

II.
THE MOST EXCELLENT
TRUTH OF THE ARISING OF SUFFERING

General Introduction

As we have amply shown, the problem of the annihilation of suffering coincides with that of the conquest of our personality through which alone we are joined to the world and thereby to suffering, nay, wherein alone we even experience the world and thereby suffering. In the same measure in which I succeed in liberating myself from my personality, in outgrowing it, I also outgrow the world and its sufferings; and after having entirely freed myself from the components of my personality, I look down upon it as upon something entirely alien to me, and thereby in the same manner upon the world and upon suffering. All of them, then, have nothing more to do with me, for I have withdrawn myself from them. I am indeed still *in* the world, but I am no longer *of* the world. I tower above it, and look towards the approaching decay of my personality with cool indifference. It affects me equally as little as it affects Himālaya, the king of mountains, when the wreaths of mist floating around him far beneath dissolve and vanish, whereby he, on the contrary, only stands out all the more clearly, in all his stainless purity. "Just as, O Brahmin, the blue, red or white lotus-flower, originated in the water, grown up in the water, stands there towering above the water, untouched by the water: just so, Brahmin, I am born within the world, grown up within the world, but I have vanquished the world, and unspotted by the world I remain."¹³²

But in outgrowing my present personality, the problem of the annihilation of suffering is by no means yet solved. If it were only a question of the conquest of this my *present* personality it might rightly be replied that there really was no serious problem given, and it was therefore not worth the trouble of setting such a great apparatus of salvation in motion, since this personality of itself completely dissolves in death. But the important point lies in the hindering also of every new formation of such a personality in the moment of dissolution of the present one, since we have already learnt that at the moment of death we ever and again objectify ourselves afresh in one of the five realms. Herein precisely, for the Buddha also, lay the kernel of the problem. If it were only the suffering of this single fleeting present existence that was at stake, he, of course, would not have troubled much about it either.

As this point is of decisive importance for clearly understanding the particular doctrine of the Buddha, we shall do well to keep the whole problem of the annihilation of suffering before our minds in direct pictorial form. This is all

the easier for us, inasmuch as the Buddha himself describes most vividly, how it presented itself to him on the peak of insight as the first and second of the three great knowledges that arose within him on the night when he reached Buddhahood under the Bodhi tree near Uruvela, the third knowledge bringing to him the solution of the problem itself:

“And with thought thus fixed, cleansed, and stainless; clear of all dross, supple, serviceable, firm, and unswerving, I turned my mind towards the recollection and recognition of previous modes of existence. And I called to mind my various lots in former lives: first one life, then two lives, then three, then four, then five, ten, twenty up to fifty lives; then a hundred lives; then a thousand lives; then an hundred thousand lives. Then I recalled the periods of many a world-arising; then the periods of many a world-destruction; then the periods of many a world-arising and world-destruction. There was I. That was my name. To that family I belonged. This was my position. That was my occupation. Such and such the weal and woe that I experienced. Thus was my life’s ending. Thence departing, there I came into existence anew. There now was I. This was my rank now. This was my occupation. Such and such the fresh weal and woe I underwent. Thus was now my life’s ending. Departing once more, I came into existence again elsewhere. In such wise I remembered the characteristics and particulars of my varied lot in previous lives. And this, O Brahmin, in the first watch of the night, was the first knowledge to which I attained, ignorance banished, knowledge gained; darkness dispelled, light won; abiding there as one, diligent, earnest, resolute.

“And then I directed my thought toward the perception of the disappearing and reappearing of beings. With the Divine Eye, the purified, the superhuman, I beheld beings disappear and reappear, low and high, beautiful and ugly, happy and unhappy, I beheld beings reappear according to their deeds. ‘These precious beings, alas! are given to things evil in deeds, words, and thoughts. They revile the Noble Ones, hold perverted views; and following perverted ways, incur an evil lot. At the dissolution of the body, after death, they depart upon a sorry journey, downward to loss in the world of the hells. Those precious beings, however, are given to the good in deeds, words, and thoughts. They do not revile the Noble Ones; hold right views; and following righteous courses, earn a happy lot. At the breakup of the body, after death they fare forth upon a happy journey and come to the heaven-world. This, O Brahmin, in the middle watch of the night, was the second knowledge to which I attained, abiding there as one, diligent, earnest, resolute.

“And then I directed my mind toward the perception of the destruction of the Influences. ‘Here is Suffering. Thus comes the Arising of Suffering. Thus comes the Cessation of Suffering. This is the Path that leads to the Cessation of Suffering. These are the Influences. Thus comes the Arising of the Influences. Thus comes the Cessation of the Influences. This is the Path that leads to the Cessation of the Influences.’ All this I comprehended according to the reality. And thus perceiving, thus beholding, my mind was released from the Influences

of Desiring, from the Influence of Craving for Becoming, from the Influence of Ignorance. 'I am delivered,' this knowledge came to me. 'Life is lived out, the holy goal achieved: done all that was to do; no more is this world for me'. This I fully comprehended. Such, Brahmin, in the last watch of the night, was the third knowledge to which I attained, ignorance banished, knowledge gained; darkness dispelled, light won; abiding there as one, diligent, earnest, resolute."¹³³

Thus did the Buddha in direct vision look out over the endless chain of his bygone personalities, conditioned each time by a new birth, as well as upon the fact that all other creatures are ever and again conducted from death to renewed birth in an incessant round. This boundless circle of rebirths within the five realms he therefore understood by the third knowledge that arose in him, as the great suffering of man: "This is *the* suffering, I there understood."

How this circle of incessantly renewed objectification as personality—taking personality, of course, in its broadest sense, as individual existence of any kind—was to be brought once for all to a standstill, was therefore for him the great question. Its solution was given to him by the third knowledge, of which he says himself: "Then I saw and knew: 'Assured am I of deliverance; this is my final birth; never more shall I return hither.'"¹³⁴

The Dialogues are full of passages which ever and again point to this getting out of the circle of rebirths, out of *Samsāra*, as the supreme goal of all sanctity. Only a few of them may here be quoted:

"Whatever there may be, brethren, of things created and not created, the highest of them is said to be . . . the destruction of the circle [*samsāra*]."¹³⁵

"An enemy of birth is the ascetic Gotama, for the hindering of birth does he proclaim his doctrine, and thereby does he direct his disciples . . . Through whom for the future, rebirth into another life is annihilated, as a palm-tree is rooted up and destroyed, through whom it is brought to cease so that never in the future can it grow again, him I call an enemy of birth."¹³⁶

"The saint who seeks peace bears his last body to the grave."¹³⁷

"Through countless ages I have been devoted to the body:

This is the last of them,—this living conjunction.

The round of birth and death: there is now no more
coming to be of it.

In the round of existence I came to the hell-world.

Again and again I came to the realm of the Shades.

In suffering born from the wombs of animals of various kinds, I lived for long.
Then a man I became, very well pleased. To the heaven-worlds I came now
and again,

To the form-worlds, to the formless worlds, to the realm of neither perception
nor non-perception.

All Becoming well seen as without substance, put together, unstable,
changeable,

Having seen this complete Becoming of myself, heedful, I have attained to
Peace."¹³⁸

According to this, the case lies thus: I can only regard myself as definitely freed from suffering, when I reach the unshakeable, intimately assured certainty that I am not only something entirely different from the components of my present personality, and therefore something that cannot be touched by its fate, but also that this my present personality will be the last to which I am chained, that therefore with my coming death, the last in store for me, I shall for ever depart out of the round of rebirths, *saṃsāra*, and never more be troubled by any of its elements. *This* is the problem.

But it is clear that if I am to cut short the endless chain of my personalities, if I am to be able to put a period to the eternal reappearing of such a personality, after the present one has dissolved in death, then before all else I must know how it comes about that such a personality ever and again arises anew. For only if I know the conditions of a process, can I undertake to guard against its initiation; or, in the Buddha's words: The annihilation of suffering I can only reach, if I know its arising. Hence it is only logical of the Buddha when, at the outset, in the second of the four holy truths he lays bare the arising of this endless chain of suffering.

Meanwhile, in this second holy truth he only gives the principal cause of this incessant and successive reproduction of personalities, as which we objectify ourselves from all eternity. In detail he points out the conditions of this process, incessantly repeating itself, in the famous formula of origination through dependence, *paṭiccasamuppāda*, with which therefore we have to deal first. This formula is generally regarded as the most difficult part of the doctrine of the Buddha, and has received the most various, and sometimes incredible interpretations, though, if only we are able to penetrate it, it is self-evident. In order to penetrate it, however, it is, first of all, necessary to be able to regard it in a purely objective manner, that is, without presuppositions, so that we may not proceed to its investigation wearing the spectacles of the philosophical views to which one is sworn. We must not start out, for instance, with the presupposition that the Buddha was teaching a purely idealistic world-view, in the modern sense of the word, and that the formula must therefore represent the Buddhist dianiology. By such pre-conceived notions we render it impossible from the very first to understand the formula. The only correct thing is to place oneself in relation to it at the standpoint of a Perfected One, as far as one is able to do so. Already we have treated of this in detail. To state it precisely yet once more, it is as follows: The Perfected One is in such wise alienated from the five groups, out of which the complex called personality, representing the world, is built up, and is so far cured of the delusion that they are in any way an efflux of his *essence*, that in contemplating them, not even the thought of his I arises in him. To him they are nothing more than processes restlessly heaving up and down, which at bottom have nothing at all to do with him. From the unmoving pole of his real essence lying beyond them, he looks down upon them as upon a phantasmagoria flitting before him; he perceives them as foreign elements rising incessantly from the realm of the uncognizable, or, — what, as we already know, means the same thing

—from *Nothingness*, like bubbles rising out of the water of a swamp, on the instant to dissolve again and again. The idea of his I does not even come to him to make him want to know the manner in which it is interlocked with those elements foreign to its essence. For the fundamental insight that all cognition is directed outwards, and that, accordingly, the essential and its whole domain are unattainable to it, has become so vivid within him that he only cultivates this kind of thinking that is perfectly adapted to reality.

If we are able completely to grasp this standpoint, then, even before we know anything at all about the formula of origination through dependence, it will be clear to us that it can only consist in showing us how these processes which yield the total impression of personality and world, are conditioned one by the other, how one arises through another, and we shall no longer think that there can be any talk of a person actuating these processes. In short: We already know beforehand that the formula of origination through dependence must be taken quite *impersonally*, since in the realm of the cognizable a person is not to be found, and the realm of the uncognizable, precisely as such, yields no ideas at all. And so, the formula of origination through dependence, in fact shows us nothing more than mere processes running their course against the background of *nothing*, as the domain of our innermost essence, withdrawn from knowledge, arising out of this “nothing” and always again disappearing into it:

“But who, O Lord, touches?”

“‘The question is not rightly put,’ the Exalted One replied. I do not say: ‘He touches.’ If I said: ‘He touches;’ then of course the question, ‘Lord, who touches?’ would be rightly put. But I do not say so. But if some one should ask me who do not say so: ‘On what, O Lord, depends touch? then this question would be put rightly, and the right answer to it would run thus: ‘In dependence upon the six organs of sense arises touch, and in dependence upon touch arises sensation.’”

“But who, O Lord, feels?”

“‘Neither is this question rightly put,’ the Exalted One replied. ‘I do not say: ‘He feels.’ If I said: ‘He feels;’ then the question, ‘Lord, who feels?’ would of course be rightly put. But I do not say so. But if some one should ask me who do not say so, ‘On what, O Lord, depends sensation?’ then this question would be rightly put, and the right answer to it would be: ‘In dependence upon touch arises sensation.’”¹³⁹

Only because there is really no person, is there room left for a causal connection as conceived by the Buddha. For a person is thought of as a being to which sensation and perception are *essential*. If there were such a being, then of course every question as to the primary causes of sensations and perceptions would be meaningless, and every causal connection as conceived by the Buddha impossible. For to feel and to perceive would then be just the manifestation of my essence. These qualities would find their sufficient reason in the latter, so that no room would be left for any further cause, in the same way that the question, why a certain creature has wings, is sufficiently answered by pointing

out that the said creature is a bird. But thereby any deliverance from sensation and perception, and thereby from suffering itself would be impossible. For it is impossible for me to annihilate myself.

If now this peculiarity of the formula that it is an entirely impersonal conception, appears as self-evident, it will, for the rest, show itself to be of extreme lucidity, if only we always keep before our eyes the standpoint of the Buddha, as expounded above.

Old Age and Death — Birth as immediate Conditions of Suffering

Samsāra is an endless chain of single personalities strung one on to the other. Personality, as we know, consists in the interworking of the five groups of grasping in such a manner that the corporeal organism—the first group—represents the personality's substratum, the six-senses-machine, that by means of the action of the organs of sense first rouses consciousness and then, in union with it, generates sensation, perception and the activities of the mind. Since, further, as we know, these five groups constitute at the same time all the elements and thereby the totality of all suffering, we might also well call the corporeal organism *the machine of suffering*.

With this, however, it becomes apparent that, if the endless chain of misery that is called Samsāra is to be shown as being causally conditioned, the corporeal organism, the same machine of suffering itself, appears as the immediate cause of Suffering. It receives its character as a machine of suffering, as we saw above, in that it "ages and withers, worn out, becomes gray and wrinkled, vitality disappears, and the senses become dulled,"¹⁴⁰ until at last, in death, entire ruin and dissolution follow. These two fundamental qualities of the substratum of personality, old age and death, give at the same time to the whole process of personality and therewith to the whole of life in all its details and in every direction the stamp of transiency, and precisely in doing so, make life as such full of Suffering. In old age and death, therefore, suffering culminates; they are suffering's most pregnant expression. Precisely on this account, the first question that arose in the Buddha's mind, as in deep meditation he sought to discover the conditioned nature of the process of suffering, was: "Are old age and death dependent on something?" The answer, of course, was: "Yes, they are dependent."—"On what are old age and death dependent?"—"In dependence on birth arise old age and death."¹⁴¹ Any one can see without further ado that this answer is correct. Because old age and death are nothing but the gradual decay and the final definitive dissolution of the corporeal organism, therefore they are inevitably bound up therewith which means, they are conditioned by the same process whereby the organism itself arises with the accession of the element of consciousness: "Hence, Ānanda: Whatever is born, or becomes old, or dies, or perishes, or originates,—that is the corporeal organism together with

consciousness."* This process of the arising of "the body endowed with consciousness" takes place within the maternal womb, extending from the moment of conception to the extrusion of the foetus from the womb. The whole process in its entirety is comprised by the Buddha under the expression "*birth*": "And what, ye monks, is birth? Of beings in this or that class of life the birth, the becoming born, the germination, the conception, the appearing of the groups, the grasping of the realms of sense,—this, ye monks, is called birth."¹⁴²

From this insight that old age and death are by necessity of nature involved in birth that is to say, in the formation of "the body endowed with six senses," since they are only the external manifestation of the laws to which this body is subject, the first result for the Buddha was that liberation from old age and death to which was subject the body he at that time occupied, was proven to be impossible. With regard to this *present* old age and the death bound up with it, he was from the outset powerless. In relation to *this* old age and *this* death, therefore, nothing remained but a calm, indifferent submission to these inevitable consequences of an already given cause, as expressed in the words: "With patience I wear out my body."¹⁴³ On the other hand there appeared the possibility of protecting ourselves in our inscrutable essence against a repetition of these processes in future time, that is, in a new existence, if only we succeeded in hindering every *new* birth, that is to say, the formation of any *future* new corporeal organism. The Buddha thus found himself here confronted by the new and unheard-of problem of finding out the secret in consequence of which, through the act of conception in a maternal womb, ever and again a new body endowed with senses is formed, with the result that in the same act consciousness comes down into it. Only if the solution of this problem could be effected, only then would it be at all possible to determine if the conditions of this act—birth, in the sense used by the Buddha—were such as it might be in our power to set up or to omit. The Buddha solved this problem also, and therewith, at the same time discovered the share that we ourselves have in our conception, so that every one is in a position to determine whether he shall be reborn or not. It is precisely this power of making a future rebirth impossible, together with the unshakeable certainty of having succeeded in doing so, which is the criterion of deliverance acquired and thereby of holiness gained. For he only has forever escaped the circle of rebirths, thereby definitively passed beyond suffering, and thus become wholly delivered and perfectly sanctified, who can say of himself: "Rebirth is exhausted, lived out the holy life, done what was to do; no more is this world for me."¹⁴⁴ Or, as it is said in another passage: "Unshakeable is my deliverance, *this is the last birth*, I have nothing in common with this order of things."¹⁴⁵

Thereby the only moment when it is possible to depart out of Samsāra forever, is fixed as the same wherein a new birth takes place, namely, at the moment of death that is immediately followed by the new birth.

* *nāma-rūpa*.

The Conditions of Rebirth

It has already been said above, that the solution of the riddle as to how we come to be reborn again and again, shows itself to be astonishingly simple, as simple as only truth can be. Now we have reached the point of verifying that statement.

In the first place, of course, nobody can say from immediate ocular evidence how the event of his own birth takes place, though every one has gone through it countless times. For the act of conception which led to his present birth took place, in the case of every being, in a night of the deepest unconsciousness, or, to speak in the spirit of the Buddha, in the deepest ignorance. But the idea might well occur to us of deriving the knowledge which the Buddha ascribes to himself on this point, from the second of the three great knowledges he had acquired, that is, from the faculty of cognizing "by means of the divine eye, the purified and supernatural, how creatures vanish and reappear." If the Buddha had really in this way arrived at establishing the conditions under which our rebirth takes place, this would be very unfortunate for us. For we, to whom this faculty of the divine eye is entirely wanting, would be limited to mere belief in his dictum, and thereby one of the strongest pillars of the colossal structure of his teaching, founded upon the possibility of our own immediate insight, would prove itself to be rotten. Nevertheless, this fear is unfounded, and for a very simple reason. By means of the faculty of the divine eye the Buddha could only register the mere fact that the beings—in our sensual world, within a maternal womb—always appear anew; but not the *cause* of this fact, which is not at all accessible to immediate ocular evidence. This cause he therefore had to find out in another way. And this way was as follows:—

The Buddha sought to comprehend the process of becoming born as the integral part of another, more universal process, in such wise that if he discovered the conditions of the latter, then those of the former at once became clear of themselves. And this more universal process he found to be *Becoming* (*bhava*). Becoming is the most universal, nay, at bottom, the only process within the world. There is no real being in the sense of something persisting in any way, but everything is in a state of constant flow, developing from smallest beginnings, to dissolve again soon afterwards; everything is nothing but *Becoming*. In this manner also everything living *becomes* in every possible world, namely, in the world of desires, in the world of forms and in the formless world.* Thereby this Becoming of a new body endowed with senses, that is of a new corporeal organism,** happens always and exclusively in the way of being brought about

* "These three (kinds of) Becoming exist, ye monks: Becoming in the world of desires, Becoming in the world of forms, Becoming in the formless world."¹⁴⁶—By "world of forms" those heavenly realms are understood wherein objectification is reached in corporeal forms, but free from sensual desire; the "formless world" comprises the realms of infinite space, of unlimited consciousness, of Nothingness and of Neither Perception nor Non-perception. We will discuss these later on.

