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NEWSLETTER ON ASIAN AND ASIAN-AMERICAN PHILOSOPHERS AND PHILOSOPHIES

FROM THE CHAIR, CHANG-SEONG HONG

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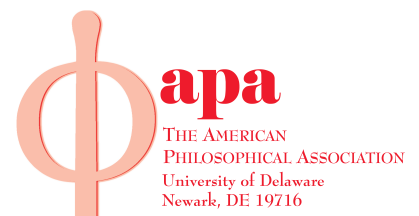
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Asian and Asian-American Philosophers and Philosophies

Chang-Seong Hong, Editor

Fall 2005

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FROM THE CHAIR

Chang-Seong Hong

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My three-year term as chair of the APA Committee on the Status of Asian and Asian-American Philosophers and Philosophies began on July 1, 2005. I would like to have an opportunity to thank David Kim for his service as chair of the Committee from July 1, 2003 – June 30, 2005.

The Asian Committee has been preparing to sponsor two sessions at each of all three divisional meetings for 2005-2006. A variety of topics in Asian and comparative philosophies will be discussed in these sessions. At the Central Division meeting, two sessions will be dedicated to discussing philosophies of an influential Asian philosopher in Western philosophies and a Western philosopher in Asian philosophies.

The Committee is currently planning to appoint an editor for its *Newsletter*. It has been the chair or guest editors who have edited the Committee's *Newsletter* since its first issue (Fall 2001), but the new editor will be in charge from the Spring 2006 issue.

I will welcome any comments or suggestions for our committee work. Please send your messages to Chang-Seong Hong at cshong@mnstate.edu. Thank you.

ARTICLES

Sankara's View of Consciousness and the Self in the Upadesasahasri

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In the *Upadesasahasri*, the only clearly authentic work of Sankara not in the form of a commentary, we find a succinct account of his view of consciousness and the self. This view is basically in agreement with his views expressed in the *Brahmasutrabhasya* and his other commentaries, allowing us to focus almost exclusively on the *Upadesasahasri* in exploring Sankara's understanding of consciousness and the self.

Sankara, a major Vedanta thinker who lived in the eighth century, was a metaphysical thinker whose primary objective was to explain how *moksa*, final release from the suffering of

samsara, is possible. The *Upadesasahasri* consists of two parts, originally probably two independent works. The first part, in metrical form, is addressed to students as a kind of textbook of Vedanta. It begins by proclaiming that because the Self, the *Atman*, is truly *Brahman*, only knowledge of *Brahman* can destroy ignorance and end the transmigratory existence that ignorance produces.¹ The second part, in prose, is addressed to teachers, opening with the words: "Now we shall explain how to teach the means to *moksa*, final release...."² Both parts expound the advaitic teaching that *Atman*, which is identical to *Brahman*, is ultimately the only reality and that the appearance of plurality is entirely the work of ignorance. It is this conviction that underlies the central project of the *Upadesasahasri*, namely, showing what this ignorance is, how it arises, and how it can be removed. That the self is ultimately of the nature of *Atman/Brahman* is never doubted by Sankara, who repeatedly cites the evidence of revelation (*sruti*) for its truth. Significant portions of both the metrical and prose parts are devoted to analyses of the great sayings (*mahavakya*) of the Veda that proclaim the identity of the self with *Atman/Brahman*, with almost one-fifth of the text dedicated to analyses of the sayings, "*tat tvam asi*" (*Chandogya*, VI, 8-16) and "*ahambrahmasmi*" (*Brh*, I,4.10).

Historically, we can see Sankara's advaitic view of the self and consciousness against three competing views. The first of these is the Mimamsa view that sees the self as an agent and that sees actions, both moral and ritual, as the principal means of achieving the highest goal. Against this view Sankara argues that the true Self, the *Atman*, cannot be an agent, for agency necessarily involves change, and the *Atman* is changeless. That the *Atman* is seen as an agent is, according to Sankara, the result of ignorance, an ignorance that mistakes modifications and agencies of ordinary, embodied consciousness for the pure consciousness that is the *Atman*.

The second competing view is the Buddhist *anatmanvada* that rejects all claims for an eternal, permanent Self. This view, which denies the claims of *Sruti* that *Atman*, which is identical to *Brahman*, is the true Self, Sankara mistakenly rejects as nihilistic. Sankara begins and ends with the reality of *Atman*. In its identity with *Brahman*, he regards *Atman* as the only thing that is ultimately real. His primary concern in the *Upadesasahasri* is to clarify what *Atman* is and how it can be realized, releasing a person from the suffering of transmigratory existence. In arguing against Buddhist views, Sankara frequently uses one of their favorite forms of arguments, namely, the *reductio ad absurdum*. I might add that I find no evidence in the *Upadesasahasri* that supports the historical claims that Sankara was a crypto Buddhist.

The third competing view that Sankara seeks to discredit is the Sankhya dualism of *purusa* and *prakrti*. The Sankhya dualism claims the reality of both pure consciousness, *purusa*, and the experienced world, *prakrti*. It hopes, thereby, to provide an explanation of the bondage of *purusa* by *prakrti*

and its liberation from this bondage through yoga. However, the Sankhya theory of prakrtic existence seems irrelevant to its theory of the self as *purusa* when it comes to the problem of explaining how *purusa* can be bound by *prakrti* and how it can liberate itself from this bondage. Indeed, Sankhya ultimately is forced to claim that there is no real interaction between *purusa* and *prakrti* and that bondage is only illusory; that the *purusa* is eternally free.

It is just this problem of explaining how genuine interaction between the dual realities of *purusa* and *prakrti* can occur that Sankara hopes to avoid with his nondual stance. Sankara's view, as expressed in the *Upadesasahasri*, for example, is that the pure consciousness (*cidatman*) alone is ultimately real; everything else is only appearance. The Self (*Atman*) that I truly am, he says, is "ever free, pure, transcendently changeless, invariable, immortal, imperishable, and thus always bodiless."³ Further, being bodiless means that the true self neither experiences nor acts. In Sankara's words, "The false belief that *Atman* is a doer is due to the belief that the body is *Atman*."⁴ Thus, when a student approached his teacher, a knower of *Brahman*, and asked how he could obtain release from the suffering of this transmigratory existence, the teacher advised him that he must overcome the ignorance through which he mistakenly thinks that he is an agent, an experiencer, and a transmigrator, when, in fact, he is none of these but the highest *Atman*.⁵

But if all the experiences of the embodied self are ultimately unreal, the result of ignorance, how can this embodied self ever achieve *moksa* by realizing its true nature as *Atman*? What is this embodied self, and how does its consciousness function? It might seem that Sankara cannot be expected to have a philosophy of empirical or embodied consciousness because whatever is embodied is, like the body, unreal. After all, from his perspective, though I frequently identify with this body, this identification (*adhyasa*) is a mistake, the result of ignorance, for the truth is that I am pure consciousness, *Atman*, eternal and unchanging, having nothing to do with body or mind. But if taking my embodied consciousness to be real is a mistake, how is this mistake to be explained? What is this ignorance wherein I identify with the body and regard myself as actor and experiencer?

