

Our response is selfless, noncentralized. It is not for them or for me. It is environmental generosity.

But we cannot just go out and try to practice this kind of compassion. First we must learn how not to make a nuisance of ourselves. If we can make friends with ourselves, if we are willing to be what we are, without hating parts of ourselves and trying to hide them, then we can begin to open to others. And if we can begin to open without always having to protect ourselves, then perhaps we can begin to really help others.

The Eightfold Path

THERE SEEM TO be so many sidetracks in relating to our life-situations, sidetracks of all kinds by which we are seduced: "Food, gas and lodging, next exit." We are always promised something if we turn right at the next exit as we travel down our highway. There are so many colorful advertisements. We never want to be just where and what we are; we always want to be somewhere else. We can always turn right at the next exit, even though we really know we are stuck on our highway anyway, that we really have no choice about it. Where we are is embarrassing, and so we would like to hear somebody say that there is an alternative whereby we do not have to be ashamed of ourselves: "I'll provide a mask, just put it on." Then you can get off at that exit and you are "saved" by pretending to be what you are not. You think

people see you as a different person, the one wearing the mask of what you would like to be.

Buddhism promises nothing. It teaches us to be what we are where we are, constantly, and it teaches us to relate to our living situations accordingly. That seems to be the way to proceed on our highway without being distracted by the sidetracks and exits of all kinds. The signs say: "Tibetan Village, next exit;" "Japanese Village, next exit;" "Nirvana, next exit;" "Enlightenment, next exit—*instant one*;" "Disneyland, next exit." If you turn right, everything is going to be OK. You get what you are promised. But after having gone to Disneyland or having taken part in the Nirvana Festival, then you have to think about how you are going to get back to your car, how you are going to get home. This means you have to get back on the highway once more. It is unavoidable. I am afraid that this portrays our basic situation, the process in which we are constantly involved.

I am sorry not to be presenting any glamorous and beautiful promises. Wisdom happens to be a domestic affair. Buddha saw the world as it is and that was his enlightenment. "Buddha" means "awake," being awake, completely awake—that seems to be his message to us. He offered us a path to being awake, a path with eight points, and he called it "the eightfold path."

The first point the Buddha made has to do with "right view." Wrong view is a matter of conceptualization. Someone is walking toward us—suddenly we freeze. Not only do we freeze ourselves, but we also freeze the space in which the person is walking toward us. We call him "friend" who is walking through this space or "enemy." Thus the person is automatically walking through a frozen situation of fixed ideas—"this is that," or "this is

not that." This is what Buddha called "wrong view." It is a conceptualized view which is imperfect because we do not see the situation as it is. There is the possibility, on the other hand, of not freezing that space. The person could walk into a lubricated situation of myself and that person as we are. Such a lubricated situation can exist and can create open space.

Of course, openness could be appropriated as a philosophical concept as well, but the philosophy need not necessarily be fixed. The situation could be seen without the idea of lubrication as such, without any fixed idea. In other words, the philosophical attitude could be just to see the situation as it is. "That person walking toward me is not a friend, therefore he is not an enemy either. He is just a person approaching me. I don't have to prejudge him at all." That is what is called "right view."

The next aspect of the eightfold path is called "right intention." Ordinary intention is based upon the process we have just described. Having conceptually fixed the person, now you are ready either to grasp or attack him. Automatically there is an apparatus functioning to provide either a waterbed or a shotgun for that person. That is the intention. It is a thought process which relates thinking to acting. When you encounter a situation, you think; and thinking inclines toward acting. In your constant alertness to relate the situation to your security, the intention is worked between two jaws. The emotional element, concerned with pleasure or pain, expansion or withdrawal, is one jaw; the heavy, physical aspect of the situation is the other. Situations keep you chewing your intention constantly, like gristle. Intention always has the quality of either invitation or attack.

But according to Buddha there is also "right inten-

tion." In order to see what this is, we first must understand what Buddha meant by "right." He did not mean to say right as opposed to wrong at all. He said "right" meaning "what is," being right without a concept of what is right. "Right" translates the Sanskrit *samyak*, which means "complete." Completeness needs no relative help, no support through comparison; it is self-sufficient. *Samyak* means seeing life as it is without crutches, straightforwardly. In a bar one says, "I would like a straight drink." Not diluted with club soda or water; you just have it straight. That is *samyak*. No dilutions, no concoctions—just a straight drink. Buddha realized that life could be potent and delicious, positive and creative, and he realized that you do not need any concoctions with which to mix it. Life is a straight drink—hot pleasure, hot pain, straightforward, one hundred percent.

So right intention means not being inclined toward anything other than what is. You are not involved in the idea that life *could be* beautiful or *could be* painful, and you are not being careful about life. According to Buddha, life *is* pain, life *is* pleasure. That is the *samyak* quality of it—so precise and direct: straight life without any concoctions. There is no need at all to reduce life situations or intensify them. Pleasure as it is, pain as it is—these are the absolute qualities of Buddha's approach to intention.

The third aspect of the eightfold path is "right speech." In Sanskrit the word for speech is *vac*, which means "utterance," "word," or "logos." It implies perfect communication, communication which says, "It is so," rather than, "I think it is so." "Fire is hot," rather than, "I think fire is hot." Fire *is* hot, automatically—

the direct approach. Such communication is true speech, in Sanskrit *satya*, which means "being true." It is dark outside at this time. Nobody would disagree with that. Nobody would have to say, "I think it is dark outside," or, "You must believe it is dark outside." You would just say, "It is dark outside." It is just the simple minimum of words we could use. It is true.