** The expression "bhava", Becoming, is used exclusively in this sense in the Dialogues when in relation to the Pañiccasamuppāda.

by "conception, germination, becoming born." But according to this, the process described under these latter conceptions is only *Becoming* in its beginning itself. Therefore it is clear without further words that the latter conditions of birth in the sense given above, that is, *becoming* conceived and born, coincide with those of *Becoming* in general. If I give the conditions for the conception of a being, I thereby give the condition for its *Becoming*; and if I annihilate the conditions of all *Becoming*, I thereby also annihilate those of any birth. Therefore it is only a self-evident axiom when the Buddha says: "If, Ānanda, the question were put: 'Is birth dependent on something?' then it ought to be replied: 'Yes, it is dependent.' And if it is asked: 'On what depends birth?' then it ought to be replied: 'In dependence on *Becoming* arises birth.'"¹⁴⁷ That the Buddha in this saying really only means to express what has been expounded above, follows with all the exactness one could desire from the explanation he himself gives of it:

"I have said: 'In dependence on *Becoming* arises birth.' And this, Ānanda, that birth arises in dependence on *Becoming*, must be understood in the following sense: Suppose, Ānanda, that there was no *Becoming* at all of anything and in any sense, which means, no *Becoming* in the world of desires, no *Becoming* in the world of corporeality, no *Becoming* in the world of non-corporeality, if *Becoming* thus were entirely wanting, if *Becoming* were annihilated, could then birth be perceived anywhere?"

"Certainly not, O Lord."

"Here, then, Ānanda, is the cause, origin, arising, dependence of birth, namely, *Becoming*."

Thus for the Buddha the problem of birth led over to that of *Becoming* in general, inasmuch as now for him the question to be answered was: What is the sufficient cause of this unresting, unceasing *Becoming* in which we find ourselves involved? Again through deep meditation he obtained the answer that will, without trouble, solve the question, also for us.

I am walking on the street. A girl's form appears before me. I *grasp* it, in mind. As a consequence of this, I fall to considering how I can approach her. Plans are made. They are externally realized. I declare my love, and marriage ensues. Children are begotten; in short, the whole chain of happy and unhappy events, such as only family life can bring about, runs its course. All this is conditioned and effected through the sole circumstance that years ago I *grasped* in mind that girl's form on the street. It was this *Grasping* which then arose within me that effected all this *Becoming*, reaching through many years. If it had not arisen within me, if I had remained indifferent at the first sight of that female form, she also, like thousands of others, would have disappeared unnoticed from my field of sight, even as she had entered it, perhaps never again to cross my way of life, which, perhaps, thereby might have taken a diametrically opposite course. A young man who has to choose his life's profession *grasps* the thought arising within him, of becoming a merchant, an official, an officer, or an artist. "This thought he cherishes and cultivates, and cleaves to." The

consequence is that the thought is translated into deed; *Becoming* sets in and remains in action until the young man has actually *become* a merchant, an official, an officer or an artist. In consequence of this Grasping he has become that which he grasped. If no such *grasping* had stirred within him, he would not have *become* anything of all this. We *grasp* some kind of food, with the effect that we eat of it and *become* ill; we *grasp*, in mind, the thought that a certain medicine may help us, in consequence of which we partake of it and *become* cured. We *grasp* a certain thing which somebody takes away from us, in consequence of which we *become* angry; we *grasp* a merry sight, and in consequence *become* glad. In short: As soon as some kind of *grasping* rises within us, *Becoming* begins; not merely *becoming* ill, *becoming* cured, *becoming* angry, *becoming* glad, but every kind of *Becoming*. Always and everywhere we *become* that which we *grasp*, by identifying ourselves at the same time with that which becomes in consequence of the grasping. Even my own body only *becomes*, if, and for as long as, I *grasp* food, and this, in consequence is incorporated into the body. If every *grasping* at food ceases, then there is no more *becoming* of the body as such, but it dissolves. The result therefore is this: If I *grasp* nothing more, then also nothing more can *become* in relation to me. Even a mere thought arising within me vanishes without foothold and dissolves, if I remain entirely indifferent towards it, that means, if no kind of grasping takes place: "If, Ānanda, the question were put: 'Is *Becoming* dependent on anything?' then it ought to be replied: 'Yes, it is dependent?' And if it were asked: 'On what is *Becoming* dependent?' then the reply should be given: 'In dependence upon Grasping arises *Becoming*.'"

However convincingly, because drawn from immediate observation, this line of argument may demonstrate that all *Becoming* has its cause in a grasping, none the less, it—and with it, also its outcome—is entirely strange and unaccustomed to us, because so completely different from our so-called scientific method. For our natural science regards all *Becoming* simply and solely from the point of view of the incessant changes of matter caused by the laws dominating it. This matter and its laws for it are the only things given, through which, therefore, like everything else in the world, man also is to be wholly and completely comprehended. Therefore our investigators take it for granted in advance that matter and its laws must conceal within themselves the sole causes of all the phenomena of nature and thereby also of man. From this there results, as the only method of all aetiology, the completest possible exploration of nature within which man only represents a genus among many others. In consequence of this it is always only the *external* causal connection of phenomena that is recognized, but never the innermost principle from which they take their origin. This principle, called by us the force of nature, natural science, because of the nature of its method, leaves on one side an unexplained and, for it, unexplainable residue. Hence we do not know how to behave at first when we suddenly find ourselves planted in the middle of the explanation of this force of nature itself. For it is nothing else but this explanation that is presented to us in the

intuition that all Becoming proceeds from grasping. This grasping is the energetic principle resident in all the separate phenomena of nature, constituting therefore the essence of all natural forces. Of course we can thoroughly understand this only when, in place of the said *objective* standpoint of our natural science — called objective, because it proceeds from the object, regarding this as the primary thing, from which all other things, even the subject, are to be explained — we withdraw to the directly opposite one, the subjective standpoint taken up by the Buddha. According to him, as we already sufficiently know, the primary thing is not nature, not the world with its laws; but I myself am this primary thing; and the problem consists not in comprehending myself as a product of this world, thus in explaining how the world comes to me, but, on the contrary, in understanding how in my inscrutable essence I come to the world, to the realm of *anattā*, of not-self; or what is the same thing, how I have got into this realm of *Becoming*. Precisely because of this, it can never be a question for the Buddha and for any one who from the Buddha's standpoint looks out into the world, as to how Becoming in itself, thus independent of me, is to be explained, but, just like the whole world, it becomes a *subjective phenomenon of the individual*; and consequently, from the very outset always and without exception, must have its ultimate and sufficient cause within the private individual. But from this there results a method the very opposite of ours, for discovering this ultimate cause. We shall never come upon it by external investigation, even if we search the entire universe through to the depths of starry space, just as little as we could ever find the subterranean inlet of a lake by exploring however closely its surface in every direction, with every possible kind of instrument. We must retire from the world back into ourselves, to the "centre of our vital birth" and by persistent introspection seek to find out how we have come into all this Becoming in which we find ourselves enmeshed. Under the Buddha's guidance, as we have seen, we shall be able without much difficulty, definitely to ascertain that whatever *becomes* in and about and for me, does so through an antecedent grasping that has arisen within me; nay, that it is precisely through this that I myself first become an *I*. Only when thus is discovered the source from which Becoming flows, may we with some hope of success turn our eye, in this manner rightly directed, upon other beings with a view to ascertaining if all Becoming, in regard to them also, is based upon a grasping, — in direct contrast to natural science which always seeks to comprehend the particular from the general.* As all the phenomena of life are obviously alike, we shall without further ado come to the insight that the axiom holds good to its full extent, for them also, as it is expressed by the Buddha: "I have said: 'In dependence on grasping arises Becoming.' And this, Ānanda, that in dependence on grasping arises Becoming is to be understood as follows. Suppose, Ānanda, that there was nowhere and nowise any grasping of any being at

* Meditating on the processes of the own body, he becomes wholly calmed, wholly clarified, and because he is thus wholly calmed, wholly clarified, he is able wisely to maintain his gaze externally, upon other bodies."¹⁴⁸

anything, that is to say, no grasping at Sensuality, no grasping at Views, no grasping at Ceremonial Observances, no grasping at Doctrines about the *I*, thus if grasping were entirely wanting, if grasping were entirely annihilated, would then any kind of Becoming be perceived?"

"Certainly not, Lord."

"Thus, Ānanda, there is here the cause, origin, arising, dependence of Becoming, namely, grasping."

Indeed, if only we are able to look deep enough, at last even all forces in the vegetable kingdom and in the realm of inorganic matter, disclose themselves as expressions of grasping. Take a box of matches. As soon as a match is rubbed against the surface of the box, fire flames up. Whence does it come? Neither within the friction surface nor yet within the match, of course, is it contained; we may investigate both of these physically and chemically in every imaginable way, never shall we find in either a trace of fire or of anything like it. And yet, every time a match is rubbed against the surface, fire appears. Accordingly, friction-surface and match are nothing more than *conditions*—occasional causes—for a third factor which seizes upon these conditions, *grasps* them, and by their means becomes manifest as fire. This third thing really lies in wait for these conditions, in order to grasp them and by their means to come violently into manifestation. Wherever a match is rubbed against a friction surface, whether this happens in Europe or in Asia, upon the moon or on Sirius, it is all the same. Everywhere and always this mysterious power of nature will eagerly seize upon these conditions and by means of them force its way into existence. And yet, although it is always and everywhere, nevertheless again, it is nowhere, for nowhere can it itself ever be found. In short, it is for us something inexplicable and inscrutable; it ever arises anew for us out of the "nothing", into which it always again sinks back, on which account in the last analysis we can say no more about it than we can say about the manifestations of our own energies; only this, that it is a kind of *grasping* which comes to fruition, and which we then perceive as fire. And it is the same with every force of nature. As further illustration, the beautiful comparison in which Schopenhauer vividly depicts the essence of nature's forces, may here be given in Buddhist garb:

"Let us imagine a machine constructed in accordance with the laws of mechanics. Iron weights through their weight furnish the impetus to movement; copper wheels resist through their rigidity; they push and lift each other and the levers by means of their impenetrability and so forth. Here weight, rigidity, impenetrability are original and unexplained forms of *grasping*: merely the conditions under which they appear, and the manner in which they express themselves as dominating a given substance as well as time and space, are indicated by mechanical science. Now, for example, let a strong magnet act upon the iron of the weights and overcome their weight, at once the movements of the machine cease, and matter is immediately again the scene of some other kind of *grasping*, about which the aetiological explanation can tell no more than the conditions under which it happens, namely, magnetism.

But if now the copper strips of this machine are laid upon zinc plates, and diluted acid is introduced between them, then at once the same matter of the machine falls prey to another kind of original *grasping*, that is, to galvanism, which now dominates it according to its laws, and reveals itself in it through its phenomena, of which aetiology can tell no more than the circumstances under which, and the laws according to which, they appear. Now let us raise the temperature, and introduce pure oxygen, and the whole machine burns up: this means, again, that another kind of *grasping*, chemical action, now lays irresistible claim to this matter. Now let the metallic calcium thus produced be combined with an acid: a salt is produced; crystals shoot out; they are the phenomena of another kind of *grasping*, again quite inscrutable in itself, whereas the taking place of this phenomenon is dependent on conditions which aetiology is able to state. The crystals weather away and mingle with other substances, and a vegetation arises out of them: a new kind of *grasping*—and thus we might track the same persistent matter into the infinite . . . how now this, now that, species of *grasping* gains the right to it, and inevitably seizes it in order to show itself.”

To be sure, the Buddha does not expressly teach that all Becoming in the vegetable kingdom and in the domain of inorganic matter also is conditioned by grasping; but not because this is wrong, but because here as everywhere with unequalled logical consequence he holds to his principle of dealing with nothing which does not serve to establish a truly holy life, but is only of use to satisfy our mere lust for knowledge. But Becoming in the vegetable kingdom and in the domain of the inorganic does not here concern us any further, at least as regards the original direction of our enquiries, since it can never become of practical consequence to us, inasmuch as we can never slip back again into these domains. If upon this account the Buddha does not expressly speak about the causes of Becoming in these realms, nevertheless, as we shall see later on, he assumes as self-evident that there also this cause always consists in some kind of *grasping*.

In the passage quoted above we also find a classification of the possible kinds of grasping, in so far as it may relate to sensual pleasure, to views, to ritual observances and to thoughts about the *I*. This classification also at first seems somewhat strange to us, as we should prefer to see this grasping classified according to the external objects to which it relates. But here again we are influenced by our wonted objective standpoint which always wants, off-hand, to take the external world as its measure. But if we bear in mind the subjective standpoint of the Buddha, namely, that our inscrutable essence as something alien is opposed to the world which we only *grasp*, then it will become clear that this grasping ultimately has to do with sensual enjoyments, then with the views arising within us in regard to the world and our relation to it, then with the religious ceremonies through which we think we must effect our deliverance, as for example the worship of a personal god, but in particular, with the false idea that our essence is a positive quantity belonging to this world. Nevertheless, this classification is not the fundamental one. There appears another one, in-

telligible without further ado also to us, and known to us before. Its direct theme are the elements constituting our personality, within which, because in the latter we experience the whole world, all our grasping is summed up, to wit, body, sensation, perception, activities of the mind and consciousness, which, as the totality of everything which we can grasp, the Buddha calls the five groups of grasping, *pañcupādānakkhandhā*. The process of birth consists just in the working out, that is, in the *Becoming* of these five groups with the corporeal organism as their basis, which, accordingly, have the principal grasping as their antecedent condition. But before we look closer at *this* kind of grasping, it will be best first to make ourselves acquainted with the immediate *condition* of all grasping.

For grasping also is causally conditioned. Indeed, the essence of all aetiology, as we have seen above, consists in calling attention to those conditions under which grasping exists, and the nature and manner of its expression. Certainly, as we already know, aetiology, correspondent with its objective standpoint, is satisfied with the discovery of these *external* conditions, whereas from the Buddha we may again expect the *inner* reason, which he actually gives as follows: "If, Ānanda, the question were put: 'Is grasping dependent on anything?' then reply should be made: 'Yes, it is dependent.' And if it were asked: 'On what is grasping dependent?' then reply should be made: 'In dependence upon *thirst* arises grasping.'"

What this means, the Buddha himself explains to us: "I have said: 'In dependence upon thirst arises grasping.' And this, Ānanda, that in dependence upon thirst arises grasping, must be understood in the following sense. Suppose, Ānanda, that nowhere and nowise any thirst of any being for anything existed, that is to say, no thirst for forms, no thirst for sounds, no thirst for odours, no thirst for tastes, no thirst for objects of touch, no thirst for ideas,—if thirst thus were entirely wanting, if thirst were completely annihilated, would then any kind of grasping be perceived?"

"Certainly not, Lord."

"Here then, Ānanda, is the cause, origin, arising, dependence of grasping, namely, thirst."

According to this, by thirst, *tanhā*, is to be understood every kind of desire or craving for anything whatever within the world, which, as we already know, is summed up in the objects of the six senses, from the slightest desire that arises within us to the most deeply rooted, apparently ineradicable passion. It is only the expression *thirst* which here is unfamiliar to us. Later on, we shall return to it, especially in its relation to the will. Here it is enough to say that it comprises within itself conscious as well as unconscious volition.

As soon as this thirst, this desire for some sensual object, arises within us, the natural, necessary consequence is, that a grasping also arises within us. To illustrate this, we need only go back to our examples given above. What was the cause of my grasping at the representation of the girl I met on the street, of my *attachment* to her with the result that this grasping itself in turn determined

the Becoming that followed upon it, and therewith my whole life's fate? Unquestionably, the desire that arose in me to possess the girl. If this desire, this thirst had not arisen in me, then I should not have grasped, in mind, her form; I should not have become attached to it; and in turn all the effects of this grasping itself would have remained absent. And what is the cause of a man overcoming with iron energy every obstacle opposing itself to his plan to become a merchant, an official, an officer, an artist? What is the cause of his grasping with such force at these plans and ideas? Certainly his intense desire, his ardent *thirst*, his inflexible will to win this life-position. If he had no such desire, no such *interest*, which again, in itself is nothing but a mode of thirst, then he would not grasp such thoughts and still less the means of their realization and thereby nothing of all this would *become*. If I have no *desire* for food, no *thirst* for drinks that might make me ill, then I do not grasp them, I do not take them, and precisely thereby avoid becoming ill. And if, finally, I have not the least desire for my body and thereby no sort of wish to maintain it any longer, if, besides this, I am free from all desire to satisfy the hunger and thirst which announce their presence; in short, if I am entirely without any desire of any kind, then I grasp nothing and can behold with equanimity how this my body, through want of necessary food, declines and decays, until at last, together with the organs of sense, it entirely perishes. Thereby in immediate ocular evidence, I can confirm in myself how for me *all* Becoming little by little comes to rest.

All this is so clear that it needs no further proof; nay, at bottom, is even incapable of such a thing. That all grasping, all attachment, and thereby all Becoming is conditioned by thirst, by willing, is without further words, self-evident in itself to every one who only once has understood the statement. It only remains to test it by practically trying on ourselves how, by the gradual killing out of the will, Becoming becomes ever less and less. And this dictum holds good not only for ourselves and those phenomena that are similar to us, the animals, but "continued reflection will lead men to recognize also the force—or to speak in the language of the Buddha, the grasping—that impels and vegetates within the plant, yea, even the force by which the crystal shoots forth, by which the magnet turns towards the North-Pole, the influence which strikes it from the contact of heterogeneous metals, that which appears in the elective affinities of substances as repulsion and attraction, separating and uniting, lastly, even gravity, which strives so powerfully within all matter, pulling the stone to the earth, and earth towards the sun,"¹⁴⁹—to recognize all these kinds of grasping as conditioned by that cause which, there where it appears most clearly and unmistakably, in man, is called *tanhā*, thirst, will. "No body is without craving and desire" says Schopenhauer in the spirit of Jacob Boehme as he expresses himself, and as we may venture to add, after what we have seen, not less in the spirit of the Buddha.

To come back once more to our simile of the fire. We have seen that the mysterious force that appears as fire, if a match is rubbed against a corresponding frictional surface, lies in wait, so to say, for these conditions of its becoming

visible, ever ready, regardless of any restrictions of time or space, to lay hold of them with violence. Who will not recognize in this ever watching and waiting desire to grasp adequate conditions and thus to arrive at Becoming—as fire—the same *tanhā*, *thirst*, notwithstanding the gradually increasing distance of this kind of existence from our own?

But thereby *tanhā*, *thirst*, will, is shown to be the ultimate ground of all being, or—to speak in the enlightened mode of the Buddha who acknowledges in this world no Being but only an eternal Becoming,*—of all Becoming: “Where is craving of will, there is grasping.”¹⁵⁰ “In dependence upon grasping arises Becoming.”¹⁵¹

Our expositions thus far yield us this result: Our birth, as a part, that is, as the first stage of Becoming, in common with this latter, has the same fundamental cause, *grasping*. But all grasping is rooted in *thirst*, in willing. Thus the search for the cause of our ever repeated rebirth led the Buddha to the discovery of the fundamental cause of all Becoming, that is, in the language of ordinary speech, of all being. On the other side, however, precisely through this, the process that brings about our ever repeated rebirth is flooded with brightest light. How it presents itself in this light will now be the subject of our discourse.