Indeed, it is precisely for the sake of showing that this identification is a mistake, that it results from ignorance, that Sankara needs to develop a philosophy of the empirical self and explain ordinary consciousness. To support his claim that the experiencing, acting self is not the true self, he needs to explain what the embodied mind is and how it comes to be falsely imposed on *Atman*. Thus, he says that if the student seeking the sacred knowledge that brings release from *samsara* says, "I am eternal and different from the body. The bodies come and go like a person's garment," the teacher should say, "You are right," and then should explain how the body is different from the Self.⁶

There follows a remarkable passage in which Sankara explains what the body is and how it comes to be. In a highly creative move, he posits an unmanifest name-and-form (*avyakrte namarupa*) as the source of ordinary consciousness and the world of objects. He describes how this unmanifest *namarupa* evolved into the world of name and form as we know it through an evolutionary process according to which it first became manifest as ether, air, fire, water, and earth, in that order. As each of these elements became impregnated with the previous elements, finally earth appeared as a combination of all five elements. He goes on to say,

And from earth, rice, barley, and other plants consisting of the five elements are produced. From them, when they are eaten, blood and sperm are produced, related respectively to the bodies of women and men. Both blood and sperm, produced by churning with the churning stick of sexual passion driven by ignorance (*avidya*) and sanctified with sacred formulas, are poured into the womb at the proper time. Through the penetration of fluid from the womb, they become an embryo and it is delivered in the ninth or tenth month.⁷

He then explains how this body is named at birth, how it gets its student name, its householder name, and also the name of the forest dweller and *sannyasin*. Repeating that "the body is different from you (*Atman*)," Sankara says that the teacher should remind the student that the mind and the sense organs consist only of name-and-form and quotes passages from the *Chandogya Upanisad* (VI. 5,4; 6,5; and 7,6), which declare that the mind consists of food.⁸

Like the prakrtic self of Sankhya, this self of name-and-form is said to be unconscious ("like food") but, nonetheless, constituted by an awareness enabling it to experience, act, and to identify itself (mistakenly) as a transmigrating, experiencing, acting self. Thus, according to Sankara, a person consists of a physical body, made up of material substances; the senses (eye, ear, etc.); mind; agencies of speech, movement, sex, excretion, and grasping; sense-of-self (*ahamkara*); as well as the internal embodied consciousness (*antahkarana*), all of which are disposed and conditioned according to previous experiences.

The distinction between physical and subtle bodies (*sthulasarira* and *sukshmasarira*) is very important, for it recognizes a distinction between mere physicality and humanly embodied physicality. It is a way of insisting on the bodily character of what we think of as mental functions, for the *sukshmasarira*, constituted by the five vital airs, the *buddhi* and *manas* through which the *antahkarana* functions, as well as the ten organs (five cognitive-sensory; five conative-motor), is not only itself viewed as a body but is itself further embodied in the *sthulasarira*. Only for the embodied self are the knowledge and action needed for liberation possible (or necessary). The senses are seen as instruments of the mind, linking mind with the outside world, just as mind links senses with reflective consciousness, and reflective consciousness links up with Self. But senses, vital force, mind, and reflective consciousness can function only when embodied; ultimately, the inner organ (*antahkarana*) cannot function except through the bodily self, through its *indriya*, or senses.

How the *Atman* is linked to reflective consciousness, and through consciousness to the mind, and thence to the external world through the *antahkarana* and the senses, is a serious and difficult problem for Sankara. The senses, *antahkarana*, and *buddhi* are ultimately all of the nature of body, whereas *Atman* is not. But the nature of body is unconscious and unknown, unless known by another, for example, the *Atman*. Furthermore, *Atman* is said to be transcendently changeless (*kutashtha*) and constant (*nitya*), whereas the instruments of knowledge (*antahkarana*), particularly consciousness and its forms (*pratayas*) of intelligible objects, necessarily undergo change in coming to know the changing world. Thus, if as knower of the world, the *Atman* pervades and illumines consciousness, it will be subject to all the changes of consciousness involved in coming to know something. Since, because of his view of the changelessness of *Atman*, this is unacceptable to Sankara, he must find some other way of explaining how *Atman* illumines consciousness.

Sankara's innovative solution to this problem is the concept of *abhasa*, a term that means "reflection" but that is used by Sankara to refer to a reflection that produces a false appearance, that deludes people, inducing them to mistake embodied consciousness for the pure consciousness of *Atman*. He says, "When [ordinary] consciousness is pervaded by the reflection (*abhasa*) of the pure consciousness of *Atman* (*caitanya*), knowledge arises in it. In this way sound and the other [objects of knowledge] appear. By this people are deluded."⁹ The delusion is that ordinary consciousness appears to be the knower because of *Atman's* reflection in it, when, in reality, it is by nature unconscious. Thus, ordinary consciousness falsely appears as knower, when, in reality, only the *Atman* knows.

This solution is highly problematic, however, because not only are all the objects that appear in ordinary consciousness ultimately false and unreal but the consciousness itself is ultimately unreal and, therefore, incapable of really reflecting *Atman*. But if the supposed reflection is itself wholly unreal, then it clearly cannot provide a link between the pure consciousness of *Atman* and the world and ordinary consciousness.

But if no link between *Atman* consciousness and ordinary consciousness can be established, then none of the valid means of knowledge by which ordinary consciousness operates can provide any knowledge of *Atman*. This Sankara readily acknowledges, quite surprisingly to the modern, secular mind, saying, "Just as a dream is true until awakening, so would the identity of the body with *Atman* be [true, as well as] the authoritativeness of sense-perception and the other [means of knowledge] and the waking state until [the attainment of] knowledge of *Atman*" (I.11.5). In other words, only while we are ignorant of *Atman* does the world appear real and the means of knowledge of ordinary consciousness appear valid.

How, then, in the final analysis, can *Atman* be known? Only through faith, only through revelation, the *Sruti*, in which Sankara appears to have unshakable faith. But whose faith? For the embodied self, the experience of faith is no more real than the experience of knowledge. For the *Atman*, it is totally unnecessary. The validity of *Sruti* is, for Sankara, as for almost all of the Vedantins, beyond the need of argument or justification, but unless it is valid for the embodied self, it would seem to be irrelevant to achieving *moksa*.

A similar problem plagues the solution Sankara seeks through positing an *avyakrte namarupa* as the source of consciousness and the world. Recall that in order to avoid the problems of dualism, Sankara denies that name-and-form is ultimately real, or that it really embodies the Self. For him, this account functions to explain only the *appearance* of experience and the world, the reality of which is never admitted. This view is also deeply problematic, however, as Sankara himself recognized when he said not only that *avyakrte namarupa* evolved from *Atman* but also that it is different in essence from *Atman*. How can it be both essentially different from and evolved from *Atman* in a philosophy committed to *satkaryavada*? *Satkaryavada*, as a causal principle, insists that what is produced, the effect, cannot be a different kind of reality than its cause. Thus, *Atman* could produce only *Atman*, never *nama-rupa*, which is non-*Atman*.

The analogy Sankara introduces to explain this evolution of *namarupa* from *Atman* reveals the problem, for he says,

In this manner this element named 'ether' arose from the highest *Atman* as dirty foam from clear water. Foam is neither water nor absolutely different from water, since it is not seen without water. But water is clear and different from foam, which is of the nature

of dirt. Likewise, the highest *Atman* is different from *namarupa*, which corresponds to foam; *Atman* is pure, clear, and different in essence from it.¹⁰

Clearly, this analogy breaks down, for foam combines two different things, clear water and dirt. Since Sankara cannot admit such a duality, he denies the reality of *nama-rupa*, relegating it to the level of *maya* or appearance, as superimposition on *Atman* through ignorance. Thus, Advaita confronts a dilemma: though body-mind must be assumed to account for experience, action, and transmigration, to preserve the nondualism that allows nothing other than *Atman* to be real, its reality must be denied. And if the reality of ordinary, embodied consciousness is denied, its functioning would seem to be completely irrelevant to the achievement of *moksa*.