The fourth aspect of the eightfold path is "right morality" or "right discipline." If there is no one to impose discipline and no one to impose discipline on, then there is no need for discipline in the ordinary sense at all. This leads to the understanding of right discipline, complete discipline, which does not exist relative to ego. Ordinary discipline exists only at the level of relative decisions. If there is a tree, there must be branches; however, if there is no tree, there are no such things as branches. Likewise, if there is no ego, a whole range of projections becomes unnecessary. Right discipline is that kind of giving-up process; it brings us into complete simplicity.

We are all familiar with the samsaric kind of discipline which is aimed at self-improvement. We give up all kinds of things in order to make ourselves "better," which provides us with tremendous reassurance that we can *do* something with our lives. Such forms of discipline are just unnecessarily complicating your life rather than trying to simplify and live the life of a *rishi*.

"Rishi" is a Sanskrit word which refers to the person who constantly leads a straightforward life. The Tibetan word for "rishi" is *trangsong* (*drang sron*). *Trang* means "direct," *song* means "upright." The term refers to one who leads a direct and upright life by not introducing new complications into his life-situation. This is a perma-

nent discipline, the ultimate discipline. We simplify life rather than get involved with new gadgets or finding new concoctions with which to mix it.

The fifth point is "right livelihood." According to Buddha, right livelihood simply means making money by working, earning dollars, pounds, francs, pesos. To buy food and pay rent you need money. This is not a cruel imposition on us. It is a natural situation. We need not be embarrassed by dealing with money nor resent having to work. The more energy you put out, the more you get in. Earning money involves you in so many related situations that it permeates your whole life. Avoiding work usually is related to avoiding other aspects of life as well.

People who reject the materialism of American society and set themselves apart from it are unwilling to *face* themselves. They would like to comfort themselves with the notion that they are leading philosophically virtuous lives, rather than realizing that they are unwilling to work with the world as it is. We cannot expect to be helped by divine beings. If we adopt doctrines which lead us to expect blessings, then we will not be open to the real possibilities in situations. Buddha believed in cause and effect. For example, you get angry at your friend and decide to cut off the relationship. You have a hot argument with him and walk out of the room and slam the door. You catch your finger in the door. Painful, isn't it? That is cause and effect. You realize there is some warning there. You have overlooked karmic necessity. It happens all the time. This is what we run into when we violate right livelihood.

The sixth point is "right effort." The Sanskrit, *samyagvyayama*, means energy, endurance, exertion.

This is the same as the bodhisattva's principle of energy. There is no need to be continually just pushing along, drudging along. If you are awake and open in living situations, it is possible for them and you to be creative, beautiful, humorous and delightful. This natural openness is right effort, as opposed to any old effort. Right effort is seeing a situation precisely as it is at that very moment, being present fully, with delight, with a grin. There are occasions when we know we are present, but we do not really want to commit ourselves, but right effort involves full participation.

For right effort to take place we need gaps in our discursive or visionary gossip, room to stop and be present. Usually, someone is whispering some kind of seduction, some gossip behind our back: "It's all very well to meditate, but how about going to the movies? Meditating is nice, but how about getting together with our friends? How about that? Shall we read that book? Maybe we should go to sleep. Shall we go buy that thing we want? Shall we? Shall we? Shall we?" Discursive thoughts constantly happening, numerous suggestions constantly being supplied—effort has no room to take place. Or maybe it is not discursive thoughts at all. Sometimes it is a continual vision of possibilities: "My enemy is coming and I'm hitting him—I want war." Or, "My friend is coming, I'm hugging him, welcoming him to my house, giving him hospitality." It goes on all the time. "I have a desire to eat lambchops—no, leg of lamb, steak, lemon ice cream. My friend and I could go out to the shop and get some ice cream and bring it home and have a nice conversation over ice cream. We could go to that Mexican restaurant and get tacos 'to go' and bring them back home. We'll dip them in the sauce and eat together

and have a nice philosophical discussion as we eat. Nice to do that with candlelight and soft music." We are constantly dreaming of infinite possibilities for all kinds of entertainment. There is no room to stop, no room to start providing space. Providing space: effort, non-effort and effort, non-effort—it's very choppy in a sense, very precise, knowing how to release the discursive or visionary gossip. Right effort—it's beautiful.

The next one is "right mindfulness." Right mindfulness does not simply mean being aware; it is like creating a work of art. There is more spaciousness in right mindfulness than in right effort. If you are drinking a cup of tea, you are aware of the whole environment as well as the cup of tea. You can therefore trust what you are doing, you are not threatened by anything. You have room to dance in the space, and this makes it a creative situation. The space is open to you.

The eighth aspect of the eightfold path is "right samadhi," right absorption. Samadhi has the sense of being as it is, which means relating with the space of a situation. This pertains to one's living situation as well as to sitting meditation. Right absorption is being completely involved, thoroughly and fully, in a non-dualistic way. In sitting meditation the technique and you are one; in life situations the phenomenal world is also part of you. Therefore you do not have to meditate as such, as though you were a person distinct from the act of meditating and the object of meditation. If you are one with the living situation as it is, your meditation just automatically happens.