The Process of Rebirth — the Law of Karma

Our true essence lies beyond our personality and its components, even beyond the world. But we do not allow ourselves to be satisfied with it. We have a longing, a thirst for something else, entirely alien to our innermost essence, namely, for the world, a world of forms, of sounds, of odours, of sapids and of things tangible. And because we long and thirst for it, we always eagerly seize any opportunity of coming into contact with it. But this is not directly possible. To bring about a contact with form, an eye is needed; for contact with sounds, an ear; for contact with odours, with sapids, with things tangible, a nose, a tongue, a body are necessary; but an organ of thinking is always needed as a central organ. In short: to obtain the contact with the world which we so eagerly strive for, we need the corporeal organism, the “body endowed with six senses,” as the six-senses-machine. And so great is our thirst for the world of forms, of sounds, of odours, of sapids and of things tangible, that we imagine this thirst to be the immediate manifestation of our own essence, and therefore “the corporeal organism together with consciousness” the present appearance of this our essence, which objectifies

* Here again one has to complain of the inexactness of many translations from the Canon, which, instead of leading us to the height of insight attained by the Buddha, from which no Being is to be found in the world but only Becoming, and of purifying thus our own shallow views, do exactly the reverse. Contrary to the language of the original text, they force the clear insight of the Buddha into modes of expression current among ourselves, and thus degrade and obscure it, when they translate *bhava*, Becoming, always by *Being* or *Existence*.

itself therein. Hence also our unexampled clinging to this organism so long as we possess it, and our boundless thirst for a new one the moment we lose it, thus at the moment of death, a thirst which then actually leads to the formation of a new organism of the same kind, of a new six-senses-machine. The process of this formation, as given in the teaching of the Buddha, is as follows:

We now know that every kind of Becoming presupposes two things: first, that conditions are set up for its taking place, and secondly, that these conditions are attached to, that they are grasped. Let us bear in mind the simile of the fire. The rubbing of the match on the frictional surface constitutes the condition at which grasping occurs. Or, since this grasping, this attachment, follows out of apparent nothingness, so that it is impossible to define it more closely in any way, more especially not as the action of a subject, we may still better and more briefly express it thus: The match in consequence of friction becomes the object of grasping. From these two factors there results this new Becoming also which sets in with conception, or, keeping to the language of the Buddha, with birth. The two parents, by uniting in copulation the male sperm with the female ovum—a process analogous to the rubbing of the match on its frictional surface in the production of fire—provide the condition, or, what is the same thing, the object of grasping, in consequence of which the object grasped, that is, the ovum thus fertilized, becomes an embryo, and the Becoming of a new corporeal organism sets in. But this grasping was that which the thirst of a dying creature, unallayed notwithstanding all sickness and death agony, had produced for a new six-senses-machine, as for the only possibility of remaining in contact with, and enjoying the world of forms, sounds, odours, sapids and tangibles. To speak concretely: Let us imagine ourselves beside the sick-bed of some man, for example, a mighty prince, who is about to meet with what we call death. This means, that he is forced to give up the foreign elements he retained till now in his body endowed with six senses which alone made him visible for others; and who, on that very account once more as so often before in the course of time, has again to experience the sensation of dying. The thirst for the world is not yet dead within him; but where is thirst, there is grasping. This grasping shows itself as long as life has not fled from the body, in this present body itself. But in the same moment when the body, after the faculty of life has vanished, ceases to be an object that may be used for this grasping—only a body possessed of life sufficing for the satisfaction of the thirst for life—the former body is abandoned and a new life-informed germ is laid hold of, and grasping made at it. And this germ is the same that has just been generated in a strange bed by a man and woman, perhaps by a couple of rough working people, in voluptuous paroxysm, by uniting their sperm and ovum. And consciousness descends upon the germ thus seized upon in a maternal womb: the germ develops into an embryo, the fruit is born—and that once powerful prince finds himself in the light of this consciousness back again as a child of these working people, though without remembrance of his former existence. In consequence he is only insufficiently nourished, badly treated, often heartlessly maltreated, and in after-years

forced by his father to beg, in order to provide him the means of satisfying his craving for drink. The former prince has become a miserable beggar. But this is not yet the worst. In another man at the moment of death, grasping at a new germ, conditioned through thirst for new Becoming or existence, is realized in some animal body or it may be even in some hell-world, the deceased man finding himself back as a beast or even as a devil. On the other hand, it may happen that when the present body is abandoned, grasping may take place in a world of light, a heaven, so that he in whom this process of dying has run its course, sees himself changed to "a god or a divine being."

With this the question as to the "causal connection between my former death and the fruitfulness of an alien marriage-bed" is solved, the bridge between the fresh existence of a new-born creature and that of a perished one is shown: "Where, monks, three are found in combination, there is a seed of life planted. Thus, if a father and mother come together, but it is not the mother's period and the being to be born is not present, then no seed of life is planted. Or, if father and mother come together, and it is the mother's period, but the being to be born is not present, then again no seed of life is planted. But when, monks, a father and mother come together, and it is the mother's period and the being to be born is also present, then by the combined agency of these three, a seed of life is planted."¹⁵² Since the Buddha teaches re-birth, any one can see at once that "the being to be born" must depart from somewhere.

Thus death and conception reveal themselves as two sides of the one same process: Every conception is only possible through the simultaneous death of another creature in one or another realm of Samsāra. What disappears here, reappears there. To the paroxysms of lust in the moment of coition thus stand opposed the pangs of death of the creature just conceived.

In this whole matter we must, of course, proceed from this, that, for a dying creature's thirst for existence leading to new grasping of a new germ, the laws of space and of time at that moment do not exist. All the germs in the world are therefore equally near to it. For thirst at this moment is without any substratum, since its former body, upon which it had concentrated itself, has been snatched from it.* It is in just the same condition as that other kind of thirst which we see manifesting itself as fire. As we know, it lies in wait in ghostly omnipresence for the conditions of its entry and seizes upon them with eagerness, no matter whether they are given here upon our own earth or upon Sirius.**

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* At this moment, free from its former restrictions, it flares up out of the "Nothing," that is, out of our innermost essence, which is as boundless as the universe, as we shall see in the last chapter.

** In the "Milindapañha" this idea is expressed as follows:

"The king said: 'Master Nāgasena, if somebody dies here and is reborn in the world of Brahma, and another one who dies here is reborn in Kashmir, which of them would arrive first?'

If the problem of rebirth is thus solved in the simplest imaginable manner, none the less this solution is not yet an exhaustive one. For the question—of such an immense practical importance—still remains to be answered: How comes it, that one creature in dying grasps the ovum of a woman, another the ovum in an animal womb, another in a hell or in a heaven? Or more briefly: Through what is determined the different *direction* of grasping, upon a being's death? The answer is: Through the same factor which represents the cause of grasping in general, thirst, *tanhā*. The special kind of thirst, or to put it otherwise, the main direction taken by will in a dying being, determines not only the grasping itself, but also its direction.

To understand this fully, we must before all else get a clear idea as to the condition of thirst or will at this decisive moment. We only grasp what is in harmony with our will,—this axiom holds good everywhere without exception, as we have had occasion to see in our investigations thus far, and as every one may experience at every moment in himself. But though of such unlimited validity, in normal life it must be completed by this other, that we do not always grasp what is in harmony with our willing. This is the case when we recognize with sufficient clearness the injurious or deceptive nature of that for which we long. Indeed this recognition, if only it is complete enough, may entirely cure us of our desire for an object and thereby also from grasping at it. For instance, a man may be filled with hottest passion for a woman. The girl seems inclined to gratify his lust and bares her bosom which exhibits distinct symptoms of syphilis. His passion for this woman, and therewith his grasping at her, will

'They would arrive at the same time, O King.'

'Give me a simile.'

'In which town were you born, O King?'

'In a village called Kalasi, Master.'

'How far is Kalasi from here, O King?'

'About two hundred miles, Master.'

'And how far is Kashmir from here, O King?'

'About twelve miles, Master.'

'Now think of the village of Kalasi, O King.'

'I have done so, Master.'

'And now think of Kashmir, O King.'

'It is done, Master.'

'Of which of these two, O King, did you think the more slowly and of which the more quickly?'

'Equally quickly of both, Master.'

'Just so, O King, he who dies here and is reborn in the world of Brahma, is not reborn later than he who dies here and is reborn in Kashmir.'

'Give me one more simile.'

'What do you think, O King? Suppose two birds were flying in the air, and they should settle both at the same time, one upon a high, and the other one upon a low tree,—which bird's shade would first fall upon the earth, and which bird's later?'

'Both shadows would appear at the same time, Master.'

'Just so, O King, both men are reborn at the same time, and not one of them earlier and the other later.'"

probably in an instant vanish forever. Thus our willing is generally modified by *cognition*, inasmuch as in its light we reject objects which in themselves are in complete harmony with our willing, but are known to us to have predominantly injurious consequences. Our will affirms itself unchecked only when, from one cause or another, the light of knowledge no longer shines, thus, when the will is blind. Then, without making any distinction we grasp at everything that is in harmony with it, regardless of the fact—just because we have no knowledge of it—that the object seized will, as outcome, involve us in the most serious suffering. Even if consciousness is merely dimmed, the longing for possession of a walking-stick will cause a man to grasp at a poisonous snake lying quietly on the ground. But still more eagerly will a sleeping man greedily swallow a sweet draught dripped upon his tongue, though it be a deadly poison, if only his willing is excited so far that it acts, though yet without consciousness.* In full consciousness, thus, in possession of the light of cognition, neither of them, of course, would do any such thing.

But in exactly the same situation are we, and all beings at the moment of death. For then *every* kind of consciousness disappears, since their supporters, the recent activities of the senses, have ceased. The thirst to maintain ourselves in existence, our will for new Becoming, then affirms itself, because devoid of any kind of cognition, in total blindness, and for this very reason without the least regard to the consequences resulting therefrom, it simply leads to a grasping at that germ among all possible ones, among the five courses, that is most in harmony with itself, to which, precisely for this reason, it becomes chiefly attracted, all the same whether this germ is in a human female, in an animal womb, or even in some hell. Only *later*, when this germ has developed, and with the entry of sense-activity, consciousness again dawns, will the germ seized and adhered to, be illuminated by this same consciousness. *Then* we recognize ourselves as men, as beasts or as devils, just like the man who has laid hold of a poisonous snake under the delusion that it is a walking-stick, or the other who, almost wholly unconscious, has greedily gulped down the poisonous draught, and only with the restoration of the power of thought becomes aware what a trick his own will has played upon him.

Because the thirst for new Becoming at the moment of death, that is, upon the abandonment of the present body, thus acts entirely blindly, and for this very reason, in accordance with its innermost nature, therefore, to use a modern expression, we can say that at this moment it stands purely subject to *the law of affinity*. As a chemical substance forms a homogeneous combination only with certain other substances, but strives for this with all possible vehemence, while showing indifference towards all others, which is what we call chemical affinity, in exactly the same way there exists in every living creature at the moment of death a certain definite striving, called by the Buddha *taṇhā* or thirst, which striving stands in a relationship of affinity only with a certain kind

* That is: Only consciousness of taste is aroused, but not thought-consciousness.

of germ to which alone, therefore, it is led by grasping from which, thereupon, the new organism results. This is clearly to be seen in the animal world without further ado. The fundamental striving of every animal during its lifetime, when a gleam of knowledge is present, is restricted to its own kind, all animals having intercourse only with those of their own species. All the more exclusively will this concentration of the will to live upon its own species declare itself at the moment of death, when only a striving for grasping at a similar animal germ will be present, and, accordingly, only grasping at such a germ will take place. On the other hand, the determination of affinities among mankind will be much more difficult. For among men all sorts of directions of the will are represented. Alongside of men with the mind of an angel, there are others who stand far below the beast. "Man has reason, but he uses it only to be more beastly than any beast."* It will be all quite clear, then, without more ado, when the Buddha, as we have seen above, teaches that from the human realm, paths lead to all the five tracts of Samsāra: the thirst for existence of a man with an angel's mind will, when in death he abandons his former organism, draw him to a heavenly world and lead him to a grasping there, with the same necessity that the light, transparent smoke of burning precious wood by natural law mounts upward. On the other hand, the base inclinations of a degenerate man, if in the animal world they light upon a germ akin to themselves, will grasp this germ, but if they are still worse than any animal, then they will only find corresponding materials in a still lower realm, in one of the hells, and, accordingly, in their blindness cling to this, exactly as the thick heavy smoke of coal cannot rise upwards, but in accordance with its nature remains in the depths. Thus the nature of our future rebirth depends upon the direction our desires take during the course of our life up till death. *Thirst is the leading string, bound to which beings are led on the long road of their rebirths through Samsāra, as an ox is led along the street with a rope.*

This idea finds its most pregnant expression in the fifty-seventh Discourse of the Middle Collection. Punna, a cow-ascetic, and Seniya, an unclad or dog-ascetic, two penitents who, Brahmin fashion, wished to secure a fortunate rebirth through exquisite self-torment, Punna leading the life of a cow and Seniya that of a dog, betake themselves to the Exalted One. Punna asks him the following question: "This unclad one, sir, this Seniya, the dog-ascetic, practises a heavy austerity: he partakes only of food thrown upon the ground. For long years he has followed and kept the dog-vow; wither will he go? What may he expect?" The Buddha at first refuses to answer the question, but at last, under Punna's urging he makes the following reply:

* Precisely because man possesses reason, it makes him sometimes appear much worse than a beast. First just because of this reason, man may, from a purely objective standpoint, act much worse than any beast. But then his actions, if the other conditions are equal, are, in relation to his reason, always worse than those of an animal. For it is clear that a man stealing or murdering in spite of his reason, ranks morally far below an animal doing the same without reason.

“Well then, Punna, as you do not give way, I will answer you. Suppose, Punna, that someone realizes the dog-vow, carries it out completely, realizes the dog’s habits, carries them out completely, realizes the dog’s mind, carries it out completely, realizes the dog’s behaviour, carries it out completely. When he has realized the dog-vow, when he has carried it out completely, when he has realized the dog’s habits, carried them out completely, when he has realized the dog’s mind, carried it out completely, when he has realized the dog’s behaviour, carried it out completely,—then when the body breaks up, after death, he will come back to existence among the dogs. If, however, he cherishes the opinion: “Through these practices or vows, self-castigation or abstinence, I shall become a god or a divine being,—then this is a false opinion. And this false opinion, I say, Punna, causes him to come either to this side or to that: either into a hell-world or into an animal womb. Thus, Punna, the dog-vow, if it is successful, leads to the dogs, and if it fails, into a hell-world.”

Seniya now asks: “This Koliya Punna, the cow-ascetic, sir, for a long time has kept and practised the cow-vow: whither will he go, what may he expect?” To him also the Buddha only answers after having been urged several times: “Really, Seniya, since you insist, I will answer you. Suppose, Seniya, some one realizes the cow-vow, carries it out completely, realizes the cow’s habits, carries them out completely, realizes the cow’s mind, carries it out completely, realizes the cow’s behaviour, carries it out completely. And having realized the cow-vow, having carried it out completely, having realized the cow’s habits, having carried them out completely, having realized the cow’s mind, having carried it out completely, having realized the cow’s behaviour, having carried it out completely,—then, upon the dissolution of the body, after death, he comes again into existence among cows. But if he cherishes the opinion: ‘By means of such practices or vows, self-castigation or abstinence I shall become a god or a divine being,’—then this is a false opinion. And his false opinion, I say, Seniya, causes him to come to this side or to that, either into a hell-world or into an animal womb. Thus, Seniya, the cow-vow, if it is successful, leads to the cows, and if it fails, into a hell-world.”

And how should it be otherwise? To what other grasping than of a dog-germ should the blind thirst of a dying human being to maintain itself in existence, lead, in accord with the law of affinity, if his whole striving and willing have become dog-like? At the worst, it may happen, that this striving, which in that decisive moment is entirely blind, may lead to grasping in yet greater depths, namely, in a hell, “if the dog-vow fails.” Then, in one’s blind willing, one has gone astray, somewhat like an animal that in its blind craving to satisfy its hunger comes upon poisoned food and swallows it.

So it is in every case. Always and without exception the striving for new Becoming, that is, to maintain oneself in existence, if it is forced, in consequence of the decay of the body inhabited till now, to search for a new germ, leads to such a grasping as corresponds with the direction already taken during the course of life, in the way that a stone that is thrown keeps to the direction given

to it: "Suppose, monks, that a monk has won to confidence, virtue, experience, renunciation, wisdom. And he thinks: 'O that I might return, upon the dissolution of the body, after death, to the company of mighty princes!' This thought he thinks, on this thought he dwells, this thought he cherishes. These creative activities of his mind* and inner conditions, which he thus cherishes and promotes within himself, lead to his rebirth in such an existence. This, O monks, is the way, this is the transition that conducts to return thither. And further, O monks, if a monk has won to confidence, virtue, experience, renunciation, wisdom, and heard this saying: 'The thirty-three gods—the shadow gods—the blissful gods—the gods of boundless happiness—the gods dwelling beyond boundless happiness—these live long and gloriously and happily.' Such an one thinks within himself: 'O that upon the dissolution of the body, after death, I might return to the society of these gods!' This thought he thinks, on this thought he dwells, this thought he cherishes. These creative activities of the mind and the inner conditions that he thus cherishes and promotes within himself, lead to his rebirth in such an existence. This, ye monks, is the way, the transition that leads to return thither."¹⁵³

According to this, man always becomes what he would like to become, that is, whatever he desires and thirsts after; for whatever we thirst after, that we grasp. Of course this is not to be understood as if it meant that a mere wish would be sufficient; but what has directing force, is the nature of our willing and of our desire in its innermost depth, that means, our innermost character, as it appears in action as blind impulse, without being guided by the light of knowledge. For according to the foregoing expositions, exactly in this situation is our will at the decisive moment of death, when it determines our grasping of a new germ. To know to what kind of grasping our will may lead us, we must dive into the depths of our animal life, as it reveals itself when the dominating influence of reason is eliminated, thus, in emotion, or still more, in a state of intoxication, or in dream. Hence it is not decisive, if a person in rational reflection does not murder or steal, is neither unchaste nor heartless, but only if he is incapable of all this even in the height of passion, nay, even in his dreams. Only that which even in such conditions never more arises, never more *can* arise within us, of which therefore, as we can easily feel, we are absolutely incapable, only this is definitively eradicated from our will. Therefore it can never any more make itself felt when in death we have entirely abandoned consciousness, and precisely because of this, cannot any more as blind impulse determine our new grasping. If, for example, I know that I could not, under any circumstances, conceive the thought of killing, not even in a dream, then I am sure that this inclination no longer exists within me, thus also can no longer determine my new grasping at death. But if I must confess, after having carefully studied myself, that in a state of clear consciousness I am indeed incapable of killing, but might become a murderer in an excited or drunken state, then my will is

* Sankhārā, as the fourth group of grasping.

of such sort that in the future, if unilluminated by any consciousness, it might cause a grasping of a germ in a world where murders can be, and are, indeed, committed; and where perhaps also this capacity of will still asleep within me, under the appropriate external circumstances,—for instance, if I were born into a rude and uncultured family—might some time or other flame up again and make me a murderer. The fundamental condition for the certainty that after death I shall not become attached to a germ in a low-class, pain-laden world, is therefore this, that I know myself, at latest, in the hour of my death, to be definitively free from all bad inclinations. In so far as this is the case, in so far as a man has acquired confidence, virtue, experience, renunciation, wisdom, and thereby become nobler and purer and thereby more adapted to attachment in higher and purer spheres, he also has it in his own hands to bring about his rebirth in closely determined circles or spheres, be it in a powerful high-placed family, or in a world of gods. By incessantly and intensively occupying himself with thoughts relating to this, he may turn his entire striving in this direction, until he is quite absorbed, completely saturated with it, so that of itself the unshakeable certitude comes to him: After death I can no longer possibly sink into the depths, as little as coal-smoke, when cleansed, that is, freed from its heavier components, can settle in lower levels, but *must* rise upwards. Indeed, in this decisive unconscious condition, I can grasp no other germ but the one desired, because every other would be contrary to my innermost nature, that is, to the characteristic direction of my will, to my deepest thirst for a certain definite mode of existence, and therefore, without further ado, even though blind, would be rejected by it.