It is primarily because the insistence on *Atman* as the only ultimate reality implies a rejection of ordinary embodied consciousness as a means of overcoming *duhkha* that Buddhists insist on *anatman*. From a Buddhist perspective, Sankara's insistence that the real Self is of the nature of pure consciousness, eternal and unchanging, stands in the way of seeing the self in bodily terms, as an experiencing, acting, living process. Buddhism does not admit a nonkarmic self or realm of existence. It denies the existence of a transcendent self that is pure consciousness, declaring the truth of no-Self (*anatman*, teaching that all existence is devoid or empty (*sunya*) of Self). This insistence of no-Self is not, as Sankara claims, the nihilistic view that nothing exists, a view that Buddhists avoid as carefully as the view that there is an eternal Self to whom mind and body somehow belong. The positive view of no-Self is brought out in the teaching of *madhyama pratipad*, the middle way that denies both being and nonbeing in favor of becoming. This middle way means that existence is to be understood in terms of *pratitya samutpada*, or interdependent arising. Becoming is seen as a creative process, a continuous arising and perishing in which everything is related to everything else in mutually dependent ways. What *anatman* and *sunyata* deny is that selves and things exist separately and in some absolute sense, a denial intended to make room for an affirmation of existence as a dynamic, integrated whole wherein the unity and continuity of experience is not destroyed by bifurcation.

Instead of analyzing personal existence in terms of a self that, in some sense, "has" a body and mind, Buddhists analyze it in terms of the processes involved in experience. This analysis distinguishes five interrelated groups of processes, which, in their interdependent functioning, give rise to what we call a person. *Rupa* constitutes the so-called bodily processes, giving a person his or her corporeal dimensions, while the other four, feeling/sensation (*vedana*), perceptual processes (*samjna*), impulses to action (*samskaras*), and the processes of consciousness (*vijnana*), constitute the so-called mental processes. These processes, all together in their interdependent functioning, *are* the self. The assumption of a separate self is seen as a mistake.

But it is also a mistake to see the distinctions between these five groups as boundary lines marking totally separate processes, for, as the Abhidharma analysis clearly shows, there is no consciousness without impulses, perception, sensation/feeling, or bodily processes. *Dhatus*, *ayatanas*, and *dharma*s are terms of analysis of experience intended to show not only that these five groups are empty of Self but that in their interdependent functioning they constitute unified and continuous personal existence. Thus, the twelve *ayatanas*, or bases of perception, reflect the unity of the senses and their objects grounded in lived bodily experience, and the eighteen *dhatus*, or constituents, of consciousness reflect the unity of

consciousness and conceptual objects grounded in the bases of perception. Further analysis of experience yields the eighty-nine *dharma*s, or factors, constituting the interdependent flow of processes we call a person.

What needs to be stressed here is that *skandhas*, *ayatana*s, *dhatu*s, and *dharma*s are terms of *analysis* of experience and not the lived experience itself. The lived experience is a holistic, continuous process. To see it in terms of analysis pointing to a complex built up out of static and separate parts is a mistake. Not only is it a mistake to see experience as constituted by contact between an independently given subject and object, or relationship between a body and mind conceived of as essentially separate from each other, but it is also a mistake to see experience in terms of *skandhas*, *ayatana*s, *dhatu*s, or *dharma*s if these are taken to be self-sufficient units of existence. Thus, the *Heart Sutra* declares that *skandhas* and *dharma*s are both empty; and, of course, emptiness is also empty.

This insistence on emptiness constitutes a rejection of the position that there is an already constituted existent with which a person can be identified. Practically all Indian philosophers—except Carvakans—denied that there was an already constituted physical being—a body—with which one’s true existence could be identified. But they held that there was an *Atman*, *purusa*, or *jiva*—a spiritual being—with which a person can be truly identified. And this spiritual being, one’s true being, is an eternal being of the nature of pure, unembodied consciousness; it does not perish and is not subject to change. Buddhists, however, in their insistence on *anatman* and *sunyata*, deny not only that there is an already constituted physical being or body that is a person’s true identity but deny also that there is an already constituted transcendent being or self that is a person’s true identity.

Instead, Buddhists see a person as a continuous creative process, integrally linked to all the other creative processes constituting existence. The *skandhas* and *dharma*s are not seen as constituting the person but as factors or conditions out of which a person-in-the-making (along with all other beings existing in mutual interdependence) continuously creates herself/himself. In the sense that this creative process is not dependent on a logically separate and prior agent, it is spontaneous. But it is not spontaneous in the sense that it is without conditions. Indeed, it is the conditionedness of this process that allows for intentional direction, that allows a person to be a process of mutual self-creativity. The *arhant* or *bodhisattva* is a person who is not determined by the facticity of existence but who, rather, is continuously creating himself out of the conditions that the ignorant take to be the given facticity of their existence. The ignorant grasp at the factors of existence as though they were already made elements of their being. The wise know that this is the mistake of substituting the terms of analysis for the living process.

Typical attempts to account for the identity and continuity of the immediate experiential process, of the lived body, seek the underlying causal factors on which the process depends. But causal understanding is inherently atomistic; it cuts up the holistic process, regarding it as constituted by distinct factors that can stand in a causal relation to each other such that *A* causes *B*, *B* causes *C*, and so on. But *A* can cause *B* only if *A* is other than *B*. This is the same kind of thinking that leads philosophers to say that experience proves that subjects and objects have independent existence—that there could be no experience unless there were an experiencer and something to be experienced separate from each other, whereas, in truth, it is precisely their mutual interdependence that makes experience possible.

By insisting on the interdependence of the processes of existence and on the unity and continuity of personal experience, Buddhists resist the tendency to see persons as two different kinds of being—either Self and body-mind, or mind and body—in some inexplicable relationship. Instead of being forced to see the body as somehow foreign to oneself, as an object-like being appended to or imprisoning the self, the Buddhist perspective facilitates seeing oneself as a creative, unified, and continuous process of becoming—as a lived-conscious-body capable of actualizing the potential represented by the so-called objective factors of existence.

Endnotes

1. *Upadesasahasri* I. 1.25, 105.
2. *Upadesasahasri* II. 1.1, 211.
3. *Upadesasahasri* I. 13.3, 132.
4. *Ibid.*, I. 12.16, 130.
5. *Upadesasahasri* II. 2. 50, 235.
6. *Ibid.*, II. 1.12,13, 215.
7. *Ibid.*, II. 1. 20, 216-17.
8. *Ibid.*, II. 1.21, 217.
9. *Upadesasahasri* I. 5.4, 114.
10. *Upadesasahasri* II. 1.19, 216.

Self as Locus/Substratum (adhikarana) of Psychological Continuities and Discontinuities

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It is a delicate tissue of metaphysical argument and received position that makes up the Nyaya view of an enduring self, as it is a complex mix of prejudice, or inheritance, and tight reasoning that makes up the positions of Nyaya’s adversaries, the Buddhist reductionist, the Carvaka materialist, Vedantic panpsychists of different stripes, the Samkhya dualist, and so on. Here, I shall focus on Nyaya arguments against the materialist who views psychological events and properties as belonging not to the self but to the body. The materialist is not, however, historically Nyaya’s principal rival, which is the Buddhist reductionist. The Buddhist views talk of a self as, at best, a “convenient fiction,” with causal relations among psychological happenings constituting personal identity. It is important to see the antimaterialist polemic within this wider context.

On Nyaya’s side, the most pertinent background is the set of considerations that feed the theory that properties have property-bearers, also thought of as their loci in a certain sense or substrata (*adhikarana*). Selves and physical things have in common being the bearers of properties of certain sorts, some cross-type, such as dispositional properties, and some type-specific, such as awareness and color. Awareness is exclusively a psychological property, and color belongs exclusively to physical things. Some properties are known by perception, others by inference. For instance, motions are properties that are perceived (“The ball is going up”), as are colors (“The lotus is blue”). Dispositional properties are inferred, a self’s capacities of memory, for example, and a physical thing’s elasticity. In the case of a blue lotus, we perceive both the blue and the flower. We also perceive the color as “nested in” the lotus, so to speak. On the other hand, we infer that dispositional properties have possessors.

