faults. He cannot intentionally commit any breach of the moral precepts, nor would he ever pursue any course of action motivated by desire, hatred, delusion, or fear.

In the sphere of *meditation practice* or concentration, we again find a striking difference in outlook between the non-dual systems and the Ariyan Dhamma. Since, for the non-dual systems, distinctions are ultimately unreal, meditation practice is not explicitly oriented toward the removal of mental defilements and the cultivation of virtuous states of mind. In these systems, it is often said that defilements are mere appearances devoid of intrinsic reality, even manifestations of the Absolute. Hence to engage in a programme of practice to overcome them is an exercise in futility, like fleeing from an apparitional demon: to seek to eliminate defilements is to reinforce the illusion of duality. The meditative themes that ripple through the non-dual currents of thought declare: "no defilement and no purity"; "the defilements are in essence the same as transcendent wisdom"; "it is by passion that passion is removed."

In the Ariyan Dhamma, the practice of meditation unfolds from start to finish as a process of mental purification. The process begins with the recognition of the dangers in unwholesome states: they are real pollutants of our being that need to be restrained and eliminated. The consummation is reached in the complete destruction of the defilements through the cultivation of their wholesome antidotes. The entire course of practice demands a recognition of the differences between the dark and bright qualities of the mind, and devolves on effort and diligence: "One does not tolerate an arisen unwholesome thought, one abandons it, dispels it, abolishes it, nullifies it" (MN 2). The hindrances are "causes of blindness, causes of ignorance, destructive to wisdom, not conducive to Nibbana" (SN 46:40). The practice of meditation purges the mind of its corruptions, preparing the way for the destruction of the cankers *(asavakkhaya).*

Finally, in the domain of *wisdom* the Ariyan Dhamma and the non-dual systems once again move in contrary directions. In the non-dual systems the task of wisdom is to break through the diversified appearances (or the appearance of diversity) in order to discover the unifying reality that underlies them. Concrete phenomena, in their distinctions and their plurality, are mere appearance, while true reality is the One: either a substantial Absolute (the Atman, Brahman, the Godhead, etc.), or a metaphysical zero (Sunyata, the Void Nature of Mind, etc.). For such systems, liberation comes with the arrival at the fundamental unity in which opposites merge and distinctions evaporate like dew.

In the Ariyan Dhamma wisdom aims at seeing and knowing things as they really are *(yathabhutananadassana).* Hence, to know things as they are, wisdom must respect phenomena in their precise particularity. Wisdom leaves diversity and plurality untouched. It instead seeks to uncover the characteristics of phenomena, to gain insight into their qualities and structures. It moves, not in the direction of an all-embracing identification with the All, but toward disengagement and detachment, release from the All. The cultivation of wisdom in no way "undermines" concrete phenomena by reducing them to appearances, nor does it treat them as windows opening to some fundamental ground. Instead it investigates and discerns, in order to understand things as they are: "And what does one understand as it really is? One understands: Such is form, such its arising and passing away. Such is feeling... perception... formations... consciousness, such its arising and passing away." "When one sees, 'All formations are impermanent, all are suffering, everything is not self,' one turns away from suffering: this is the path to purity."

Spiritual systems are colored as much by their favorite similes as by their formulated tenets. For the non-dual systems, two similes stand out as predominant. One is space, which simultaneously encompasses all and permeates all yet is nothing concrete in itself; the other is the ocean, which remains self-identical beneath the changing multitude of its waves. The similes used within the Ariyan Dhamma are highly diverse, but one theme that unites many of them is acuity of vision — vision which discerns the panorama of visible forms clearly and precisely, each in its own individuality: "It is just as if there were a lake in a mountain recess, clear, limpid, undisturbed, so that a man with good sight standing on the bank could see shells, gravel, and pebbles, and also shoals of fish swimming about and resting. He might think: 'There is this lake, clear, limpid, undisturbed, and there are these shells, gravel, and pebbles, and also these shoals of fish swimming about and resting.' So too a monk understands as it actually is: 'This is suffering, this is the origin of suffering, this is the cessation of suffering, this is the way leading to the cessation of suffering.' When he knows and sees thus his mind is liberated from the cankers, and with the mind's liberation he knows that he is liberated" (MN 39).