As a typical example of how it is the law of affinity that determines our grasping in death, the thirteenth Discourse of the Dighanikāya may be cited, in which the way to union with Brahmā,* the highest aim of the Brahmin caste, is treated thus:

“Vāseṭṭha, what think you and what have you heard from old and elder Brahmins, who were your teachers or the teachers of your teachers, about this point: Is Brahmā interested in house and home, in wife and child, or not?”

“He is not, reverend Gotama.”

“Is his mind spiteful or peaceable?”—“Peaceable, reverend Gotama.”—“Is he ill-natured or good-natured?”—“Good-natured, reverend Gotama.”—“Is he pure or impure of heart?”—“Pure-hearted, reverend Gotama.”—“Is his will constant or not?”—“It is constant, reverend Gotama.”

“Now what think you, Vāseṭṭha? Are the Brahmins knowing the three Vedas attached to house and home, wife and children, or not?”—“They are attached to them, reverend Gotama.”—“Are they spiteful or peaceable?”—“They are spiteful, reverend Gotama.”—“Are they ill-natured or good-natured?”—“Ill-natured, reverend Gotama.”—“Are they pure-hearted or impure-hearted?”

* Brahmā is the Christian god, existing within the world and therefore not eternal but imagining himself eternal, because of the immense duration of his life. Compare Dighanikāya XI.

—“They are impure-hearted, reverend Gotama.”—“Of constant will or not?”
—“Of inconstant will, reverend Gotama.”

“Vāsetṭha, do these agree together: the Brahmins, knowing the three Vedas, but esteeming property and family, and Brahmā who is without property and family?”—“No, reverend Gotama, these do not agree together.”

“Very good, Vāsetṭha. That therefore these Brahmins, knowing the three Vedas, but esteeming property and family, after the end of the body, after death should attain to union with Brahmā who is without property or family—this is impossible.”

“Then, Vāsetṭha, the Brahmins, knowing the three Vedas, according to your saying are spiteful, but Brahmā is peaceable; they are ill-natured, but Brahmā is good-natured; they are impure-hearted, but Brahmā is pure; they are of inconstant will, but Brahmā is constant. Do these agree together: The spiteful, ill-natured, impure-hearted, inconstant Brahmins knowing the three Vedas, and the peaceable, good-natured, pure, constant Brahmā?”—“No, reverend Gotama, these do not agree together.”

“Very good, Vāsetṭha. That thus these inconstant Brahmins knowing the three Vedas, after the end of the body, after death, should attain to union with constant Brahmā—this is impossible . . .”

Thereupon the young Brahmin Vāsetṭha spoke to the Exalted One saying: “Reverend Gotama, I have heard that the Samana Gotama shows the way that leads to Brahmā and to union with him. May the reverend Gotama be pleased to show us this way and lead the Brahmins upwards.”

“Listen then, Vāsetṭha, and note well what I shall say.”—“So be it, Lord,” said the young Brahmin Vāsetṭha assenting to the Exalted One. The Exalted One spoke, and said:

“There the bhikkhu [monk] with his loving mind penetrates one direction of space, and so he penetrates the second and so the third and so the fourth. And thus he penetrates upwards and downwards and horizontally the whole wide world everywhere, completely, with loving benevolent mind, all-embracing, great, beyond all measure, full of peace.”

“Just, Vāsetṭha, as a powerful trumpeter easily penetrates all the four regions with the sound of his instrument: even so there remains no restriction for the development of such a benevolent mind thus released. Vāsetṭha, this is the way leading to Brahmā, to union with him.”

“Vāsetṭha, such a bhikkhu also penetrates with compassionate mind—with joyful mind—with equal mind one direction of space, and so the second and so the third and so the fourth. And thus he penetrates upwards and downwards and horizontally the whole wide world everywhere, completely, with all-embracing, broad, measureless, compassionate mind, with joyful mind, and with equanimity.

“Just, Vāsetṭha, as a powerful trumpeter easily penetrates all the four regions with the sound of his instrument; even so there remains no restriction for the development of such a compassionate mind—joyful mind—with equanimity. Vāsetṭha, this is the way leading to Brahmā, to union with him.

“Now what think you, Vāseṭṭha? Has the bhikkhu who keeps himself thus, any interest in the petty things of every-day life, or not?”—“He has not, reverend Gotama.”—“Is he spiteful or peaceable?”—“Peaceable, reverend Gotama.”—“Ill-natured or good-natured?”—“Good-natured, reverend Gotama.”—“Pure-hearted or impure-hearted?”—“Pure-hearted, reverend Gotama.”—“Constant or inconstant in his will?”—“Constant in his will, reverend Gotama.”

“So then, Vāseṭṭha, you say that such a bhikkhu is without interest in the petty things of every-day life, and that Brahmā is without interest in the petty things of every-day life. Do these two agree together, a bhikkhu without interest in worldly possessions, and Brahmā without interest in worldly possessions?”—“Yes, reverend Gotama, they agree together.”—“Very good, Vāseṭṭha! That such a bhikkhu uninterested in worldly things, after the end of his body, after death, should attain to union with Brahmā, who is untouched by worldly cares, this is possible.”

“And so you say, Vāseṭṭha, that such a bhikkhu is, just like Brahmā, peaceable, good-natured, pure-hearted, constant in his will. Do these agree together: a peaceable, good-natured, pure-hearted, constant-willed bhikkhu, and the peaceable, good-natured, pure-hearted, constant-willed Brahmā?”—“Yes, reverend Gotama, they agree together.”—“Very good, Vāseṭṭha! That therefore such a peaceable, good-natured, pure and constant bhikkhu, after the end of his body, after death, may attain to union with unchanging Brahmā—this is possible.” For he is by his thirst, his willing, “as it were, conducted” to the heaven of Brahmā, as it is said in the 153rd to the 162nd Discourse of the Book of Threes, in the *Anguttara Nikāya*.

But with this the law of affinity, as leading the will in its grasping, is not yet exhausted. It not only generally determinates the germ at which the new grasping takes place, in general as regards its belonging to one of the five realms of *Samsāra*, but it also indicates in minutest detail the guiding clue as to why a certain definite germ is seized and adhered to, why, for instance, within the human kingdom a grasping takes place just in the womb of a poor working woman, or of a noble lady, or at a germ already diseased from father or mother and endowed with but small vitality. This is expounded in detail by the Buddha in the hundred-and-thirty-fifth Discourse of the Middle Collection as follows:—

“What, O Gotama, may be the reason, what the cause, why also among human beings, born as men, depravity and excellence are found? There are, O Gotama, short-lived men and long-lived men, there are sickly ones and healthy ones, there are ugly ones and beautiful ones, there are powerless ones and powerful ones, there are penniless ones and well-to-do ones, there are such as are in high, and such as are in low position, there are stupid ones and acute ones;—what is the reason, O Gotama, what is the cause, that also among human beings, born as men, depravity and excellence are found?”

“Owners of their works, O Brahmin, are beings, heirs of their works, children of their works, creatures of their works, slaves of their works. Works discriminate beings, according to their depravity and excellence . . .

“Suppose, O Brahmin, some woman or man kills living creatures, is cruel and bloodthirsty, accustomed to murder and homicide, without compassion for man and beast. Such action, thus performed, thus completed, upon the dissolution of the body, after death, causes such an one to go downwards, upon an evil track, into the depths, into a hell-world. Or, if he does not reach there, but attains to humanity, then, wherever he is re-born, he will be short-lived. This is the transition, Brahmin, that leads to a short life.

“Again, Brahmin, suppose some man or woman has rejected killing, abstains from killing, without stick and sword, full of fellow-feeling and compassion, and cultivates kindness and compassion towards all living creatures. Such action, thus performed, thus completed, upon the dissolution of the body, after death, causes his arrival upon a good track, into a divine world; or, if he does not reach there but attains the human state, then wherever he is reborn, he will be long-lived. This is the transition, Brahmin, that leads to long life.”

In continuing his Discourse, the Buddha proceeds to explain, how the cruel, the angry, the envious, the miserly, the haughty, the man living without any interest in his future well-being, if they do not fall into a hell, but reach humanity again, will be reborn, the first sickly, the second ugly, the third powerless, the fourth poor, the fifth in a low position and the sixth a fool, whereas men who have cultivated the contrary qualities, rise up to divine worlds, or, if they are reborn as men, become respectively healthy, beautiful, powerful, well-to-do, of high rank or wise.*

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Until now, we had proceeded chiefly on the assumption that the main striving of a man tends in a certain definite direction, and that in consequence of this, he develops certain quite definite and special qualities of mind, and in an outstanding direction. These, then, before all else, are decisive as regards the nature

* It is not difficult in all these cases also, to show the law of affinity as the regulator of the grasping of a new germ that occurs at death:

Whoso, devoid of compassion, can kill men or even also animals, carries deep within himself the inclination to shorten life. He finds satisfaction or even pleasure in the short-livedness of other creatures. Short-lived germs have therefore some affinity for him, an affinity which makes itself known after his death in the grasping of another germ which then takes place, to his own detriment. Even so, germs bearing within themselves the power of developing into a deformed body, have an affinity for one who finds pleasure in ill-treating and disfiguring others.

An angry person begets within himself an affinity for ugly bodies and their respective germs, since it is the characteristic mark of anger to disfigure the face.

Whoever is jealous, niggardly, haughty, carries within himself the tendency to grudge everything to others and to despise them. Accordingly, germs that are destined to develop in poor outward circumstances, possess affinity for him.

It is, of course, only a consequence of the above, that a change of sex may also ensue. Thus it is related in the *Dīghanikāya* XXI, that Gopikā, a daughter of the Sakya house, was reborn after her death as “Gopaka, a son of the gods,” because “the female mind had become repulsive to her, and she had formed a male mind within herself.”

of his grasping at death. But, generally speaking, his thirst, or, as we are more accustomed to say, his willing at the moment of death is not at all homogeneous, but a summation of manifold, nay, even of opposed tendencies. In every man there dwells an angel and a devil. Therefore the question arises, as to what it is which in such a case determines the new grasping upon death. The answer again is very simple. It depends upon whether the good or the bad striving comes into activity at the moment of death and thus determines the new grasping.

By this, however, it is not meant that the opposite direction of will lying latent at this moment, has become ineffectual forever. On the contrary, it also somewhere and sometime will make itself felt, being decisive as regards some later birth, some "future return." For it remains, smouldering, so to say, beneath the ashes, and need not enter consciousness for a long time. To understand this thoroughly, we have only to reflect how very few men really know their own character, that is, the sum of the tendencies of their will. Either the outer motives are wanting which might wake the impulses and inclinations slumbering within them, or external circumstances, more especially the laws of the state, hinder *the expression* of an evilly disposed will, but not this will itself. "Hence it happens that it is only very rarely that a man sees his entire disgustingness in the mirror of his deeds. Or do you really think that Robespierre, Bonaparte, the Emperor of Morocco, or the murderers you see broken on the wheel, are the only men among all who are so bad? Do you not see, that many would do the same if only they were able? Many a criminal dies more peacefully upon the scaffold than many a non-criminal in the arms of his dear ones. For that one has recognized his will and changed it; but the other has not been able to change it, because he never was able to recognize it."¹⁵⁴ Thus it becomes apparent how some trait of character may slumber within us through whole existences, until all at once, suddenly it somehow becomes manifest and actively operative.* From this point of view we can also understand how an evil inclination may lead us upon our next death to grasp in a hell, whilst our good tendencies, possibly under the repeated influence of our evil impulsions, may only determine a later grasping, after the efflux of our objectification in a hell-world, only then becoming effective, or *vice versa*. Of this the Buddha gives an example in the following case:

King Pasenadi of Kosala tells him:

"Sir, here in Sāvattthī a householder and master of a guild has died. He has left no son behind him, and now I come here, after having made over his property to the royal treasury. Sir, a million gold pieces, and what shall I say of the silver! But this householder and master of a guild, sir, used to eat alternately broken scraps of food and sour gruel. And thus he clothed himself: For dress he wore a robe of coarse hemp; and as to his coach, he drove in a broken-down wagon with a worn-out sun-shade of leaves."

* An analogy to this is to be found in hereditary physical germs of disease, which often only in the second or even the third generation lead to sickness, as is especially the case with mental diseases. These therefore are carried about by their bearers during their whole life, in the same manner, quite unconsciously.

Thereupon the Buddha says:

„Certainly, O king, certainly, O king! In a former life, O king, this householder and master of a guild once gave alms of food to a Paccekabuddha,* called Tagarasikhi. And as, after having said, ‘Give alms of food to the ascetic!’ he rose from his seat and went away, he repented having given the food saying within himself: ‘It would be better, if my servants and workmen ate the food I gave for alms!’ And besides this, he deprived his brother’s only son of his life, for the sake of his property.

“And because, O king, this householder and master of a guild gave alms of food to the Paccekabuddha Tagarasikhi, through the maturing of his deed he attained seven times the good way, into the heavenly world. And in the same manner, as maturity of his deed, he became seven times master of a guild here in Sāvattī.

“And because, O king, this householder and master of a guild repented of having given alms, saying to himself: ‘It would be better that my servants and workmen ate the food;’ therefore, through the maturing of this deed, he had no appreciation of good food, no appreciation of fine dresses, no appreciation of an elegant vehicle, no appreciation of the enjoyments of the five senses.

“And because, O king, this householder and master of a guild deprived of his life the only son of his brother for the sake of his property, through the maturing of this deed he had to suffer many years, many hundreds of years, many thousands of years, many hundreds of thousands of years of pain in hell. And in the same manner, through the maturing of this deed, he is without a son for the seventh time, and in consequence of this, has to leave his property to the royal treasury.”

It is hardly necessary to point out particularly that the said deeds of the guild-master only brought about their later consequences as manifestations and extensions of the corresponding tendencies of will. According to the law of gradual becoming that dominates everything, no one can commit a serious crime, unless his will for long before has travelled the roads on which it lies. The decision and the perpetration of the crime itself merely strengthen and set the seal on the tendency of will already existing. This tendency, of course, also remains after the deed is done, even if in the sequel it never breaks out again, nay, even if it remains unknown to the criminal himself—nobody will trust a man who has consciously killed another, even if many years have since gone by—by reason of which, precisely, this tendency of will, thus become latent, at the approaching death may determine the direction of the new grasping. It is not the externally visible deed as such, regarded from a purely objective standpoint,—for example, the killing of a man, done without intention—which determines the future fate of a man, but rather the mental disposition in which it is performed, that is, the direction of will upon which it has followed, whose strengthening is partly conditioned by the very deed. This is set forth by the Buddha in the fifty-sixth Discourse of the Middle Collection, where in a dialogue with Upāli the householder, an adherent of Nigantha Nathaputta, he deals with the following chain

* An Awakened One for himself alone, who, in contrast with a completely Awakened One—a Sammāsambuddha—does not possess the power of sharing his knowledge with others.

of thought: What is done without intention, is not so very bad. If, however, it is done with intention, then it is very bad. Thereupon, he thrice declares in solemn repetition, that of possible deeds in thoughts, words and deeds those done in thought, because created by a bad disposition, are the worst. In the sixth Book of the Anguttara Nikāya the Buddha directly identifies action with willing: "Willing, ye disciples, I call acting (*kamma*); for if will is there, then one acts, either in deeds, in words, or in thoughts."*

According to this, every act of volition leads to certain quite definite consequences, not only consisting in those which manifest themselves in this very life, and called by the Buddha the "visible chain of suffering,"¹⁵⁵ but manifesting themselves also beyond death as the "hidden chain of suffering." For every act of volition determines by way of the *tendency* of will, conditioned or partly conditioned or strengthened by it, the grasping of one of our future rebirths and thus contributes towards our transference into the corresponding external circumstances. This effectuation of all willing, in accordance with law, called the law of Karma ** in the Dialogues, is also called "the fruit of deeds," or simply the law (*dhamma*):

"What, dear Gotama, may be the cause, what may be the reason, that many creatures, upon the dissolution of the body, after death, come upon the downward way, upon the evil road, to states of suffering, to hell?"

* Compare also Milindapañha:

The king said: "Master Nāgasena, whose fault is greater, that of a man doing evil consciously, or that of another, doing it unconsciously?"

The elder said: "Whoso unconsciously does evil, O king, commits the greater fault." — "Then, master Nāgasena, we ought to punish our princes and ministers doubly, if they commit faults without knowing it?" — "What does your Majesty think about this: If some one, without knowing what he is doing, and another consciously, seizes an iron ball heated red-hot, which of these two men would burn himself more?" — "That one, master, who unsuspectingly seizes the ball." — "Just so, O king, is the fault of him greater who does evil unconsciously." — "Very good, master Nāgasena." — How is this to be understood? Hardly otherwise than that in him who knows his deed to be detestable, very soon repentance ensues, and, in consequence of this, wickedness does not increase, whereas in him who without remorse may deceive his friend, who is able to murder a man or to torment a beast without feeling compassion, the inclination towards evil will grow through the hardening of his character. If another saying of the Buddha, on the contrary, declares a man who unconsciously does evil to be free from fault, — "*ajanantassa n'apatti*: without knowledge no fault" — then this "without knowledge" must be understood in the sense of an objective error (*error in objecto*) in opposition to the case of ignorance of the moral law or *karma* treated above, an ignorance always betraying a very low moral standard. This is illustrated by the following sentence from the Sutrakṛtanga, put into the mouth of a Buddhist: "If a savage throws his spear through the side of a corn-stack, believing it to be a man, or through a pumpkin, believing it to be a child, and roasts it, then he is guilty of murder, according to our view. But if a savage spears a man and roasts him, believing him to be a part of corn-stack, or a little child, believing it to be a pumpkin, then he is not guilty of murder, according to our view."

** The Sanskrit word *karma*, in its Pāli form *kamma*, means the effecting deed, or, briefer, the acting, therefore the law of acting, or,—since, according to what we have demonstrated, acting is the same as willing—the law to which all willing is subject.

“Just because of their lawless behaviour, their wrong behaviour, O Brahmin, do many creatures, upon the dissolution of the body, after death, come upon the downward way, upon the evil road, to states of suffering, to hell.”

“And what, dear Gotama, may be the cause, what may be the reason, that many creatures, upon the dissolution of the body, after death, come upon the good road, to the heavenly world?”

“Just because of their behaviour being in harmony with the law, because of their right behaviour, O Brahmin, many creatures, upon the dissolution of the body, after death, come upon the good road, to the heavenly world.”¹⁵⁶

Closely regarded, this law of Karma is nothing more than the law of *causality*, not only in its formal meaning, as the law of cause and effect, but also in its material significance, according to which a certain quite definite effect always follows upon a certain definite cause. Only it is freed from any restriction to the physical world and shown to reign also in the domain of the moral, and therefore beyond death. In this its all-embracing sphere of validity it is that power, now marvelled at as benevolent providence, now feared as the dark fate, to which is subject every act of will, even the slightest in the faintest thought. The moment any kind of volition stirs, it stirs in harmony with the law of causality, or else not at all.