Much of our everyday speech, *vyavahara*, reflects such a layered ontology of properties and property-bearers (*dharma* and *dharmin*) through the relations of adjective and noun. And, like Hume's maxim, "Save the appearances," the principle that *vyavahara* are not to be rejected without good reason is the operative rule across school. Consonantly, perceptions and certain cognitions of other types have as their objects property-bearers, or *qualificanda*, as qualified by properties, or qualifiers, and should be assumed veridical unless proved false. Our cognitive links to the world must be assumed true and reliable in general; otherwise, the distinction between illusion and veridical experience would make no sense, and our efforts would not be successful.

Similarly, that a pot or the like is something that endures through change is backed up by our common talk and experience to the effect that it is the same pot red now after baking that formerly was black. We also presuppose in everyday discourse our own sameness through change, and an analysis of remembering and recognition in particular establishes an unchanging self qualified by cognitions as properties or qualifiers.

The antimaterialist arguments that I shall present appear in the *Atmatattvaviveka*, "Discrimination of Truth (from Falsehood) concerning the Self," by Udayana, who is said to have lived around 1000.² The work employs, in fact, a mind-boggling array of weaponry in defense of an endurance theory amidst interscholastic war. I shall translate a dozen or so sentences.³

The immediate textual context is an argument centering on psychological discontinuity, as in remembering, or, more specifically, in recognizing something perceived previously. Memory and recognition are taken to show the inadequacy of the Buddhist reductionism, which is a stream theory. If, as the Buddhist proposes, self and personal identity reduce to a series of psychological events held together and ordered causally, the temporal gap between the original experience and the later remembering cannot be explained. What happens to the information during the period when there is no awareness of it?

Perhaps a more striking example of the problem is deep sleep, which the Buddhist is forced to view not as an absence of consciousness but rather as a period when the consciousness stream is composed of moments of self-consciousness without object-consciousness. It is the lack of object-consciousness that is supposed to account for our inability to remember the nightly occurrence. But Udayana brings out that all remembering presupposes a psychological gap, a period when the information gathered by the original experience is absent from consciousness. On the Nyaya view, it lies latent in the self as the content of a mental disposition.

Now, of course, not such discontinuity but psychological continuity, as presupposed in the recognition, "This is that Devadatta I saw yesterday," is Udayana's, and Nyaya's, main reason why a selfsame psychological locus, a self, has to be posited in the first place. Recognition shows, against the Buddhist or anyone, the truth of an enduring self: Devadatta, or anything else that endures, would not be recognized as the object encountered yesterday had the subject who does the recognizing not been the same. The sameness or difference of Devadatta from the one time to the next is not the point. This, the stock example, is perhaps confusing since with respect to Devadatta the recognition is evidence that he, too, has endured, like a pot through a change of color. But the point is that if I were not the same, I would not recognize Devadatta. If it were not I but some other who had experienced Devadatta—to imagine a change of subject—then only that

other and not I would remember him now, that is, genuinely remember. Both memory and perception are understood factively. You do not really "see" an illusory snake; you only think you see one. Similarly, genuine recognition of Devadatta presupposes that the recognizer is the same person who had the previous memory-forming Devadatta-experience. The Buddhist opponent, however, denies this explicitly, putting it all at issue.

So-called recognitive cognition does not show endurance but, rather, so the Buddhist claims, only psychological continuity between the earlier and later moments. Psychological continuity is to be explained causally without Nyaya's cumbersome and misleading posit of "self." A moment of Devadatta-experience is followed appropriately in your consciousness stream by a moment of Devadatta-remembering. The immediate context of Udayana's antimaterialist arguments in the passage I shall translate is a Buddhist attempt to explain recognition within the resources of a causal, reductionist theory. And it is here that Udayana points to the discontinuity implicit in all remembering.

A Buddhist opponent is imagined as trying to use the notion of subconscious vehicles of remembering, *samskara*, in much the same way as does the Nyaya philosopher and, by the way, practically all disputants on the classical scene. Commonly translated "memory-impression," sometimes "subliminal activator," a *samskara* is a dispositional property, like the disposition of water to freeze or boil at a certain temperature. The liquid in the glass may be said to possess the property, though its having it is not currently evident. Similarly, we do not continuously remember breakfast. The experience formed a memory-disposition, *samskara*, which, when triggered (Nyaya calls triggers, *udbodhaka*, "awakeners"), informs a current remembering with the information it stored.

The problem for the Buddhist is that *samskara* are not known immediately. Such dispositional properties help to explain memory but are themselves theoretical entities, not themselves the object of memory since they are not perceived. So, on the Buddhist theory, the loss of information to consciousness is problematic. For, Udayana argues, if *samskara* were of the nature of cognition—of the conscious moments within the stream—they would be—like all cognition on the Buddhist view—themselves immediately grasped, not needing to be inferred to be known. Cognition is, Buddhists say, self-luminous, self-manifesting. All knowledge is itself known. If, on the other hand, the Buddhist views *samskara* as objects belonging to another stream and not part of that which comprises a person's identity, then remembering itself, as well as the psychological events that depend on remembering,⁴ would not belong to the consciousness stream. For how would they enter? Remembering is not perceiving. But something has to carry the information about the object, besides the object itself, in the period from yesterday's experience and today's remembering. This is not another psychological stream since one person does not have another's memories. We remember only what we have experienced ourselves. Therefore, the resource of the psychologically dispositional property, the *samskara*, is unavailable, Udayana concludes, to the Buddhist theorist.

Next come Udayana's antimaterialist arguments. Let me render a short passage.

Opponent: Isn't it the case that this attribution (of recognition and the required *samskara*) is not proved (to hold of a selfsame self) since it is just the body that has consciousness?

Udayana: Don't think like that. For, [the body is not a locus of consciousness inasmuch as it is the locus of] being-a-body, being-of-determinate-shape (*murtatva*), being-material, possessing-color-and-the-like, and other such [properties not correlate with things that are conscious].

Furthermore, it is not the case that a precise (*paryavasita*) composite of material elements is the possessor of consciousness, since, the composite being different everyday, there would be no memory of something experienced at this or that time previously.

Moreover, the consciousness (exhibited in memory of something or other mediated by a particular bodily part, as a thorn in a toe) is not dependent on the precise bodily part. For, in that case it would not be possible to remember it given a severance of the hand or foot or whatever limb (whereas in fact an amputee can remember the previous experience).

And, if it were the body that has consciousness, then a (newborn) child would not be able for a first time to make effort [to acquire something desired or to avoid something disliked]. For, without desire or aversion, effort makes no sense. And without recognition (*pratisandhana*, “recognitive synthesis”) of how the desired is to be acquired, desire makes no sense. Inasmuch as (under the circumstances) there would be no memory [on the part of the newborn child] of the connection which has not been experienced in the current lifetime, such recognition (*pratisandhana*) would not happen (whereas in fact the newborn desiring milk reaches for the breast of its mother). And with respect to what has been experienced in another birth, the experiencer (presuming, *ex hypothesi*, that it is the physical body), having [been cremated and] turned to ashes, there would be no remembering by another (body, that is, still supposing counterfactually that it is the body that is the locus of consciousness). Furthermore, in this very lifetime the causal relation between (*samskara*-forming) experiences at the one end and effort (and action) at the other is known with certainty. And so, in the absence of the one (experience, etc.), there is absence of the other (desire, etc.)—a proposition that is easy to grasp. [However, there is desire, etc., and so there must have been experience, etc.] Otherwise, there would be untoward consequences (as pointed out).⁵

Udayana voices four arguments: (a) properties exhibited by physical things are not signs of things conscious but, rather, of things unconscious; (b) since the precise material composition of the body is all the time changing, it is not the rememberer of something the person experienced in the past; (c) an amputee remembers experiences mediated by the severed limb, and so the bodily part is not crucial to remembering; and (d) (a long bit of counterfactual reasoning) the causal link between effort and action on the one hand, and previous experience on the other, which is established through invariable positive and negative correlation, requires postulation of previous experience whose subject is clearly not the body in the case of, for example, a newborn child's effort to get milk. Let us take stock of the first three arguments rather quickly and then spend more time on the fourth. Note

that the passage comes near the end of Udayana's work and, for the most part, summarizes previous reasoning.

The first argument (a) can be construed as a mainstay of Cartesian as well as Nyaya dualism (though Nyaya's interactionism is quite a distinct metaphysics) in that the mental and the physical are seen to be marked by distinctive properties. Udayana's arguments are not, however, a priori. Rather, he has in mind a set of inductively based inferences, each of which can be formally reconstructed following a standard form.

- (1) A body does not possess consciousness
- (2) Because a body has determinate shape (alternatively, is material, etc.), and
- (3) Whatever has determinate shape does not possess consciousness (is material, etc.), like a pot, and
- (4) A body is an instance of the general rule (expressed in (3)).
- (5) Therefore, a body does not possess consciousness.

Other inferences can be constructed substituting the other “provers” mentioned in the passage, being-material, possessing-color, and so on.

It seems to me that each of the inferences is a good one, at least by the terms of the epistemology of inference used not only by Udayana and other Naiyayikas but by almost all disputants in classical philosophy. In brief, examples not bracketed by being at issue, namely, pots, rocks, and other material things, do not exhibit consciousness. Living bodies are at issue, and so do not count as counterexamples. Thus, the general rule formulated as (3) (“Whatever has determinate shape does not possess consciousness” etc.) is established by inductive generalization.

In our own contemporary mind-body debate, Udayana's contention has a lot in common with what is sometimes called the zombie objection to materialism. We can imagine a physical composite precisely identical to your body without any reason whatsoever, on the materialist hypothesis, for thinking it conscious. Presumably, however, you are conscious. Correlations run the other way. There is no example of a non-living body that is conscious. It is not that there could not be but, rather, that there is none.

The second argument (b) also seems to me to be a good one. Psychological continuity through bodily change may not be as dramatic in Udayana's formulation as in the *Star-Trek*-transporter-like thought-experiments explored by Bernard Williams, Derek Parfit, and others recently, but the argument is no less cogent. Classical Indian philosophers were well aware that the precise composition of the body is never the same. Memory, however, requires sameness of subject from the time of an original experience of the thing to be remembered and the remembering. Therefore, the subject is not the body as a precise composite of material elements.

The third argument (c) is more difficult to evaluate. Udayana and Nyaya recognize the necessity of having a toe to have an experience of a pain in the toe caused by a thorn (in the stock example). Or, I should say, according to Nyaya, a toe is necessary to have a veridical experience of a thorn in the toe, and one would have to have had a toe in order to have a correct remembering. Nyaya surely recognizes physical conditions governing perception. The school's dualism is an interactionism like Hume's, with no prejudice about the sorts of entity that can stand in causal relation. Causal relationship is discovered by correlation, positive and negative, between occurrences of things *F* and *G*.⁶ Consciousness is not intrinsic to the self. It arises under certain conditions. Different types

of cognition depend on different conditions, on different causal factors, physical and mental. A self as substratum (*adhikarana*), though necessary to any and all knowledge and mental occurrence, is never itself sufficient. The same goes for material conditions, bodily states. Genuine perception of a thorn, for example, through the organ of touch requires physical contact between the thorn and a bodily part, a left toe, for instance. No one with a severed left foot would feel (factively) the thorn and its prick in a left-foot digit. But having the toe currently is not necessary to a remembering of the incident and the thorn. So much is clear and on target. The question is its significance, both in Udayana's mind and for us.

An amputee's false proprioceptive sense of the leg that is absent, which is another case of the type, shows only that consciousness that phenomenologically seems located in a particular bodily part does not depend on the existence of that part. It does not show that consciousness is not dependent on the brain. I feel the thorn by the toe, but even if the toe is gone I can re-feel, so to say, what seems to be a toe prick. But I think a Naiyayika would agree with the modern materialist that consciousness is dependent on the brain, that is, sidelining, to make the point, Nyaya's theology. Having a brain is clearly a condition of human consciousness. Cut off a head and the person dies. The particular stream of cognition forming Devadatta's mental life ends with the death of Devadatta. But note that Devadatta the person is a composite of a self and a body and, indeed, a life, according to Nyaya. A person, by definition, has temporal spread delimited by the life of the body, whereas a self is not in this way delimited. The question of survival concerns the nature of the continuity, from the Nyaya point of view, and the locus, whether in the body or the self, of *samskara*, the "subliminal activators" that carry the information triggered in remembering (and implicit in a range of psychological phenomena including the exercise of skills and acquired capacities).

This brings us to the fourth argument (d), which is the stock argument throughout classical philosophy for reincarnation. Effort, *pravrtti*, is analyzed by Nyaya philosophers, as by other classical theorists, as intentional. Effort prompts voluntary action, which is behavior guided by an idea of a goal or purpose. Desire is also analyzed as intentional, having a directedness toward an object conceived under a certain predicate, for example, something known as a ripe mango (and not the same thing known, e.g., as a physical thing of determinate size). Actually, to say that Nyaya philosophers analyze effort and desire in this manner is perhaps a little uncharitable since there are easily discernible correlations, which are commonly cited, between (a) action and (b) effort, known introspectively, with respect to ourselves, as well as between (b) effort and (c) desire—we normally do not make effort and action except to realize a desire. Desires correlate with (d) cognitions. That is, desires depend on what we know about things, especially our own experiences of pleasure and pain as brought about by previous encounters. So, typically, an action has as one of its necessary conditions previous experience.

Now, in the case of a newborn child, its reaching for its mother's breast (or whatever first-time action) is behavior that marks it, like you and me, as an agent. The action, the reaching, is goal-directed. It flows from effort on the child's part motivated by desire to be fed. The desire, which is not itself conscious nor necessarily an object of consciousness (though desires can be introspected), depends nevertheless on previous experience and on certain *samskara* having been formed. This correlation is easy to grasp. We do not desire what we have no idea of—I might say to make the point plausible against the modern prejudice to view instinct as

originating without experience. So, on Udayana's suppositions, the baby's action presupposes desire and the desire previous experience. The *samskara* formed by the previous experience do not, however, belong to the baby's body since the child is only moments out of the womb, and any body had by the child's self in a previous lifetime would have been turned to ashes assuming the standard ceremonies. The *samskara* that inform the newborn's desire, effort, and action therefore rest in the self, which is a locus or substratum of psychological properties enduring through bodily death, according to Nyaya.

Note again that a self is not necessarily conscious. It is a substance that lies unconscious in deep sleep, when its bodily instruments of cognition are not functioning and, presumably, would similarly have no consciousness between incarnations. It carries desires and *samskara* independently of the body, however, as qualificandum in relation to which desires, etc., are qualifiers. The child's action shows that there is a self distinct from the body and that it is in that *adhikarana*, not the body, where the *samskara* lie. In sum, the long bit of counterfactual reasoning is a reductio. On the supposition that the self is the body, there follows the unwanted consequence that a child would be unable to act.

Now we might think that dispositions of the physico-psychological type—given a particular type of physical stimulus, a certain kind of mental event occurs—can, contra Udayana, qualify physical things, such as the brain, and this is where the error lies in the Nyaya theory. The science of genetics shows that things physical carry dispositions to goal-directed behavior across lifetimes, like the suckling disposition of a newborn child. However, if there is indeed a mistake in the Nyaya picture, I think it is not quite so simple to detect. From the Nyaya point of view, behavioral patterns carried by genes would not result in action unless endorsed by a self. Material determinations are necessary, though not sufficient, conditions with respect to actions.