Hence we cannot escape from our deeds; they will inevitably find us at the proper time in the form of their effects:

„Not in the air, not in the depths of the ocean, nor in a distant mountain cave: nowhere in the world is there a place where a man can escape his own evil deeds.”¹⁵⁷

“That no fruit should arise from those evil deeds, the defiling, birth-producing, dreadful, sorrow-inflicting, leading anew to birth, old age and death,—this no one can effect, no ascetic nor priest, nor spiritual being, no god nor devil nor any one whatsoever in all the world.”¹⁵⁸

“He who after long absence safely arrives home from far-off countries, upon his arrival is welcomed by the crowd of friends and relatives; even so, he who has acted rightly on earth, is welcomed by his own good deeds in the next world, like a dear friend by his friends.”¹⁵⁹

First of all, of course, our present body, like every future one, together with all its sense organs and mental faculties, thus what we have called before the six-senses-machine, is exclusively a product of our previous action, inasmuch as this has brought about the grasping in the maternal womb:

“This is not, ye disciples, your body nor the body of another, rather must it be regarded as the deed of the past, the deed that has come to fruition, the deed that is willing actualized, that has become perceptible.”*¹⁶⁰

“The eye, ye monks, is to be recognized and regarded as determined through former action.

* This passage means: This body does not essentially belong to you, but is only produced through your former acting, and to this product you now see yourselves chained.

“The ear, the nose, the tongue, the body, the mind, ye monks, is to be recognized and regarded as formed and determined through former action.”¹⁶¹

In short: “My action is my possession, my action is my inheritance, my action is the womb that bears me, my action is the family to which I am related, my action is my refuge.”¹⁶²

If the consequences of all our willing are thus strictly regulated by the law, it is clear without further argument, that no good faith, no firm trust based upon religious dogmas as to the correctness of our mode of life can protect us from them. A man with weak lungs, who in a heated condition takes a cold drink, will get inflammation of the lungs, whether he has known the consequences or not, and even if he has an unshakeable conviction that the drink will do him no harm. And whoever climbs a glacier with an inexperienced guide, will tumble down into a crevasse, even if the guide has succeeded ever so well in convincing him beforehand of the infallibility of his acquaintance with the right track. For it is just a law of nature that a cold drink has bad consequences for heated lungs, and that a man who wanders towards a crevasse at last must tumble into it. It is exactly the same law that reigns in the realm of morality, nay, at bottom it is just the same eternal law as the law of nature just mentioned, that every action of will and, accordingly, every kind of grasping leads to its corresponding consequences in the corresponding kind of Becoming. This idea is set forth by the Buddha in the hundred-and-twenty-sixth Dialogue of the Middle Collection, where, among other things, he says:

“Whoever, Bhumija, being an ascetic or a Brahmin, cognizes wrongly . . . acts wrongly . . . and thus perhaps with hope leads the life of an ascetic, cannot possibly reach the goal, and thus perhaps without hope leads an ascetic life, cannot possibly reach the goal. And why not? Because, Bhumija, he does not from the very foundation understand the reaching of the goal. Just as if a man, Bhumija, who wants milk, who seeks for milk, who is in search of milk, should begin to milk a cow that had calved, by the horns: though he should exert himself full of hope, nevertheless he could not possibly get milk, and if he should exert himself without hope, he could not possibly get milk. . . . And why not? Because, Bhumija, he does not from the very foundation understand how to get milk. In the same manner, Bhumija, such ascetics or Brahmins cannot possibly reach the goal. And why not? Because, Bhumija, they do not from the very foundation understand how to reach the goal.”

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*

Though the causality of all willing is thus beyond all doubt, it does not necessarily extend in *every* case beyond death into one of our future rebirths. This, on the contrary, is only the case, if the tendency of will, the outcome of which was a given deed, is present at all even though only in latent condition, *at the moment of death*, when the new grasping takes place. If at this moment it already again has been completely rooted out, then neither itself nor, of course,

the deed resulting from it, can in any way be of causal importance for the new attachment and those that follow later on, just as little as a cold drink can be hurtful to a man, if immediately after he has taken it, before the effects of the inflammation of the lungs have set in, the pathological change in the lungs is again altered by corresponding medical treatment, and as little as an ignorant mountain-climber will fall into a crevasse, if in good time he turns back from the direction first taken:

“These three, ye disciples, will fall a prey to the abyss and to hell, *if they do not abstain from the following things*. Which three? He who lives unchastely and pretends to be a chaste-living disciple; he who accuses a chaste-living disciple of unchaste living; he who, believing and thinking that there is nothing evil in sensuality, falls a prey to sensual pleasure. These three, ye disciples, will fall a prey to the abyss and to hell, *if they do not abstain from these things.*”¹⁶³

The same is said in the Book of Threes:

“There, ye disciples, a certain person has only committed a small crime, and this brings him to hell. There, however, ye disciples, another has committed the same small crime, but this ripens even during his lifetime, and not even a small effect manifests itself, to say nothing of a great one.” This means: In one man a certain willing, manifesting itself in a crime, acts beyond death in such wise that it may bring him directly to hell, whereas with another, it exhausts itself completely during his life-time, and does not exhibit even a small *postmortem* effect.

“But of which kind, ye disciples, is the man whom a small crime which he has committed brings to hell? There, ye disciples, a man has not won insight into the body,* has not practised himself in virtue, has not developed his mind, not awakened knowledge, is narrow-minded, small-minded, and so has to suffer even in consequence of trifles. Such a man, ye disciples, even a small crime which he has committed may bring to hell.”

“But of which kind, ye disciples, is the man in whom the same small crime which he has committed will ripen even during his life-time, and in whom not even a small effect (after death) ensues, to say nothing of a great one? There, ye disciples, a man has won insight into the body, has practised himself in virtue, has developed his mind, has awakened knowledge, is broad-minded, magnanimous, dwelling in the Immeasurable. In such a man, ye disciples, the same small crime which he has committed ripens even during his life-time, and not even a small effect manifests itself (after death) to say nothing of a great one.”

“What do you think, ye disciples: Suppose a man throws a lump of salt into a small cup of water, would then the little water in that cup through this lump of salt become saltish and undrinkable?”

“Yes, Lord.”

“And why so?”

“There is only very little water in the cup, Lord. So it would become saltish and undrinkable through this lump of salt.”

* This means, he has not reached clearness about what we call personality, *sakkāya*.

“But what do you think, ye disciples: Suppose a man should throw a lump of salt into the river Ganges, would the water of the Ganges then become saltish and undrinkable through this lump of salt?”

“Certainly not, Lord.”

“And why not?”

“There is, Lord, an immense quantity of water in the river Ganges. So, through that lump of salt, it would not become saltish and undrinkable.”

“Just so, ye disciples, one man has only committed a small crime, and it brings him to hell. And another man has committed the same small crime, but it *ripens even during his life-time*, and not even a small effect manifests itself (after death), to say nothing of a great one.”

As we see, the reasoning which demonstrates why the same deed leads one man to hell, while in another's case entirely exhausting itself during his life-time, is perfectly in harmony with our foregoing explanations. Whether the consequences of a deed shall extend up to the death-moment and thereby into the next existence, is exclusively determined by the extent to which the deed affects the will. A vain, narrow-minded man will even feel a slight insult as a serious assault upon his self-conceit, which he will be unable ever to pardon sincerely and from the heart, so that it will leave behind it inextinguishable traces within him. On the other hand, upon a noble-hearted man, thoroughly convinced of the worthlessness of all worldly things, the same insult will make no impression, or, if it does excite him, this excitement will only be momentary, and the influence upon his will brought about by this excitement will very soon *ripen* into bitter repentance, work itself out, and through the kindness and compassion dwelling within him,* will be completely dried up in the shortest time, will be clean taken out of him, root and branch, so that at his death nothing more will remain of it that might influence the next following grasping.

But thereby also the way is shown, not how we may escape from the consequences of our evil actions of the past,—for after what we have said above, this, is impossible,—but how we can confine these consequences to our *present* life, or at least weaken their *post-mortem* consequences. We only need to annihilate or at least to weaken the evil dispositions of our will, the bad qualities of our character, which, as we shall clearly perceive later on, have grown out of our evil deeds, yea, which at bottom represent nothing but the sum of these, in which therefore, in some mysterious manner, we carry about with us the continuously active force of each former evil deed. Precisely because of this in our heavy labours of soul for the entire annihilation or weakening of several, or of all, of our bad qualities, we also kill our former evil deeds themselves, “outlive them one after the other,” as it is said in the “Book of Threes,” so that in the same proportion that we are freed from a certain bad quality of character, we also are freed from the further consequences of the deeds related

* Kindness and compassion are the “Immeasurables” mentioned above, wherein all egotism is dissolved, as is a lump of salt in the river Ganges.—Of these “Immeasurables” we will say more in the last chapter of this work.

to this quality. Now the Buddha indicates with perfect clearness the way to the complete annihilation of our evil inclinations, from which it follows that, whoso follows this way, and in so far as he follows it, need have no further anxiety on account of the later fruits of his former evil life, or of his former evil lives. This goes so far that at last, full of inner happiness, he may cry out: "Escaped am I from hell, escaped from the animal kingdom, escaped from the realm of the shades, escaped from the evil track, escaped from the path of suffering, from the rejected world! I have entered the stream (that leads to "the Deathless"). Sure am I never again to sink back to the abodes of misery. With unalterable resolve I turn my mind to making myself ripe for the knowledge that delivers."¹⁶⁴

But, be it noted, this consoling confidence may only be reached by him who in real earnest and at the same time with success, therefore in the right manner as laid down by the Buddha, wages warfare for the gradual eradication, or at least the weakening, of his passions. Therefore it is not enough merely to be a good man in the sense of keeping in check one's bad qualities of character, and cultivating the good ones. For thereby the former still remain as bearers of our earlier bad deeds; there merely take place no *new* evil deeds, undesirable fruits, but only good actions which of course in time again will bear their good fruits. But because thus the evil actions of a former existence, manifesting themselves in present bad qualities of character, still remain in existence, it may well happen that a man who only in this sense has been good during his immediately past lifetime, that he has kept his bad qualities in check without annihilating them, or at least without appreciably weakening them, after death, in consequence of his former evil deeds, may pass to a hell-world. On the other hand, on like grounds a bad man, in consequence of his good actions in a lifetime previous to his present existence being saved up, so to speak, in his present latent and uncultivated, good qualities of character, at death may rise to a heaven-world, though only, upon his departure from this heaven-world, to rush straight down into a hell, in consequence of his bad actions during his last earthly existence now coming into effect.*

Both these cases are dealt with by the Buddha in the hundred-and-thirty-sixth Discourse of the Middle Collection. In the same place it is shown, how also upon other grounds a good man may come into a hell, and a bad one into a heaven, namely, in that the former at the moment of death displays wrong, and the latter right, knowledge. The first case occurs, for example, if a man otherwise good during his life, in time loses patience in consequence of his last wearisome and painful illness, and becomes fretful and quarrelsome, as is not seldom the case in daily life; the latter, however, occurring when a criminal comes to his senses on the scaffold.** In both cases, strivings are called into life which are at work in the very moment of death, and which *must* therefore

* Like the fallen angels of the "Old Testament."

** In the "Questions of King Milinda" the example is quoted of a man who for a hundred years has been given to vice, but will be reborn among the gods, if, in the hour of death, he only devotes one serious thought to the Buddha or to his Doctrine.

corresponds a grasping in a painful world, is an unwholesome or an evil one; and lastly, that which conditions rebirth in a world endowed with pleasures and pains, is at the same time wholesome and unwholesome, good and bad:

“There is, ye monks, bad action which bears bad fruits. There is, ye monks, good action, which bears good fruits. There is, ye monks, action partly good and partly bad, which bears fruits partly good and partly bad.

“But what, ye monks, is this bad action, which bears bad fruits? There, ye monks, a certain person practises pain-full action in deeds and words and thoughts. Practising pain-full action in deeds, in words and in thoughts, he comes back to existence in a pain-full world. Having come back to existence in a pain-full-world, he is touched by pain-full things. But while touched by pain-full things, he experiences pain-full sensations and extremest woe, like the beings in hell. This, ye monks, is called bad action, which bears bad fruits.

“But what, ye monks, is good action, which bears good fruits? There, ye monks, a certain man practises pain-free action in deeds, in words and in thoughts. Practising pain-free action in deeds, in words and in thoughts, he comes back to existence in a pain-free world. Having come back to existence in a pain-free world, he is touched by pain-free things. But while touched by pain-free things, he experiences pain-free sensations and highest bliss, like the brightly shining gods. This, ye monks, is called good action, that bears good fruits.

“But what, ye monks, is action partly good and partly bad, which bears fruits partly good and partly bad?

“There, ye monks, a certain man practises action partly pain-full and partly pain-free in deeds, in words and in thoughts. Practising action partly pain-full and partly pain-free in deeds, in words and in thoughts, he comes back to existence in a world partly pain-full and partly pain-free. Having come back to existence in a world partly pain-full and partly pain-free, he is touched by things partly pain-full and partly pain-free. But while touched partly by pain-full and partly by pain-free things, he experiences sensations partly pain-full and partly pain-free, changing weal and woe, like men, certain spirits, and certain rejected beings. This, ye monks, is called action partly good and partly bad, which bears fruits partly good and partly bad.”¹⁶⁷

Now the outstanding feature of the pain-laden worlds, hell and the animal Kingdom, is that the creatures in them recognise in themselves no limit to the thirst for existence and well-being which animates them, and in its coarsest form. On the contrary, they so completely identify themselves with this thirst in its two main manifestations, namely, desire for everything corresponding to it, and hatred of everything opposed to it, that in order to satisfy it, they without further ado encroach upon the sphere of other creatures' interests.* In correspondence with this, the inhabitants of the joyful worlds, the heavens—the higher, the more joyful—are free from such desire and such hate, especially in their

* That creatures in hell find no objects corresponding to their desires, but only such as rouse their abhorrence, makes their state all the more woeful.

coarser forms. Above all, they do not satisfy their desires at the expense of other creatures, but on the contrary, they include these beings with an ever more comprehensive love in their own thirst for well-being, which thus in them takes a new direction. The reason for this is that in these realms the delusion in which all living beings are caught, namely, that our essence is identical with our personality, and that our thirst for well-being ought therefore to be concentrated upon it, is partly overcome, and thereby the partition-wall between ourselves and the other creatures is partly thrown down.* According to this, desire, hatred and delusion appear as the characteristics of the lower and woeful worlds; while, as those of the higher worlds, upon the path of an ever more expanding love, there is an increasing approximation to desirelessness, freedom from hatred, and right insight. Between both stands what is specifically human. Since we have seen that our present entrance into one of these worlds is determined according to which of our own qualities of character, of our own deepest aspirations, are most closely conformed, related to it, it follows that *desire (lobha)*, *hate (dosa)* and *delusion (moha)* are unwholesome or bad for us, and that *desirelessness (alobha)*, *freedom from hatred (adosa)* and *non-delusion (amoha)* are wholesome or good for us. In these fundamental qualities all virtues and vices are embraced.

The Conditioning of Thirst

In what has gone before we have seen that our existence is conditioned through *the thirst* for existence which animates us, and that the shaping of the outer conditions of this existence may be traced back to *the character* of this thirst. We are in the world because we thirsted for it; and we are just in such a world as ours is, because we had a thirst which, according to the eternal laws, had to lead us just into this world. Thereby it might seem as if the problem of the arising of suffering were solved, as far as it is necessary for the practical purpose of the annihilation of suffering; and this alone had any interest for the Buddha. For we need only annihilate this thirst within ourselves, in order to prevent any future rebirth, and so, with our next approaching death, depart out of the world forever. From the standpoint which we now occupy, however, such a conclusion would be somewhat over-hasty. For to the thinking man another question at once arises: Am I at all able to annihilate this thirst for existence within myself? Is it not rather a manifestation of my essence itself, and for that very reason just as little to be annihilated as this? Certainly the Master has already told us about this thirst also that it is not our self, since in it can be observed an arising and a passing away. But this criterion for the recognition of the sphere of *anattā*, of not-self, cannot be accepted at once. For thirst for existence and wellbeing fills us from the first moment of our existence, yea, through all our repeated existences, so unceasingly and so powerfully, that even the great

* About this, more will be said in the last chapter.

Schopenhauer came to the conclusion that in will, that is, in thirst, no arising and passing away was to be observed. Rather, as the thing in itself, thirst was without cause or condition, and could never be the *cause* of anything else; everything besides it, more especially, our own personality, was not its *effect* but rather its *phenomenon*. In short, thirst he considered to be the immediate manifestation of our essence itself which in it became apparent. Or, in the language of the Buddha, thirst was our veritable, actual and true self, of which it held good that "This am I, this belongs to me, this is my self," a standpoint also practically taken up by mankind in its entirety from all times. But from this it is clear of what decisive importance in the doctrine of the Buddha is the proof that this thirst also is *nothing metaphysical*, but subject in every respect to causality, therefore conditioned, and therefore something *purely physical*, that is, *anattā, not-the-I*.* For if it were not so, if thirst really were the essence of man, and thereby our self, then through all eternity no deliverance from it and thereby from suffering would be possible, since no one can annihilate himself, jump out of his own skin,** a consequence, which was actually drawn by Schopenhauer to this extent, that according to him, our intelligible character is unchangeable, and at bottom we can contribute nothing towards our deliverance.*** But if this were the case, then the doctrine of the Buddha would become meaningless from the outset, since its very heart consists precisely in pointing out a way to deliverance that may be trodden at all times and speedily leads to the goal, if the necessary intensity is applied to its treading. Accordingly, it is not at all, as is thought by some, against the spirit of his doctrine, when in it the reason why this thirst maintains itself in existence is definitely laid down; but on the contrary, the doctrine of the Buddha would in itself be absurd, if this were *not* so. And, as a matter of fact, it is so: "If, Ānanda, the question were put: 'Is thirst dependent on anything?' then it ought to be replied: 'Yes, it is dependent.'"

The question therefore now is: *On what* is this thirst for existence dependent, this thirst which shows itself chiefly at the moment of death, ever and again bringing about a grasping at a new germ? What fundamental antecedent condition must there be, that it is able to rise, to spring up in us?† The Buddha tells us this in the following words: "If it should be asked: 'On what is thirst dependent?' then it ought to be answered: 'In dependence on *sensation* arises thirst.'"

* One sees that *anattā* and things physical are identical conceptions.

** See above.

*** Schopenhauer only leaves open the *possibility* that some time or other in the course of endless time our will may perhaps of itself and without our assistance, turn and renounce.

† Precisely the same as with the other links of the chain it was not a question with the Buddha in the case of Thirst also, of firmly fixing its *absolute* general cause, but only of discovering the cause of *the occasion* that enables thirst to appear and to become evident. This finds expression in the very *form* in which the question is put: "On what is thirst dependent?" Here the Buddha completely shares the standpoint of Schopenhauer: "Every natural cause is only an *occasional* cause, nothing within the world having an *absolute* cause for its existence."

This too is clear without further explanation. Without the stimulus of *sensation* there is no desire. When every sensation has vanished completely and forever, then all willing, all thirst, of every kind, also is gone forever. A man who is quite without sensation *wills* nothing more, has no kind of *thirst* for anything any more. And if he has become without sensation *forever*, then this phenomenon of thirst can no longer show itself within him through all eternity. "I have said: 'In dependence on sensation arises thirst.' And this, Ānanda, that thirst arises in dependence on sensation, must be understood in the following sense. Suppose, Ānanda, that nowhere and nowise there occurred any sensation of anything, that is to say, no sensation resulting from eye-contact, no sensation resulting from ear-contact, no sensation resulting from nose-contact, no sensation resulting from tongue-contact, no sensation resulting from body-contact, no sensation resulting from mind-contact, if thus sensation were entirely absent, if sensation were abolished, would then any kind of *thirst* be perceptible?" — "Certainly not, Lord."