The dispositional properties recognized by Nyaya are of several types. To repeat, dispositions, *samskara*, are latent properties, lawful tendencies for something to change under certain circumstances, as captured by conditional statements. Simplifying a bit the Nyaya philosophy of mind (by ignoring the complication of *manas*, a separate substance, a kind of inner sense or nonmaterial organ of aesthetic synthesis), we may say that Nyaya finds dispositions of four broad types.

1. Physico-physical dispositions, e.g., elasticity, e.g., of a rubber band. (A rubber band is a physical thing both before and after being stretched.)
2. Physico-psychological dispositions, e.g., perceptual capacity, e.g., to perceive the cat that jumps into your lap. (The sense organs triggered by connection with a physical object have the ability to generate, for example, the psychological event of awareness of the cat.⁷)
3. Psycho-psychological dispositions, e.g., inferential capacity, e.g., from sight of smoke on the mountain to the occurrent knowledge that there is fire over there. (The self carries the disposition to infer fire from detection of smoke, a disposition acquired by "wide experience" of the connection between smoke and fire.)
4. Psycho-physical dispositions, e.g., to effort and action, e.g., from wanting the mango on the table to the effort and action to pick it up. (The self is the locus of a, let us say, desiderous disposition—*cikirsa* in Sanskrit, "desire to do"—to such effort and action on the body's part.)

We know, introspectively, by attending to the psychological events that are our own, that desires correlate with previous experiences. Desires are psychological properties whose generation involves things physical, likewise their being triggered, but which themselves embed dispositions of type four, the psycho-physical kind of disposition (since desires motivate action), or, possibly, type three, the psycho-psychological disposition (inasmuch as, on Udayana's view, desires are necessary to effort, which is the psychological property responsible for movement of bodily parts). Psycho-psychological dispositions lie in a self—this has the advantage of simplicity (*laghavatva*, literally, “[theoretic] lightness”)—and it would seem that so, too, do psycho-physical dispositions. After all, desire and the like are available to introspection. By extrapolation, we know that all effort and action is directed to a goal, for example, to get what we want (or avoid that for which we feel aversion). The best explanation of the action we see on the part of the newborn is to extend this view of ourselves. Furthermore, how the newborn becomes an agent remains mysterious on the materialist theory. The body of the newborn has no store of previous experience and, thus, no desire, effort, or action within the current life. Therefore, the body is not the locus of such a psychological property.

Endnotes

1. Professor Kisor Chakrabarti, the official commentator at the APA meeting, is responsible for several improvements in this revised version. To him go my sincere appreciation and thanks.
2. Udayana's *Atmatattvaviveka*, edited by Vindhyesvariprasada Dvivedhin and Lakshmana Sastri Dravida (Calcutta: Asiatic Society: 1986), published along with a Sanskrit commentary by Sankara Misra (c. 1425). Udayana's text has been translated by N. S. Dravid together with a (sometimes too brief) English commentary: *Atmatattvaviveka of Udayanacarya* (Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1995). Some portions, about a tenth of the whole, have been translated by Kisor Chakrabarti, *Classical Indian Philosophy of Mind* (Albany: State University of New York Press: 1999), with fuller explanations.
3. The translation is my own, which I have checked against David's. Chakrabarti, op. cit., presents some three hundred pages of tightly reconstructed argument centering on Nyaya's view of the self. His book is, however, organized differently than Udayana's, discussing Western views as much as those of Nyaya's historical opponents. Chakrabarti's translations end, unfortunately, before the passage in the *Atmatattvaviveka* that I shall render, but he discusses most of the arguments at various places.
4. Udayana gives the counterexample of pleasure arising from holding all of a dancer's movements together in mind. The pleasure depends upon a recollective synthesis, *pratisandhana*.
5. The text is taken from Udayana's *Atmatattvaviveka*, op. cit., pp. 808-09:
na ca a-siddham idam visesanam dehasya eva cetanatvat | ma evam | dehatva-murtatva-bhutatva-rupa-adimattva-adibhyah | na ca bhutanam samudaye paryavasite caitanyam, pratidinam tasya anyatve purva-purva-divasa-anubhutasya a-smarana-prasangat | na api pratyeka-paryavasitam | kara-carana-ady-avayava-vislese tad-anubhutasya smarana-a-yogat | dehasya cetanatve balasya prathamam a-prvrtti-prasangac ca, iccha-dvesav

antarena prayatna-an-upapatteh | ista-abhyupayata-pratisandhanam vina ca iccha-an-upapatteh | iha janmany an-anubhutasya pratibandhasya a-smrtau pratisandhana-a-yogat, janma-antara-anubhute ca anubhavitari bhasmasatbhute 'nyena smarana-a-yogat, anubhava-adinam pravrty-antanam karya-karana-bhavasya iha eva janmani niscitatvat, tatha ca tad-a-bhave tad-a-bhavasya sulabhatvat | anyatha tv atiprasangat |

For problematic expressions, I follow the commentary by Sankara Misra, pp. 809-10.

6. The anti-Buddhist argument centering on psychological discontinuity rehearsed here as the immediate context for Udayana's antimaterialist arguments is actually separated from them in the text by a couple of sentences. These are about the epistemology of causal claims. Invariable correlation is the way, and the only way, that a causal relationship is apprehended.
7. Technically, only “indeterminate perception,” *nirvikalpaka pratyaksa*, is the end result of the triggering of a person's physico-psychological dispositions since “determinate cognition,” *savikalpaka pratyaksa*, is fed its “predication content” (*prakara*, the “way” something appears) by an immediately prior indeterminate perception. At least this is the view of the New Nyaya school. The earliest commentators on the *Nyayasutra* (until Vacaspati, c. 950) do not distinguish the two types of perception.

How to Teach Zen in a College Classroom

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Legend has it that the Buddha simply raised a flower when he was asked a question, “What is truth?” The entire assemblage of his followers that gathered to listen was completely puzzled at his response. Only one of the Buddha's disciples understood the meaning of his silence and broke into a smile. This incident supposedly became the origin of the Zen tradition, the teaching of wordless transmission of truth.

It is exciting, but undoubtedly challenging, to try to convey the meaning of this “silent” teaching in a college classroom where we are expected to talk. Some Buddhists would even argue that it is not a coherent idea to verbally explain the teachings of Zen when the Zen tradition denies the usefulness of any conceptual approach to truth. But I wanted to find a way for this allegedly impossible job. After all, the Buddha used many “skillful means” of a great variety wherever and whenever he thought they could benefit different groups of people. The incoherent idea of verbal teaching of the silent truth may not be incoherent at all if it could help best “enlighten” my Western students who have virtually no knowledge of Buddhism. I was not going to miss any opportunity to use this skillful means. Seven years ago, I took up this challenge just the way only our reckless youths would prefer. I chose a story of Zen for the topic of my sample class when I was interviewed for a professorship to teach analytic metaphysics, philosophy of mind, and contemporary epistemology. I could not expect to have any good number of students or professors in the audience who were familiar with Buddhism, especially when they were going to observe and evaluate the teaching performance of a candidate whose job descriptions included nothing but hardcore analytic philosophy

courses. My challenge was to use verbally skillful means to teach the Western audience the wordless truth of Zen and help them get enlightened in fifty minutes. Well, it seems my verbal teaching of nonverbal truth was effective in some way—I got a job offer from the professors in the audience (but, of course, I am not sure whether they offered me a job because my skillful means enlightened them), took it, and am still teaching at the same college. It was a very interesting and exciting experience. Naturally, I wish to have a chance to share this experience with other philosophers who teach, or want to teach, Zen in their college classes. Let me ask you not to be surprised how I taught the sample class. The topic I gave at the beginning of the class was: Why is the Buddha a piece of dogshit?