"Therefore, Ānanda, here is the cause, the origin, the arising, the dependence of thirst, namely, sensation."

But whence comes sensation? "If, Ānanda, the question were asked: 'Is sensation dependent on something?' then it ought to be replied: 'Yes, it is dependent.' And if it should be asked: 'On what is sensation dependent?' then it ought to be replied: 'In dependence on *contact* arises sensation.' And this, Ānanda, that sensation arises in dependence of contact must be understood in the following sense. Suppose, Ānanda, that there is nowhere and nowise contact of any (sense) with anything, no eye-contact, no ear-contact, no nose-contact, no tongue-contact, no body-contact, no mind-contact, if thus, contact were entirely absent, if contact were abolished, would then any sensation be perceived?"

"Certainly not, Lord."

"Therefore, Ānanda, here is the cause, the origin, the arising, the dependence of sensation, namely, contact."

But for any kind of contact to take place within me, my corporeal organism, as bearing the organs of sense, the six-senses-machine, is necessary. "If, Ānanda, the question were put: 'Is contact dependent on something?' then it ought to be replied: 'Yes, it is dependent.' And if it should be asked: 'On what is contact dependent?' then it ought to be replied: In dependence on *the corporeal organism (nāma-rūpa)* arises contact."

That sensation, and perception inseparably connected with it,* are conditioned by contact, and this by the organs of sense of the corporeal organism, is already explained in the previous chapter on personality, an accurate knowledge of which is here, of course, assumed. There, by means of passages which are *the immediate continuation given here*, it is explicitly shown, how the corporeal organism is

* In Dīgha Nikāya I, therefore perception is given instead of sensation as the antecedent condition of thirst.

again dependent, namely, on consciousness, and this again in its turn, upon the corporeal organism, both in mutual dependence.* Thus the chain of dependences ultimately comes to its end in the "corporeal organism together with consciousness," wherewith, indeed, in the *Māha-Nidāna-Sutta* it reaches its definite conclusion. The reason of this can only be that therewith the circle of dependences is actually closed. And this is really the case.

We know that we can only escape from suffering forever, when we succeed in leaving behind forever *Samsāra*, the circle of rebirth, when, thus, we are no longer exposed to a future new birth, hence to no new formation of the "corporeal organism together with consciousness." For the moment the process through which this new formation is accomplished ("birth" in the phraseology of the Buddha) has merely begun,—through conception in a maternal womb—for the entire duration of the existence of this newly forming "body endowed with consciousness" we are again indissolubly bound to it: only at the moment of the ensuing death can we entirely step out of *Samsāra*. All suffering, thus, is founded in the "*corporeal organism together with consciousness*," which we might therefore call, as we do call it the six-senses-machine in general, the machine of suffering in particular. For this reason, at the very beginning of our task of showing all suffering to be naturally conditioned, we were forced to establish the cause of *birth*, that is, for the ever renewed formation of this "corporeal organism together with consciousness." As such a cause we discovered *the thirst* for existence animating us, always causing in the moment of our death a new grasping of a new germ in a maternal womb and thereby *the Becoming* of a new organism. With this, however, we found ourselves confronted by the further question, as to whether this thirst also is conditioned, or, in other words, whether it is something physical, and not rather our metaphysical substratum, and therefore indestructible. But we found it also to be conditioned stage by stage, first by sensation, then by contact, and lastly, by—"the corporeal organism together with consciousness." With this, however, we have again got back to our starting-point. *The circle is closed*: All suffering is rooted in our "corporeal organism together with consciousness;" these two united as our present "body endowed with consciousness" are the consequence of our thirst for existence during the last existence *before our birth*. This birth, on its side again, had, as antecedent condition, "a corporeal organism together with consciousness," and so on backwards to all eternity.

If we remember that from the corporeal organism together with consciousness, thirst is always issuing in such a special manner that the former, as the six-senses-machine is set in activity, and thereby in the immediately up-flaming consciousness sensation and perception are aroused, from which latter, then, thirst during the whole of our life up till the moment of death is always welling forth anew, and that we have summed up this whole process of activity of the six-

* This mutual dependence is, in *Dīghanikāya* II, 84, illustrated by saying that consciousness is bound to the body like a string that is threaded through a gem.

senses-machine together with consciousness, as it goes on from birth to the moment of death, as the machinery of *personality*, then the content of the formula of causality may be summed up still more pregnantly as follows: *Personality*—in both its main groups, the corporeal organism, together with consciousness as its real substratum—is conditioned by *thirst*, and *thirst* by *our bygone personality*, just as the hen is conditioned by the egg, and the egg again by the hen. So astoundingly simple is the formula of origination by dependence.* But what all has not been made out of it!

With this result the root of suffering is fully laid bare; we have penetrated to the unwearied builder of our corporeal organism itself, through which, as through the machine of suffering, all suffering becomes primarily possible for us. At the same time, we have recognized this builder of the machine of suffering as a fellow who has nothing at all to do with our true essence, to whom therefore we need only hand his passports in order to be free for ever from any new reincarnation. Hence, if we wish, with the Buddha we now can exclaim:

The changing state of rebirth always new,
By pain and sorrow chased, I wandered through.
In vain I often looked around for him,
Who once did build this house of suffering.
Builder, I know you now, and laugh at you.
You'll never build for me a house of bone;
No longer will my mind create anew, —
Since ghastly thirsting is destroyed, for true."¹⁶⁹

Now also we are ready to understand the second of the four holy truths in all its depth: "This, ye monks, is the most excellent truth of the origination of suffering: It is *thirst* generating rebirth, *thirst* accompanied by pleasure and lust, now here and now there taking delight, *thirst* for sensual pleasure, *thirst* for Becoming (for existence), *thirst* for annihilation."^{**170}

We said above that the formula of origination in dependence is closed in the Mahā-Nidāna-Sutta with the link "corporeal organism together with consciousness." The same is the case in the Mahāpadhānasutta, where the Bodhisatta Vipassī, after having followed the origination of dependence up to the two factors "corporeal organism and consciousness" and having recognized both as mutually conditioned, expressly declares: "The series goes no further."

* Certainly, if we combine the formula with the *anattā*-thought, then on its side the formula also becomes deep as an abyss. Then too we understand the words of the Master upon Ānanda remarking that the formula now seemed to him easy to understand: "Speak not so, Ānanda, speak not so! Deep is this origination by dependence, it contains a deep revelation."¹⁶⁸

** The *thirst* for annihilation arises in consequence of the wrong view that personality is our essence. For if we recognize at the same time that this personality as such is full of suffering, then the further notion arises that we can free ourselves from suffering only by the annihilation of our personality and thereby of our own essence. Accordingly, *the thirst* for annihilation springs up. (Concerning this *thirst* for annihilation [*vibhava*] see Itivuttaka, 49.)

But in many other passages of the Canon the formula of causality is nevertheless extended still further. For after the causal nexus, in entire unison with the links presented up till now, has been traced back to the corporeal organism—*nāma-rūpa*—and further, this latter declared to be conditioned by consciousness, this consciousness itself is not again represented as conditioned by the corporeal organism, but the text runs on thus: “In dependence upon the Sankhārā, ye monks, arises consciousness . . . In dependence upon ignorance, ye monks, arise the Sankhārā.” It is clear that this conclusion of the formula is not to surpass “the corporeal organism together with consciousness“, if it is not to contradict what we have hitherto been learning,—and such a possibility may safely be excluded from the outset, in view of the importance of the Paṭicca-samuppāda. For, since the conclusion as we have been learning to know it, turns back again to the beginning, a further continuance of the dependences beyond it, is thus quite impossible. This somewhat different formulation of the last links of the chain at most can only be a matter of a more detailed explanation of the conclusion of the formula as we have hitherto learned to know it. And this is actually the case, as will now appear.

The Sankhārā

Like the Chain of Causality in general, the conception of Sankhārā in particular has received the most different interpretations by European scholars. And yet also this conception is as clear as the Chain of Causality itself. Sankhārā is derived from the verb *sankharoti*, an equivalent of the Latin verb “*conficere*”, meaning literally “to make (together)”, i. e. “to put together”. Hence its participle *praeteritum* means “put together”, “joined together”, in the sense of “made”, “created”, “produced”. According to the Canon, it can be used of anything in the world: plainly everything is *sankhata*, i. e. put together, joined together, and even therefore created, produced. The material out of which it is put together, are the six elements: earth, water, fire, air, space, consciousness, which elements represent, according to the Buddha, the only components of the world (see the treatise “Energy and Stuff” in “The Science of Buddhism”).

The substantive verb pertaining to *sankhata* is *Sankhāra*, which means “the making together”, “the putting together”, “the joining together”, “the producing”: “Monks, the *sankhārā* derive their name from the fact that they produce (*sankharonti*) what is *sankhata*.” Therefore the concept *sankhāra* is as all-comprising as that of *sankhata*: simply everything is *sankhata*, “brought forth”, “produced”, and simply everything which is *sankhata*, is based upon a *sankhāra*, an “act of producing”. In this, *sankhārā* means, first of all, the *act* of bringing forth, but may as well cover that which has been brought forth, produced, i. e. may as well be used in the sense of *sankhata*, just like our word “Production” (which also covers both concepts: the action of producing as well as that which has been produced, namely the product). A typical example

for this circumstance is the regularly repeated phrase: “sabbe sankhārā anicca, sabbe sankhārā dukkhā: all productions are transitory, all productions cause Suffering.”

The following quotations may serve as examples for this widest extent of the sankhāra-concept:

1) “Transient, monks, are the productions (sankhārā), unsteady are the productions, troublesome are the productions; it suffices to get weary of all productions, suffices to shrink back from them, suffices to detach oneself from them. Once there will come a time, monks, as it comes now and then in the end of a long period, when there no rain will fall for years. Whatever there will exist of seeds and plants, herbs, grasses, and trees, will dry up, wither away, disappear. Thus transient, monks, are the productions, thus impermanent are the productions, thus inadequate are the productions; it is sufficient to get disgusted at all productions, sufficient to abhor them, sufficient to become detached from them.

Once there will come a time, monks, as it comes now and then, in the end of a long period, when there will appear a second sun. Then all rivers and ponds will dry up, will be drained off, will disappear . . . And once there will come a time when a third . . . a fourth . . . a fifth sun will appear. Then the waters of the world-ocean will retire, will float back hundred miles, three hundred, five hundred, six hundred, seven hundred miles. And the water of the world-ocean will stand only seven palms high, then only six, five, four, three, two palms high, then only one palm high; then only seven men high, then only six, five, four, three, two men high, then it will sink down to one man’s height, then to the half of a man’s height, then it will go no farther than to the hip, then to the knee only, then to the ankle only, then not higher than a fingerlimb.—Thus transient, monks, are the productions, thus impermanent are the productions, thus inadequate are the productions; it is sufficient to get disgusted at all productions, sufficient to abhor them, sufficient to become detached from them.

Once there will come a time, monks, as it comes now and then in the end of a long period, when a sixth sun will appear. Then this big earth will begin to fume and to smoke . . . And once there will come the time when a seventh sun will appear. Then this big earth will begin to burn up and to become one single vast flame.—Thus transient, monks, are the productions, thus impermanent are the productions, thus inadequate are the productions; it is sufficient to get disgusted at all productions, sufficient to abhor them, sufficient to become detached from them.”¹⁷¹

2) “The Exalted One said: ‘Not to be measured out by thinking, monks, is a beginning of the circle of rebirths (samsāra), not to be recognized a first starting-point of the beings confined by ignorance, fettered by Thirst, wandering about and roaming around.—In former times, monks, this mountain Vepulla had the name Paṇḍinavaṃsa, and the men here were called the Tivara. And the Tivaramen lived for forty thousand years. In four days they ascended the mountain Paṇḍinavaṃsa, and in four days they descended again. And in those times there

appeared in the world Kakusandha as the Exalted One, as the Holy One, as the Perfectly Awakened One . . .—Look, monks, that name of the mountain has perished, those men have died, and that Exalted One is completely extinguished. Thus transient are the productions, thus impermanent are the productions, thus inadequate are the productions; it is sufficient to get disgusted at all productions; it is sufficient to abhor them, sufficient to become detached from them”.¹⁷²

In the 17th Discourse of the Dīgha-Nikāya the Buddha narrates about the glories of the prehistoric king Mahāsudassana—(which the Buddha himself had been in a former existence)—, about his cities, palaces, treasures, elephants, horses, carriages, and wives, in the possession of which he had led a wonderful life, and finally about his holy-like death,—in order to draw also from this description the conclusion: “Thus transient, monks, are the productions, thus impermanent are the productions, thus inadequate are the productions; it is sufficient to get disgusted at all productions, sufficient to abhor them, sufficient to become detached from them.”

* *
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If thus, according to the Buddha, everything in the world is a mere “Production”, originating and vanishing as such, he deals with these productions in particular only insofar as there is something arising for *us*, whose unfathomable essence lies beyond the world, and as this world with its “painful things” comes into connection with *us*. As we know already, we come into contact with the world by our “body endowed with the six senses”, which senses bring forth that consciousness in which alone this world presents itself to us: “Here in the consciousness stands the universe”. As soon as each kind of consciousness disappears in lack of any sensual activity, all the world has disappeared for us, too. It is for this reason that the Buddha says: “Just in this body, six feet high, endowed with perception and consciousness, the world is contained, the origin of the world, the end of the world, and the path leading to the end of the world”. To this body of six feet height, however, we come through seizing an impregnated ovum in a mother’s womb, driven by our Thirsting Will, which embryo then develops to our body in the way of *Becoming*. As regards this *Becoming*, however, it remains unexplained, which principle compels the material substances right into the form of the corporeal organism with its organs of sense in such a wise that these organs of sense are able to produce consciousness and therewith the phenomenon of life. This *teleology* of *Becoming* is also for our modern natural sciences an insolvable enigma. They restrict themselves to the statement that all *Becoming* is executed by those natural processes, moreover by mere chemical-physical processes. How little this explains, becomes clear already from the fact that the Latin word “processus” means nothing more than “occurrence”, in the sense as it is expressed by the saying: “It occurs”. Hence, in face of the real problem, namely the *teleological character* of these natural proceedings directed upon bringing about quite a distinctive

result, also our natural sciences must declare themselves bankrupt. Only singular neovitalists venture to touch this problem. However, also to them there is nothing left but reverting to the entelecheia-conception of Aristoteles who lived 2200 years ago, by interpreting it as that force which provides the material with its form and only thus bestows it with reality—"entelecheia" means "reality". Yet, this is no explanation but merely another formulation of the problem, since it is the question in what this "entelecheia", namely this unknown "Something", consists, "by means of which the material is brought into the form, here of a rock-crystal, there into that of a lion, there into that of a man".

The Buddha solves also this problem of the teleological forming of the material into a consciousness-apparatus. In the Chain of Causality he explains—after the assertion that the Becoming of our corporeal organism is conditioned by the accession of consciousness—this accession of consciousness by the following assertion: "In dependence on the *Productions* (sankhārā) arises consciousness". This sentence means: The Productions form the germ seized in a mother's womb into the corporeal organism, "the complicacy and perfection of which is known to him alone who has studied anatomy", as Schopenhauer says; they form it into that apparatus which, by its six organs of sense, makes possible to us sensations, perceptions, creative mental activities, and cognition—: "Monks, the sankhārā (the productions) are called so because they produce (abhisankharonti) that which is sankhata (produced). And what do they produce? They produce the corporeal shape for corporeality's sake as a product, produce sensation for sensation's sake as a product, produce perception for perception's sake as a product, produce mental creative activities for creative mental activities' sake as a product".¹⁷³

Thus the Buddha has dissolved that Becoming of the entire machinery of Personality into a heap of Productions. This truth was pronounced in a very precise manner by the nun Vajirā, when she was asked by Māra the Evil One: "By whom is the being created? Who is the creator of the being? Where is the being engendered? Where does the being perish?" by responding: "Why do you cling to the word 'being'? This is quite a characteristic Māra-opinion. *There is nothing else but a heap of Productions.* There is no being* to be found out. Like there where the respective parts are joined together, the word 'cart' is used, so is there where the Groups are present, the colloquial term 'being' (satta) used'.¹⁷⁴

Accordingly we arrive at the result: The Five Groups are "Productions" in the second sense of the word that they constitute that product (sankhata) of the *acts* of producing. The acts of producing themselves are set, as the above quoted passage of Sam. Nik. XXII says, for the explicit purpose of making possible a body, further sensations, perceptions, creative mental activity, and

* The term 'Being' includes the conception of some one whose true and last reality, i. e. whose substance, is *life*.

cognition. After all, this means: behind the productions there stands a *will*, stands *our will*, in the service of which the productions are at work. This fact results also from the following words of the Buddha, uttered elsewhere: “The Five Groups of Grasping are rooted in the Will”¹⁷⁵ and: “In the *Will* all things are rooted”¹⁷⁶,—consequently the productions, too. With quite a special emphasis the will is being pointed out as the production’s fountain in the following explication of the Buddha: “The ordinary man, not knowing the doctrine, regards the Five Groups of Grasping as himself. This opinion, monks, is a production. Whereupon is this production based, owing to what circumstance does it originate, out of what is it born, by what engendered?—When the ordinary man is hit by a sensation started from a contact taking place in the state of ignorance, *Thirst* arises within him. *From this* results the production”¹⁷⁷. This explication, of course, holds good not only for the mental productions, but at all for the entire heap of productions constituting our personality. Thus the real constructor of our body, and therewith, of our total personality is that *Thirst* inspiring us, as it was specified before.

“Builder, I laugh at you, since you are known;
 You’ll never build for me a house of bone;
 No longer will my mind create anew,—
 Since ghastly thirsting is destroyed, for true.”
 (visankhāragatam cittam taṇhānam khayam ajjhagā)¹⁷⁸

This finds another certification in the 28th Discourse of the Majjh. Nik., where the body is called a “construction of thirst” (taṇhupādiṇṇa). The productions are only the workmen in the constructor’s service, are the *executors of the Will*; as soon as there is a willing, the productions set to work to satisfy this Will; and where absolutely nothing more is wanted by the Will, there are no more productions, either. Consequently, already now it may be said that the way to definite annihilation of all the productions leads over the destruction of the Thirsting Will.

The productions are *our* productions, as the Thirsting Will is *our will*. Accordingly, each of us is the *demiurge* himself forming the stuff into that inexpressibly complicated corporeal organism with its six organs of sense* and creating for himself, by and within this consciousness, his world; a world, however, which in the last end is nothing else but an ocean of suffering, in spite of its artistic skill displaying itself in the productions, and incomprehensible to our intellect—since all this artistic skill is not capable of overwhelming that fundamental insufficiency of the *working-stuff*, i. e. the material, of which our corporeal organism and all the world presenting itself within consciousness, consists, namely the ceaseless changeability, yea transitoriness of this stuff. And so will remain true in all eternity those words:

* “Anima struit corpus” was also recognized by the German philosophers *Rüdiger* and *Stahl* (Schopenhauer, *New Paralipomena*, § 685).