I taught the class as follows. Once upon a time, in ancient Korea, there was a renowned Zen monk. One day his student asked, “Master, what is the Buddha?” The monk answered, “Dogshit!” This dialogue is quite puzzling on its surface. Is the Buddha a piece of dogshit? The master and his student were both Buddhist monks, and it is hard to imagine that the famous monk was teaching some kind of blasphemy to his student. But the master’s answer apparently implied that the Buddha was a piece of dogshit. The Zen tradition is full of puzzling but interesting stories of this sort, and Buddhists have learned the teachings of Zen with a lot of jokes, fun, and laughter. But let me tell you: there is absolutely no blasphemy involved anywhere in these stories. When someone points to the moon with a finger, you do not want to see the finger itself; you should look at the moon to which the finger is pointing. Likewise, do not try to understand the meaning of these Zen stories by merely analyzing the syntax and semantics of sentences. I can assure you that, for instance, the master’s answer can never be truly understood by analyzing the meaning of the word “dogshit.” In other words, we need to try to go see what our dialogue points to, not the dialogue itself. The purpose of this class is to help you make sense of this puzzling dialogue that does not seem to make any sense on its surface structure.

Some brief introduction to the basic principles of Buddhism is necessary in order to understand the gist of the Zen teaching. Before getting into the philosophical teachings of Buddhism, I ask students if they know anything about Buddhism, I mean, *anything*. There is not much response—they talk about Dalai Lama, the fat happy Buddha (but he is, in fact, not a Buddha!), meditation, etc. I ask again if there is anyone who knows the meaning of the word “the Buddha.” This time, there is no answer, just silence. Then I give the answer myself. “The Buddha” means “the Enlightened One.” This is the etymologically correct answer. But it is not a philosophically good answer because we need to ask further what it is that the Buddha was awakened to. What is it that the Buddha was enlightened of? It is the truth about the world and life (or the worlds and lives, if you believe in transmigration). (1) This world and our lives in it are fundamentally unsatisfactory, (2) the cause of this unhappiness is our excessive attachment, but (3) we can avoid this unsatisfactoriness by eliminating its cause, which is our attachment, and (4) there is a way to eliminate the attachment. This is the famous noble fourfold truth that the Buddha was enlightened of. This is the most basic teaching of all schools in Buddhism, and, thus, it deserves more of our attention, although it is not directly related to the characteristic teachings of the Zen tradition.

The first teaching of the noble fourfold truth is that the world and our lives are fundamentally flawed. Many important aspects of our lives are marked with painful experiences. Births are obviously traumatic experiences to both mothers and babies. Youth is short and we soon grow old. Aging comes

with weakness and sickness. And we eventually die. No one can escape any of these unsatisfactory phases of life. Let me tell you of another couple of unsatisfactory stories that happen in everybody’s life. We cannot live with those who we love most—our loved ones often have to live far away from us, and they leave us behind for good when they die. This is very unsatisfactory. The other side of the same coin is that we have to live together with those who we dislike most. Almost everyone has bad experiences with roommates, so one can easily understand what this aspect of life is like. Imagine how those Jews must have felt when they had to live with Hitler and his followers in Nazi Germany. I suppose you do not need any more examples. But the point of this teaching is not to espouse any pessimistic point of view of the world and life. To the contrary, it is to courageously admit the unsatisfactory aspects of life so that we can find out a better way to improve it. So the Buddha did not stop his teaching when he recognized the unsatisfactoriness of our lives. He further analyzed its cause and concluded that it is our attachment that causes all our sufferings. This is the second teaching of the noble fourfold truth. What does it mean to say that attachment is the origin of our unhappiness? Perhaps the following formula, however crude it may be, can serve as a principle of happiness and help explain the problem of attachment: Happiness = satisfaction / desire (attachment). Happiness increases when desires are satisfied more or better. Given the same amount of desires, the increase of satisfaction results in the increase of happiness. If it is for some reason impossible to increase satisfaction, or if the satisfaction has to decrease, one may try not to increase desires, or, better, one may want to decrease them in order to remain at least as happy as before. The Buddha teaches that it is always a good idea to try to decrease any unnecessary or excessive desires for one’s happiness because, given very limited supplies of material goods and services available in this world, it is hard to increase the satisfaction of our ever-growing desires. Further, there are some desires that you can never satisfy—for instance, desires to avoid aging, sickness, and death. For your peace of mind, you need to learn not to have those desires. Suppose that one reduces his or her desires much, so much so as to have the amount of desires approach zero. According to our formula, the amount of happiness will approach infinity. No wonder the Buddha, who has completely eliminated all the attachments, always smiles with blissful joy. The third teaching of the noble fourfold truth is that we can avoid the unsatisfactoriness of our lives by eliminating its cause, that is, by eliminating attachment. I have already explained this third teaching. The fourth teaching is that there is a way to eliminate attachment: Follow the noble eightfold path. The gist of this teaching is one should do everything right, and I do not have time to explain all the eight right things to do. Further, I believe that, from a philosophical point of view, what interests us more is not what it is that is right but what *right* itself is. But the teaching of the noble eightfold path does not address the latter issue.

All the schools of Buddhism accept the noble fourfold truth. It was the Buddha’s very first sermon given right after his enlightenment. Other teachings of the Buddha, which are more closely related to the philosophical foundations of the Zen tradition, include the doctrines of impermanence and interdependent arising (or dependent origination). The teaching of impermanence may be compared to Heraclitus’s view of the world. Nothing remains the same over time, and everything changes constantly. Heraclitus’s examples will illustrate this point clearly. For instance, can we step in the same river twice? No, the river is made of water, the water flows constantly, we cannot step in the same water twice, so it is impossible to step in the same river twice. Although we

use the same name, say, “The Mississippi,” to refer to a river, there is no such river that remains the same over any duration of time. No material objects stay the same because their constituent particles are constantly moving around, going away and coming in all the time. Our minds also never stay the same because different beliefs and thoughts are always coming and going in our minds. In Buddhism, there is not a thing that lasts over any time period. So, it is only a result of ignorance to be attached to anything in this world as if that thing would last permanently for us. The doctrine of impermanence teaches how futile our attachment is.

You may like to know why I regard the teaching of impermanence as a doctrine, not as a truth *tout court*. Well, it is because I think there may be good objections and counterexamples to this teaching. For instance, should we also regard the “truth” of impermanence itself as impermanent, thereby nullifying the importance of this teaching? Most Buddhists accept the doctrine of impermanence as a permanent truth, but this results in a serious logical problem—a paradox. Philosophers’ stock examples of necessary truth, such as “The sum of internal angles of a triangle is 180 degrees,” “Water is H₂O,” and “Gold is the element with atomic number 79,” may also make good candidates of counterexamples. These truths do not seem to be impermanent; they never change. What is philosophically more troubling than the logical problem and counterexamples is that we can take the teaching of impermanence only as one of many possible ways to view the world and life. The material constituents of the city of Boston have constantly changed ever since it was named Boston several hundred years ago. But the proper name “Boston” has always designated the same city, and one may think that this evidence is good enough to make us believe that there is something permanent that has lasted with no change over hundreds of years. Another good example is our personal identity. It is said that all the molecules of a human body are completely replaced by other molecules every seven years or so. But Dave is still the same Dave after seven years, and Sarah is always the same person Sarah. Dave and Sarah may come to have very different beliefs and feelings every several years or so, but they will still be the same Dave and Sarah. This is a very strong intuition about our personal identity, and our belief system about persons crucially hinges on it. All in all, I do not really think that the Buddhist doctrine of impermanence can change much of our belief system that depends on different intuitions. Other competing worldviews than the doctrine of impermanence may be more appealing to us when we try to understand the world and life. So, it is at the moment good enough if we just remember that the Buddhists choose the doctrine of impermanence for their worldview.