“Whatever is produced, will pass away; once it will perish, as it was brought forth. If every Production is left off, man’s welfare is attained for good.”¹⁷⁹

“And now, ye monks, take it for granted: Whatever one may produce— it must vanish again. So you have to struggle indefatigably for the aim (of producing no more).”¹⁸⁰

“These three marks of the Produced are there: Arising is showing itself; perishing is showing itself; and during its existence mutation is showing itself.

These three marks of the Not-Produced are there: No arising is showing itself; no perishing is showing itself; and no mutation of the existent is showing itself.”¹⁸¹

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So far we have come to know two classes of “Productions”. The first one comprises everything arisen at all, the second one embraces the entire machinery of personality, i. e. the totality of those Five Groups of Grasping into which the Buddha has dissolved personality: “The Five Groups of Grasping are the personality, so the Exalted One has said”.¹⁸² Yet, there is still a third class of *sankhārā* left, namely the sum of the fourth Group of Grasping, also called *sankhārā*. How is this to be understood, since, as exposed, also the four other groups are “productions”? More particularly: which peculiar productions are summarized in the fourth Group of Grasping? In order to answer this question we eliminate the three first Groups of Grasping. Then the remaining part of the personality’s machinery—treated in detail in the chapter on the personality—renders the solely possible contents of those two last Groups of Grasping, i. e. the “productions” (*sankhārā*) and the “cognition” (*viññāna*). Besides the first three Groups of Grasping—corporeal form, sensation, perception—there is, as for the personality, only *thinking* left: “What one senses, one perceives; what one perceives, one thinks (*vitakketi*)” we have seen above.* Hence, it is evident at the outset that the two last Groups of Grasping must consist in thinking. Yea, we are also able to discern without ado the kind of thinking meant in the fourth Group of Grasping. The fourth Group of Grasping has the name “Productions” par excellence. Hence, that Thinking of the fourth Group of Grasping is the *producing* thinking; which means, it is that thinking employed by the Thirsting Will, incessantly endeavouring to fill the unsatiable throat of this Thirsting Will with food, that he may not torment us permanently, by trying to supply what he is greeding for. The Buddha describes this kind of thinking as follows: “Monks, I have promulgated the doctrine of the eighteen mental considerations. In relation to what did I say so? If one sees a form with

* Thirst and grasping do *not* belong to the machinery of personality. Even therefore the five groups are called *Groups of Grasping*: one *grasps* for them because of the *thirst* for them: “One grasps for those groups fit for grasping. Therefore they are called Groups of Grasping” (Sam. Nik., XXII, 48).

the eye, one considers the form giving occasion for joy, considers the form giving occasion for sadness, considers the form giving occasion for indifference. If one hears a sound with the ear, smells a scent with the nose, tastes a flavour with the tongue, touches a palpable object with the body, thinks an object of thought with his thinking-organ, he considers the object of thought giving occasion for joy, considers the object of thought giving occasion for sadness, considers the object of thought giving occasion for indifference.”¹⁸³ Since this thinking is thus fully engaged by the Thirsting Will, therefore it is incessantly irritated by this will “with all those modifications of a thing called feelings, affections, passions”. The Buddha says with regard to such thinking (*citta*) that it is dirtied and begrimed by greed, hatred and delusion, just the qualities of thirst. To signify this state of the thinking spirit we use the term “Mind”. Therefore those *sankhārā* of the fourth Group of Grasping may also be called the “creative” or “productive” activities of mind.

Of quite a different nature is that thinking of the fifth Group of Grasping, called *cognition*.* It is the “cognizing par excellence”, the “pure cognizing”, no longer producing in order to satisfy a Thirsting Will, but confronting the total machinery of personality and also this very Thirsting Will itself, critically observing and soberly stating the respective objective matter of fact. It wants, engendered by the newly awakened “will for *pure cognition*”, nothing else but to *know*.

The fact that *such* is the kind of thinking mentioned in the fifth Group of Grasping, results clearly and explicitly from the following words of the Buddha: “Now there is left cognition (*viññāna*) alone, the perfectly pure one, perfectly clarified one. With this cognition, one *cognizes* what? ‘It is pleasant’, one *cognizes*; ‘it is unpleasant’, one *cognizes*; ‘it is neither pleasant nor unpleasant’, one *cognizes*.—Upon a contact, monk, to be felt as pleasant, there follows a pleasant sensation, and feeling a pleasant sensation, one *cognizes*: ‘I feel a pleasant sensation’. But because that contact to be felt as pleasant ceases, also that pleasant sensation ceases which had arisen consequent upon the contact felt as pleasant, and comes to rest again: thus one *cognizes*.—Upon a contact, monk, to be felt as unpleasant, there follows an unpleasant sensation, and feeling an unpleasant sensation, one *cognizes*: ‘I feel an unpleasant sensation’; but because that contact felt as unpleasant ceases, also that unpleasant sensation ceases which had arisen consequent upon the contact felt as unpleasant, and comes to rest again: thus one *cognizes*.—Upon a contact, monk, to be felt as neither pleasant nor unpleasant, there follows a sensation neither pleasant nor unpleasant, and feeling a sensation neither pleasant nor unpleasant, one *cognizes*: ‘I feel a sensation neither pleasant nor unpleasant’. But because that neither pleasant nor unpleasant contact ceases, also that neither pleasant nor

* *viññāna* (derived from *vi + jñāti*) means literally “cognition”. Since the *element viññāna* is the basis of *all* kinds of cognizing, even of each quite indistinct sensation, we are allowed to interpret *viññāna* in this broadest sense, also by our term “consciousness”.

unpleasant sensation ceases which had arisen consequent upon that neither pleasant nor unpleasant contact, and comes to rest again: thus one *cognizes*. It is just, monk, as if two logs of wood are rubbed together, scraped together, and in consequence of this rubbing warmth arises, heat engenders; but when those two logs are being parted, being separated again, that warmth engendered shortly ago, vanishes again, comes to rest . . . And he recognizes: ‘*It is produced* (sankhata)’. And so he produces no more, thinks out nothing more, neither for the purpose that anything might arise, nor that anything might be destroyed (So n’eva abhisankharoti nābhisāncetayati bhavāya vā vibhavāya vā). That he no longer produces, thinks out nothing more, neither for the purpose that anything might arise, nor that anything might be destroyed, this shows that he is no longer thirsting; because he is no longer thirsting, he will extinguish within himself”¹⁸⁴.

Hence, this cognition of the fifth Group of Grasping *kills* as we shall see later on still more particularly, the Thirsting Will and enables to dispense with all that *creative* thinking of the fourth Group of Grasping serving for the satisfaction of the Thirsting Will and thereby with every production at all consequently, the *entire* productive activity will be finished forever. Therewith also that activity of pure cognition has reached its final goal and goes consequently, to rest at the earliest possible date—as it will be exposed in detail later on.

The Buddha calls this pure cognizing activity of the fifth Group of Grasping *the meditative contemplation* (ñānadassana).

This forms, in its gradual realization, as the great instrument of the abrogation of Ignorance, the kernel of the Buddha’s way of Release, as will be shown by the subsequent illustration of this way.

From this confrontation of the two kinds of thinking of the fourth and fifth Group of Grasping will be seen without further ado, why the Buddha has divided these kinds of thinking into two *individual* groups. In his doctrine they are of fundamental, pioneering importance: the fourth Group of Grasping shows the path of thinking leading into the world, the fifth Group of Grasping pioneers that path leading out of the world. At the same time, by this confrontation the concept of the sankhārā, the creative activities of mind, is being outlined sharply.

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Hitherto we have explained the conception of the sankhārā, the fourth Group of Grasping, as the creative mental actions, from the logical standpoint only. Now also the authentic evidence in respect of the original research shall be given. With it, at the same time the fact will become evident that such a mode of thinking, as applied before, comes to a standstill in mere abstract thinking and reflecting, just as commonly the “meditative contemplation” is a completely strange field to the “ordinary man”.

1) Whatever there is in motion within and about us, is sankhāra, production: the body, the sensation, the perception, the creative mental activity, the

cognition, as well as each action that we execute by the body, each word that we speak, and each thought that we think—especially the three last kinds of productions are encountered in the Canon again and again, when it deals with the *practical* doctrine of moral. All this pertains to the heap of productions constituting that which we call “being”, peculiarly “man”. This entire heap is now dissolved by the nun Dhammadinna, “the wise one, the knowing one”, as she is called by the Buddha himself, with the latter’s explicit approval, as follows:

“How many kinds of Productions are there, Venerable One?”—

“Three kinds of Productions are there, brother Visākha, the corporeal Production, the linguistic Production, the mental Production.”—

“And what is, Venerable One, the corporeal Production, what the linguistic Production, what the mental Production?”—

“In-breathing and out-breathing, brother Visākha, is the corporeal Production, discursive thinking and reflecting is the linguistic Production, perception and sensation is the mental Production.”*

“Why, Venerable One, is in-breathing and out-breathing the corporeal Production, discursive thinking and reflecting the linguistic Production, perception and sensation the mental Production?”—

“In-breathing and out-breathing, brother Visākha, are corporeal faculties, bound up with the body. Therefore is in-breathing and out-breathing the corporeal Production. What one thinks conceptionally and reflects upon (*vitakketvā vicāretvā*), one utters in speech afterwards. Therefore is discursive thinking and reflecting the linguistic Production. Perception and sensation are mental faculties, bound up with the mind (*citta*). Therefore is perception and sensation the mental Production”.¹⁸⁵

Indeed, Dhammadinnā was wise, eminently wise. For this definition of the productions is astonishing in its unsurpassed precision revealing the *kernel* of the matter: in-breathing and out-breathing is the basis and the centre of the corporeal productions; also according to Schopenhauer the motion of life is to be regarded as starting from the process of breathing; sensation and perception are the representatives of the productions appearing in the activities of sense; conceptual thinking and reflecting (*vitakkavicāra*) form the kernel of the creative mental actions. Dhammadinna calls the latter productions the linguistic *sankhāra* because the language serves the conceptual thinking, i. e. the reason, as its first product and at the same time its necessary tool—(Schopenhauer, *W. a. W. u. V.* I, 44, 74.)—, yea, word and language are the indispensable means of distinct thinking (I. c. II, 71, 77). But where are, in Dhammadinnā’s definition, the productions of the fifth Group of Grasping? The contents of this

* Note the *successive order* of the productions: it corresponds exactly to that succession according to which during the contemplative *jhānās* (to be dealt with later) the productions will be ceased methodically, one after the other: firstly ceases in- and out-breathing, then discursive thinking and reflecting, afterwards perception, and finally also sensation. Also this is exposed by Dhammadinnā in the 44th Discourse of the *Majjh. Nik.*

fifth Group of Grasping is, as we have seen, the *meditative contemplation*, and therewith already contained in the third Group of Grasping, perception.

Thus also Dhammadinnā certifies what we have in mind in this place, namely that the sankhārā of the fourth Group of Grasping are the creative mental actions, consisting in discursive thinking and reflecting.

2) This fact results also from the following; above we have quoted already words of the Buddha out of the Sam. Nik. XXII, 81. The passage reads in particular as follows:

“The ordinary man regards the Five Groups of Grasping as himself. This opinion, monks, is a *Production* (sankhāra) . . . Or he has the opinion: ‘This am I, this is the world, this I shall become after death, persisting on, eternally enduring, without a change.’ This opinion of eternal duration, monks, is a *Production* . . . Or he has the opinion: ‘No more may I be, no more might anything be for me, I shall not be any more, and so nothing more will become for me.’ This opinion of destruction, monks, is a *Production* . . . Or he is doubting and undecided, cannot attain full certainty about the true matter of facts (saddhamma). This vacillating and doubting, this disability of attaining full certainty, monks, is a *Production*.”

In each single of these cases mentioned the Buddha proceeds:

“This Production, however, grounds in what, owing to what circumstance does it arise, out of what is it born, by what engendered? There the ordinary man has, not knowing the real matter of fact, been hit by a sensation, originated in a contact taken place in the state of ignorance, and *Thirst* has arisen within him. *From this comes the Production*”.

Hence: thirst-born opinions are the productions. Opinions, however, are acts of thinking, and, since these acts of thinking are called “productions”, productive acts of thinking.

3) In quite an outstanding manner the Buddha points to the literal and objective meaning of the productions of the fourth Group of Grasping in the 120th Discourse of the Majjh. Nik. which is entitled “Reincarnation according to the Productions (sankhārā)”:

“Reincarnation according to the Productions (sankhāruppattim), monks, I will show you. Listen! There is a monk full of confidence, morally pure, knows the doctrine, is able to detach himself, is wise. He considers: ‘O, might I be reborn, with the dissolution of my body, after death, among high aristocrats’ . . . or he considers: ‘Might I be reborn in a distinguished family.’ He concentrates upon such a thought, sticks to this thought, cultivates this thought. These *Productions* and an *adequate attitude*, thus performed and cultivated, lead him to such an existence . . . Or a monk has heard saying: ‘The Blissful Gods, they live for a long time, happy and magnificently,’ and he thinks: ‘O, might I be reborn, with the dissolution of my body, after death, among the Blissful Gods!’ Upon this thought he concentrates, to this thought he sticks, this thought

he cultivates. These *Productions* and an *adequate attitude*, thus performed and cultivated, lead him to such an existence."

The same is illustrated by the Buddha in particular and in the same manner with regard to all other divine areas. It is impossible to express in a clearer way that the "productions" are acts of thinking, i. e.—even as "productions"—just that what we call "productive actions of thought."

Further results from these Buddha-words, that these productive acts of thinking must be performed and cultivated *permanently* and have to be accompanied by an appropriate behaviour (*vihāra*), namely by an attitude "causing no harm in deeds and words," should they reach their goal.

Why? We know already that our rebirth is modified by the mode of that *thirst* pervading us, because this thirst leads to the seizing of a germ congenial to it. The task is, consequently, to refine this thirst accordingly, to *permutate* it. And this will be managed in the way of those creative mental actions to be performed and cultivated long enough till this permutation of the will is achieved.

As long as this is not the case, each creative thinking-act, besides its immediately pursued purpose of satisfying the tormenting thirst, lets—as its further "*product*" (*sankhata*)—*increase* also this Thirst in its up-to-date state, enforces it by supplying new nutriment:

"And his thirst, leading to new Becoming, increases more and more," the Buddha explicates in the 149th Discourse of the Majjh. Nik. Thus the journey through the world goes on in its usual course.

He, however, who intends to form his next existence in a more favourable way and therewith to settle after death in a world he may look forward to, he has to cultivate, with an iron energy, those productive mental actions guiding his Thirsting Will in the desired direction. Of what kind, however, are the possible modes of thinking in respect of this?

"There are three modes of productive activity: the productive mental activity leading to future fortune; the productive mental activity leading to future misfortune; the productive mental activity leading to future liberation from disturbance." (Dighā-Nik., 33rd. Discourse)*

"If the man entangled in ignorance produces a productive mental activity leading to fortune, then his consciousness attains—(after death)—to a lucky world.** If he produces a productive mental activity leading to misfortune, then his consciousness attains to an unlucky world.

* One can always form only one's future; the present time is always the accomplished product of the past. If one mounts a train for Berlin, one cannot arrive at Rome. Thus we mount our new life-train in the moment of our death by seizing of a new germ. From this very moment our newly starting life is, in general, as distinctly outlined as the happenings to be experienced after the start of a journey to India or to the North-Pole. *Therefore* the Buddha lays such a vast stress upon the care for a favourable rebirth. On it depends, in the end, *everything*.

** This means: The universe to be experienced by him after death in his new consciousness—"here in the consciousness stands the universe"—presents itself as a lucky world.

If he produces a productive mental activity directed upon freedom from disturbance—(by objects of sense)—, then his consciousness attains to a world free from disturbance—(Brahmaworld)—.”

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Hence, absolutely everything depends on our mode of thinking :

“From thinking all things have their start, by thinking they are directed, by thinking they are created. Him, who speaks or acts according to perverse thinking, follows Suffering like the wheel follows the draught-animal’s hoof.

In thinking have all things their root, by thinking they are directed, by thinking they are created. Him who speaks or acts according to pure thinking, follows well-being like the shadow follows him.”

(Dhammapada I.)

“Whatsoever, monks, there are of unwholesome things: at first arises the thought about them, and the unwholesome things are subsequent to it.

Whatsoever there are of wholesome things: at first arises the thought about them, and the wholesome things are subsequent to it.”

(Ang. Nik. No. 6, 6, 7.)

Brought into a short formula, this means: As the organ of thought is the *centre* of all activities of the senses, so is thinking the Commander in Chief of the whole heap of productions which constitutes the personality. Especially the five outer organs of sense are only the *executory* organs of this Commander in Chief.

Above it was said that each being himself is the *demiurge* of his world, by creating same again and again in the production of his corporeal organism through which alone we enter into our world and experience it. This will now, in all its wideness, be intelligible to us: We are such professional demiurges that we do not come to rest at all in this creative activity. No sooner have we created a new world by our birth then we begin already incessantly to suggest to our world-creator, i. e. our Thirsting Will for life, the architect’s plan for our *future* world in our present productive activities of mind—Mind in the sense of that thinking imbued with thirst—, with the consequence that this thirst leads us, at the moment of the dissolution of our present body, to the seizing of quite a distinct germ in a new mother’s womb, determined by our past mental activities. This germ we form then, by our *Productions* as the obedient journeymen of the constructor, to a new corporeal organism in which, as said before, we enter into our new world, be it a human world again, or an infernal or a ghostly or a divine one, or an animal’s world.

Yet, this world-creation is not so easy as that of Jehova simply speaking: “It shall be light,” and there was light. However, even he needed six days for his world-creation. Christian theologians do not hesitate to declare these six days

to be as many world-periods. Also Jehova's work seems not to have been quite simple. Accordingly, we have not to be astonished if also we, as demiurges, cannot create *our* respective world but by hard work, at least if it shall be a light-world or any other divine world we want to produce. Also for this purpose, i. e. for the mutation of our Thirsting Will, we might need a series of existences, yea world-periods.

It is *this* cosmogony the Buddha has in mind when speaking the following, eminently profound words—to the comprehension of which it may be pointed out that also the animals, even the insects, once upon a time had been human beings and as such had laid the ground for their present animal attributes:

“Monks, have you ever seen such a multicoloured picture, called ‘showpiece’?” —“Certainly, Lord.”—“Now, monks, such a painting has become so multicoloured by the *Mind* (citta)—(of the painter)—; but the Mind is still more colourful than such a multicoloured picture, called ‘show-piece’.

In the selfsame way, ye monks, also those extraordinarily multicoloured beings of the animal kingdom have become so multicoloured by the *Mind*. The mind is still more colourful than those extraordinarily multicoloured beings of the animal kingdom. Therefore, ye monks, the monk has to consider his mind, by uncovering it, often and often again: ‘For a long time—(in the course of *samsāra*)—this Mind has been soiled by greed, by hatred, by perverse thinking. By the defilement of mind, however, the beings themselves are soiled, and by the purification of the mind the beings themselves are getting pure.

It is, monks, as if a dyer or painter with paint or lacquer or curcuma or indigo or varnish creates a female or male form in all its completeness on a polished board or a wall or a cloth; in the selfsame way, monks, the world-man not knowing the real matter of fact creates—(in the course of his *samsāra*)—again and again a new corporeal form, creates again and again a new sensation, new perception, new productive mental activities, new cognition” (Sam. Nik., XXII, 100).

As a concluding result of these expositions two examples may be given, how the interpretation of the term “*sankhāra*” in an individual case might be performed:

“During the rain-period—(a few months before his death)—the Exalted One was taken by a serious disease; he had to suffer vehement pains, as if death were near. The Exalted One sustained them mindfully, clearly conscious, without letting them molest him. And the Exalted One said to himself: ‘It behoves me not to extinguish without a word of farewell to those who have served me, and without having seen once again the community of monks. For this reason I will conquer this disease with energy and will persevere for another while in this mode of life-producing thought (*jīvitasankhāra*).’ Thus the Exalted One concentrated energetically upon that mental activity creating life (*jīvitasankhāra*). Thus the Exalted One’s disease was overcome” (Dīghā-Nik. XVI, 2, 23).

Later on it reads:

“... Then it happened near the Cāpāla-Sanctuary that the Exalted One, mindfully and clearly conscious dismissed that Thinking which produces life (āyusankhāra) ... And the Exalted One spoke the solemn words: “That thinking which produces Becoming (bhavasankhāra) has been dismissed by the Wise One. And there will be no new Becoming, be it high or low. Concentrated within himself, imbued with interior bliss, he breaks his own Becoming like a coat of mail’.”

Thus the saying: “In dependence on the Sankhārā arises consciousness” at bottom means nothing else but this: Consciousness is the product of the physiological processes of our body in general, and of the functions of the senses in particular. Or, to speak in the spirit of Schopenhauer: Consciousness is a secondary phenomenon, conditioned by the functions of the cerebral nervous system, based upon the somatic life of the individual; “only by means of organic life is consciousness possible,” dicta which are almost verbally identical with the lapidary apophthegm of the Mahānidanasutta: “*Retroactively, consciousness depends on the corporeal organism (nāma-rūpa); the series goes no farther.*”

This is nothing new to us. We saw before and indeed more closely, that consciousness is dependent on the corporeal organism, and that the latter also again as regards its maintenance is dependent upon the accession of this same consciousness. Thereby, however, our presumption proves to be justified—at least as far as the Sankhārā are concerned—that the continuation of the causal nexus beyond the “corporeal organism together with consciousness” to the Sankhārā and to ignorance, at bottom could tell us nothing new, but only represent a closer explanation of the conclusion of the formula dealt with by us before, the continuation of the formula up to the Sankhārā making specially clear the *manner* in which consciousness is conditioned by the corporeal organism; consciousness being conditioned by the setting in of the activities of the senses of the corporeal organism.

It now remains only to show how *ignorance* also as the cause of the Sankhārā fits in harmoniously with the formula of causality treated above.

Ignorance — Summary of the Chain of Suffering

“In dependence on ignorance arise the Sankhārā,” the Productions. With this we have come to the last link of the formula of the causal nexus, also in its amplified form. From this placing of ignorance at the extreme end of the chain of causality alone we may judge it to be of fundamental importance; and this really is the case.

First, it is clear that in this dictum the Buddha wishes to say that the productions are the outcome of the ignorance of something, *and would not come about, if this something were known*. What now may this something be, with respect to which this unknowingness, this ignorance exists? The Buddha tells us in the following words: “To be ignorant as regards Suffering, to be ignorant as regards the arising of Suffering; to be ignorant as regards the ceasing of Suffering,

to be ignorant as regards the path leading to the ceasing of Suffering—this, friends, is what is called ignorance.”¹⁸⁶ In the first of the four most excellent truths we saw what this suffering is. It is the great misery of the world, transitoriness, to which everything is subject, so that the whole world is only one great world of suffering. *Everything* is transitory, and thereby painful; the eye and forms, the ear and sounds, the nose and odours, the tongue and sapsids, the body and tangibles, the organ of thought and the thinkable. This the “average man” does not cognize according to reality. He is not able to understand that ultimately, ever and always, the inevitable collapse of all the enjoyments and satisfactions of sense of every kind, even of the highest and most ideal kind, must ensue, and that these, either in this present life or in some later form of existence, perhaps even in the animal kingdom or in some hell-world, must flow into a measureless ocean of woe. And so “he delights in the eye and in forms, in the ear and sounds, in the nose and in odours, in the tongue and in sapsids, in the body and in tangibles, in the organ of thinking and in thoughts,” as it is said in the 149th Discourse of the Middle Collection. This means: he cultivates the activities of sight, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching and thinking, in short, the productions, the Sankhārā. In consequence of this, the whole chain of suffering runs its course again, inevitably leading the careless creature in the course of time, as so often already during the immeasurable past, down again into all the abysses of existence. For just because of these renewed productions, consciousness ever and again flames up anew, and thereby new sensation, and therewith new thirst for the world of forms, sounds, odours, flavours, tangibles and thoughts; whereupon that factor again is actualized which at the next approaching death again must lead to a new grasping exactly corresponding to the quality of this thirst. With this it becomes apparent, why the Buddha, in the formula of the causal nexus did not confine himself to the *objectively* last link, “the corporeal organism together with consciousness,” but carried it on to the Sankhārā and ignorance. For him it was a question of laying bare the definitive cause of the thirst that is ever and always breaking forth anew and forming the source of continually repeated rebirth. Not only had the *objective* cause to be found out, as the Mahānidānasutta, we dealt with above, has done in concluding that it is “the corporeal organism together with consciousness;” but in correspondence with his practical purpose directed towards the annihilation of this thirst, he had, if at all possible, to penetrate to its final *subjective* condition, dependent upon ourselves, which condition he found to be a lack of knowledge of the real character of the world, which the Buddha calls *ignorance*. This ignorance, even in the maternal womb, where, in the absence of a developed organ of thought and thereby of thought-consciousness, it is complete, gives rise to the first and lowest activities of the senses, and also after birth during the whole life constitutes the real cause of every activity of the senses. We make unceasing use of the organs of sense, because we do not recognize, in accordance with truth, the consequences of these activities. Hence ignorance is the *basis* of the whole chain of suffering. It is the deep night, wrapped in which, beings from beginningless

time have used their six-senses-machine, with the result that ever and again new thirst for more of such activity arises, which thirst, then, in its turn, upon the break-up of the six-senses-apparatus in death, effects the constant upbuilding anew of the same: "Ignorance is the deep night, wherein we here so long are circling round."¹⁸⁷

But according to this, it is not only established beyond all doubt that thirst is *conditioned* as the immediate cause of the circle of rebirth and thereby is a purely physical phenomenon, but also its final fundamental conditioning is recognized as being something, the removal of which is entirely in our power: If ignorance is abolished, thirst and, together with it, all causality is uprooted forever. "Those who have vanquished delusion and broken through the dense darkness, will wander no more: *Causality exists no more for them.*"¹⁸⁸

With this, we now know the whole formula of origination through dependence, and may well also have seen that in all its parts it is lucid to the utmost degree. No one can shut his eyes to the insight that one link hooks with logical necessity into the other, the whole chain of conditionings being thus not only correct, but also exhaustive. In particular it has been shown to us that ignorance as well as the Sankhārā, join on harmoniously to the conclusion of the formula treated above, which had the „corporeal organism together with consciousness” for its final link. Neither of them go beyond this last link, this being impossible according to the foregoing. For together with it, especially together with the corporeal organism which begins to take form at the moment of conception, there is given immediate linking up with the *former* “body endowed with consciousness” that had immediately preceded conception. As the Sankhārā cleared up the *mode* in which consciousness was conditioned by the corporeal organism, so “ignorance” gives us the key to the understanding of how we have come to shape the germ, seized in consequence of our former thirst in a maternal womb, into a six-senses-machine and to make use of this machine.

Now we only need to run through the whole formula in its totality:

“Inasmuch as that is, this is. Through the arising of that does this arise. Thus, namely:

“In dependence on ignorance—*avijjā*—arise the productions—*sankhārā*—,” building up the germ grasped in the womb into an apparatus of perception.

“In dependence on the productions arises consciousness—*viññāna*.

“In dependence on consciousness arises the corporeal organism—*nāma-rūpa*.*

“In dependence on the corporeal organism arise the six organs of sense—*salāyatana*.**

* Compare our disquisitions above. There we saw that only a corporeal organism endowed with consciousness is able to develop and to live, that even the very first development of the fecundated germ is conditioned by consciousness being aroused by means of its organized matter, though this consciousness is at first only plant-like.

** *Salāyatana* literally “sixfold realm”.

It is divided into “the six inner and six outer realms.” Whereas the six outer realms represent the totalities of the objects corresponding to the several organs of sense, as forms, sounds *etc.*, the six inner realms mean the six organs of sense themselves.

“In dependence on the six organs of sense arises contact—*phassa*.

“In dependence on contact arises sensation—*vedanā*.

“In dependence on sensation arises thirst—*taṇhā*.

“In dependence on thirst arises grasping—*upādāna*.

“In dependence on grasping arises Becoming—*bhava*.

“In dependence on Becoming arises birth—*jāti*.

“In dependence on birth arise old age and death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair.

“Thus comes about the arising of this entire sum of Suffering.”¹⁸⁹

What, until now, has made the understanding of this formula so very difficult for us, was, among other things, the circumstance that it was generally thought to be an exposition of several links of the causal nexus simply in their *temporal* sequence. We saw the wrongness of this point of view from our foregoing explanations of the chain, given in accordance with the Buddha's own statements. According to these, the correct train of thought of the formula, and thereby the key to its understanding, is rather as follows: The Buddha in it wishes to show the relation of the single links in a *purely abstract* manner, in the way in which they condition themselves internally and in themselves, that is, as follows: Old age and death, sorrow, affliction, pain, grief and despair are only possible in and with a corporeal organism, as a six-senses-machine. Such an organism must be born, therefore it presupposes *birth*. But birth is nothing but a special case of *Becoming*. Every Becoming is conditioned by a *grasping* and grasping is conditioned by the *thirst* for Becoming (*bhavataṇhā*). Such thirst can appear only, where *sensation* is. But sensation is the consequence of *contact* between the senses and an object; therefore it presupposes *organs of sense*. Organs of sense, of course, presuppose a *corporeal organism* for their supporter. Such an organism unquestionably can only exist, even, only develop, if *consciousness* is added to it. But consciousness presupposes the building-up of the germ grasped by us into a six-senses-apparatus by means of the creative (productive) activities. But these are only set going, where *ignorance* exists as to the unwholesomeness of their results.

Taken in reverse series, and at the same time having regard to their actual realisation, these general dicta take shape as follows:—

In the maternal womb, in the night of deepest *ignorance*, the *productions* (Sankhārā) begin in the seized and fertilized germ. These productions

Here, in the chain of causality, first of all, of course, the six inner realms, that is, the organs of sense, are meant, since it is the explanation of the five Groups of Grasping in form of the machinery of the personality that is in question.

This link of the six organs of sense that we see here and elsewhere inserted is, however, wanting in the chain of dependencies, as we know it until now according to the Mahānidānasutta. The reason is clear: it is essentially given by the corporeal organism, *nāma-rūpa*, the fourth link, and therefore is really superfluous.

The links Sankhārā, Consciousness, corporeal organism together with organs of sense, are *mutually* conditioned, representing only the further explanation of the two links “corporeal organism” and „consciousness,” *conditioning each other*, with which in the Mahānidānasutta the formula is closed. See above.

constitute the necessary antecedent condition for the arising of *consciousness*. But consciousness, on its side, again constitutes the necessary condition for the development of the organism even in the maternal womb and for its continued existence after birth, so that it is only in dependence upon consciousness that the *corporeal organism* with the *six organs of sense* can come to maturity and continue maintainning itself. The organs of sense, on their side, again represent the necessary presupposition of every *contact* and thereby of every *sensation*. Out of sensation* in due sequence there ceaselessly springs forth *thirst* for the world of forms, sounds, odours and so forth, which on its side constitutes the *sine qua non* of *grasping*. With this, however, the immediate cause of all *Becoming* is laid bare: whatever becomes, becomes in consequence of such grasping. This grasping in particular is the cause of the becoming of a new organism, which is brought about by *birth*, that is, by conception and the corresponding following development in the maternal womb. With this the circle is again closed, and thus once more the antecedent conditions are provided for the arising of old age and death, of sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair.

If thus we see explained in the formula of the causal nexus only the *inner* dependence of the several links of the chain of suffering, one upon the other, thus, how they are conditioned *in themselves*, none the less, as we might expect, the Buddha on the other hand also furnishes the formula as it takes shape in a concrete case:

“In dependence on the eye and forms arises visual consciousness; the conjunction of these three is contact; in dependence on contact arises sensation; in dependence on sensation, thirst; in dependence on thirst, grasping; in dependence on grasping, Becoming; in dependence on Becoming, birth; in dependence on birth arise old age and death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair.

“In dependence on the ear and sounds arises auditory consciousness; in dependence on the nose and odours arises olfactory consciousness; in dependence on the tongue and sapsids arises gustatory consciousness; in dependence on the body and tangibles arises tactile consciousness; in dependence on the organ of thought and objects of thought arises mental consciousness. The conjunction of these three is contact; in dependence on contact arises sensation; in dependence on sensation, thirst; in dependence on thirst, grasping; in dependence on grasping, Becoming; in dependence on Becoming, birth; in dependence on birth arise old age and death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair.”¹⁹⁰

From this reading of the formula it becomes at once apparent, how ignorance, not mentioned here, as constituting the cause of the activity of the senses, is also the immediate cause of the thirst for existence, that ever and again gushes forth anew from sensation. For at the moment when the senses come into activity, thus, when the eye meets a form, the ear a sound, and so on, *consciousness* also flames up, and therewith sensation, and therewith thirst, desire. Thus, it is not the case, as it is often said, that thirst by means of a series of intermediate

* Reciprocally, out of perception that is always inseparably associated with it.

links separated in time is artificially traced back to ignorance; but it is because I am ignorant "in respect of corporeality"* as of something fraught with suffering, that I therefore continually use my six senses, with the immediate consequence that *as soon* as I use them, ever new sensation arises, and therewith again thirst immediately makes its presence known. The ignorance, as cause, and thirst as effect, thereby meet in the act of sensation. Hence they do not lie apart in time; on which account precisely, if thirst is to be modified or annihilated, this is only possible by applying the lever to the primary cause of the activities of the senses, namely, to Ignorance.

Still a third way of looking at the formula of the causal nexus is possible. We may follow its course beginning with the first arising of the six-senses-machine, as the machine of suffering, at its conception in the maternal womb, then on through the time when this machine is in activity, up till the formation of a new one in a new conception. As the matter is of fundamental importance, it is only natural that the Buddha gives the formula also from this point of view:¹⁹¹

"When, monks, a father and a mother come together, and it is the mother's period and the being to be born is also present, then, by the combined agency of these three, a seed of life is planted.

"And now for nine or ten months** the mother bears in her womb this seed of life, with much anxiety, a weighty burden; and when the nine or ten months have run their course, the mother brings forth that weighty burden with much anxiety, and this that is born she now nourishes with her own blood. 'Blood,' monks, is what mother's milk is called in the Order of the Exalted One.

"And now this boy, with the growth and development of his faculties, takes part in all sorts of games and sports appropriate to youth, such as ploughing with toy ploughs, playing tip-cat, turning somersaults, playing with toy windmills, toy measures, toy carts, and toy bows and arrows.

"And this boy, with the continued growth and development of his faculties, *now lives his life open to all the five incitements to desire*,*** namely, Forms cognisable through the organ of sight, Sounds cognisable through the organ of hearing, Odours cognisable through the organ of smell, Flavours cognisable through the organ of taste, and Tangibles cognisable through the organ of touch—all longed for, loved, delightful, pleasing, bound up with desire, provocative of passion.

"And now, through the eye sighting forms, through the ear hearing sounds, through the nose smelling odours, through the tongue tasting flavours, through the body encountering tangibles and through the mind discerning ideas, he is enamoured of pleasing forms, pleasing sounds, pleasing odours, pleasing tangibles, pleasing ideas, and shuns unpleasing forms, unpleasing sounds, unpleasing

* See the following third reading of the formula.

** Lunar months are meant.

*** Of course, he has already before this exercised the five powers of desiring, that is, seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching, and thereby set going the Sankhārā, beginning with their slightest stirrings in the maternal womb on to their full unfolding, to which the Buddha here introduces us.

odours, unpleasing flavours, unpleasing tangibles, unpleasing ideas;* being void of Recollectedness as respects corporeality, bounded and limited of mind, knowing naught, in accord with truth, of the Deliverance of the mind, the Deliverance by wisdom, whereby all that is evil and insalutary totally ceases to be.**

“So, with such likes and dislikes, when he experiences any kind of sensation, pleasant or unpleasant, or neither pleasant nor unpleasant, he greets, welcomes and clings to that sensation, and in him, thus greeting, welcoming and clinging to that sensation, there arises delight; which delight in sensation is Grasping.*** Then, in dependence upon that Grasping, there arises Becoming,† in dependence upon Becoming, there arises Birth, and, in dependence upon Birth it is that Growth and Decay, Death, Sorrow, Lamentation, Suffering, Grief and Despair come to be. Thus comes about the arising of the entire Sum of Suffering.”¹⁹²

If the Buddha thus has pointed out to us, “how ever and again a new being arises,” and thereby suffering is perpetuated, precisely thereby he also has put into our hands the key as to how we can prevent the arising of a new being or a new corporeal organism, and thereby of a new personality, and thus break through the chain of suffering, and be able forever to pass out of the circle of rebirths. With this, accordingly, we now shall have to deal.

* To be enamoured and to shun, are the two fundamental directions of *Thirst*. Note that this thirst above is the direct consequence of the activity of the senses. As soon as this latter sets in, at the same moment there comes about sensation and perception, and therewith also thirst.

** “Being void of Recollectedness as respects corporeality, bounded and limited of mind”: this is *Ignorance*. “Knowing naught, in accord with truth, of the Deliverance of the mind, the Deliverance by wisdom, whereby all that is evil and insalutary, totally ceases to be”: by this is meant *Knowledge*, which he does not possess, and about which he does not exert himself. It is precisely this whole attitude of mind which determines his sense-activity.

*** Hence only a grasping *bound up with delight* is a grasping in the Buddha’s sense of the word. The Saint, *also*, still satisfies his hunger and thirst. “Be so good, Ananda, as to bring me some water; I am thirsty and would fain drink,” says the Master to Ananda shortly before his death (Dīgha-Nik. XVI); but there arises no more *delight* in drinking.

† As we have already seen, upon every grasping there immediately follows a Becoming: as soon as I grasp, something becomes. At the moment when I no longer grasp, for me also nothing more becomes. As already previously stated, however, *this* Becoming is not what the Buddha means here, but the Becoming of a *new personality*, of a new existence which begins with conception. In the above cited passage the Buddha describes how the ignorant man spends his *whole* life from youth to the grave. During this whole period he practises grasping in all its forms, so that *this* grasping—namely, what he has practised precisely *up to the moment of death*—effectuates itself in a new germ just at the death-moment, and so brings about the becoming of a new personality. That it is only *this* Becoming that is meant follows indeed from the fact that only if it does the further sentence hold good: “In dependence upon Becoming arises Birth,” since *this* Becoming is brought about precisely by conception—Birth in the Buddha’s sense—but not that Becoming which still *during* life arises in consequence of grasping. Precisely on this account, up to the very moment of his death, man has it in his own hands to put a stop to *Becoming*,—that is, of a new personality—since it suffices that in this last moment he has no more thirst for life, and thereby possesses the assurance that he will grasp no more at any new germ.