More fascinating, and more closely related to the Zen tradition, is the doctrine of interdependent arising: everything arises interdependently of everything else. This doctrine was originally about the teaching of causal relation: nothing in this universe can escape the causal network; there is not a thing/event that does not have a cause, and it will itself become a cause of other thing(s)/event(s). Well, there is nothing surprising or fascinating about this teaching of causal relation. However, the doctrine of interdependent arising came to get more extended and quite thoroughly metaphysical interpretations among the Buddhist schools in Central and Northeast Asia. Let me give you an example and explain the nature of these new interpretations. It is now 11 AM in Minnesota. It’s then 1 PM in Beijing, China. Do you believe that there is at least one Chinese man who is at the moment eating steamed dumplings on the other side of the world? It is pretty late at night in China, but considering the size of their

population, you believe that there must be at least one hungry Chinese man eating steamed dumplings. I am related to this man in such a way that I have the property of having this Chinese man eating steamed dumplings at this moment. Suppose this man suddenly chokes on the dumplings and meets an untimely death. Then, I come to lose one of my properties that I have this unfortunate Chinese man on the other side of the world. I am totally unaware of the existence of this man, but I am quite related to this person in the way I just described. If we include this kind of relations in the relations we have with other things in the world, though they are obviously not causal relations, it is clear that everything is arising interdependently with everything else. In light of this view, the following line of a famous poem in the Zen tradition may be easily understood: “A drop of morning dew on the tip of a grass blade contains the whole universe”—Of course it does because everything penetrates into everything else in the universe!

But I think the doctrine of interdependent arising also faces powerful objections. If it is understood as a teaching of causal relation, the problem of free will becomes a difficult issue because it would be quite puzzling if our will to get enlightened should necessarily be determined by causal relations, not by our free choice. Some philosophers will also find it objectionable if the doctrine should include noncausal relations as well because those noncausal relations are too abstract to be *real* relations that can make any *real* changes in the world. However, it is again good enough for our purpose if we just note that the Buddhists in the Zen tradition choose to include all those possible relations in their doctrine of interdependent arising.

The doctrine of interdependent arising constitutes the famous teaching of Emptiness (or Void). Everything changes constantly, and nothing arises independently. In other words, everything is empty of independent existence (or intrinsic essence). When everything arises interdependently of everything else, nothing can have its own intrinsic essence and exist on its own. This emptiness is the very mode of existence of things that we have known of in this universe all along. This table in front of you, for instance, is not really something in the sense that it exists independently of other things. It does not have its own intrinsic essence that lasts permanently. So, it is not really something. But it is not nothing either because it does arise interdependently of everything else. In other words, this table is not something, but it is not nothing either. It exists well, mysteriously, somewhere between absolute existence and nonexistence. This mode of existence was named Emptiness; but later on, as time passed by, since Emptiness is the very mode of existence of everything, the name came to be used to refer to the reality of all things. These Buddhists see Emptiness in everything that exists in the universe. This Emptiness is thought to reveal the nature of existence; to grasp the very nature of reality is the ultimate goal of the Buddha’s teachings; the Buddha became the Buddha because he realized the truth of Emptiness in his meditation; so Emptiness is the very essence of the Buddha. In other words, the Buddha is nothing but Emptiness!

I bet many of you find lots of logical problems in these unsophisticated inferences. Further, it is an outright contradiction to claim that the essence of the Buddha is Emptiness when the doctrine of interdependent arising, which resulted in the teaching of Emptiness, denies any intrinsic essence of anything that includes the Buddha himself. But it is also a historical fact that there have been a good number of Buddhist schools that have accepted these unfortunate inferences and claimed that everything in the world is Emptiness, which is the very essence of the Buddha, and,

thus, everything is already a Buddha, or at least has the Buddha-Nature. These Buddhist schools saw the Buddha in everything they saw; so, for them, even a piece of dogshit contained the Buddha-Nature! Well, this is one possible way to interpret the puzzling dialogue I introduced at the beginning of this class: “Master, what is the Buddha?” “You can see the Buddha present even in such a low, insentient thing as a piece of dogshit!” There have been Buddhist schools whose views are very much consistent with this rather embarrassing interpretation. Some Buddhists actually took this kind of interpretation quite seriously. But it is hard for me to accept this interpretation because (1) it is consistent only with the views based on the fallacious inferences I described above, (2) it erroneously presupposes that the Buddha has an intrinsic essence that his teaching of interdependent arising denies, and (3) this is not the orthodox interpretation of the Zen tradition, which I think is more preferable. Let me now turn to the Zen tradition and try to help you understand the puzzling dialogue better.

In the Zen tradition as well, Buddhists see Emptiness in everything at every instant. The interdependent arising is the very mode of existence; so everything, including the Buddha, is Emptiness. The understanding of the nature of Emptiness is the key to understanding the nature of enlightened beings like the Buddha and bodhisattvas. But you do not have to meet and listen to the Buddha or bodhisattvas in order to grasp and comprehend the nature of Emptiness because Emptiness is everywhere all the time. You can use anything at any instant as an instrument for your enlightenment. You can enjoy the bliss of nirvana while simply breathing in and breathing out as long as you realize that the breathing is itself Emptiness, eating a good breakfast is to actualize the Buddha-Nature, a cup of tea is full of the Buddhas once you only realize it, you can be struck by the utmost beauty of the full moon and get immediately enlightened, and sitting meditation effectively helps experience enlightenment. All this teaching of the Zen tradition may be summarized in the following famous phrase: Samsara (the secular world of transmigration) is nirvana (the state of being enlightened), with “is” in the sense of “is identical with.” The ultimate Emptiness is here and now; so the enlightenment is also here and now, everywhere and all-embracing. What is culturally fascinating about this view of Emptiness is that, combined with the teachings of Taoism, the Zen tradition greatly espoused the love of nature among Northeast Asians. How can anyone not love and cherish nature when every corner of it is full of the Buddhas? There are only a handful of Asians living in New England, but if you go see the beautiful autumn foliage of the White Mountains in New Hampshire, you will come to realize that virtually half of all the tourists are Northeast Asians—Chinese and Koreans cannot miss the opportunity to appreciate the beauty of nature! There would have been much fewer environment issues if the Zen tradition had rooted in the other parts of the world as well.

But we need to be careful here. Most schools in the Zen tradition do not go and claim that even such a low entity as a piece of dogshit is a Buddha just because the mode of its existence also reveals the truth of Emptiness. It is only sentient and intelligent beings that can be enlightened and become Buddhas; all the other insentient things may be used as instruments for enlightenment, but they are not themselves Buddhas. I think this is the right view Buddhists should accept if they do not wish to oppose our commonsense with their exotic metaphysics. A piece of dogshit must not be a Buddha. In order to make sense of the dialogue I introduced above, we need to find a different interpretation.

The Zen tradition has created so many interesting but apparently puzzling stories for instructional purposes. Let me

give you another example. A master asked a group of students, “There is a reflection of the moon on the surface of the water. Is that water or the moon?” A student answered, “Last night I saw the North Star in the southern sky.” The master responded, “Excellent!” We all know that it is impossible to see the North Star in the southern sky. Then why did the Master like the answer? This is very puzzling, and the master’s question was designed to provoke intensive research on the part of students. Let me call these puzzling questions *Zen riddles*. Students are expected to struggle much to solve these riddles—until they come to realize that there is no solution!

It is by now well known that the Zen tradition emphasizes the importance of sitting meditation where you try to have all your thoughts fall off from your mind. It is relatively easier to concentrate on a particular thought that you have in your mind than to have no thought at all. Just try not to think about anything even for one moment. You will find it very difficult to empty your mind—but you need to practice this meditation in order to grasp and experience the truth, which is nothing other than Emptiness itself. The doctrine of interdependent arising teaches us that everything penetrates into, arises only interdependently from, everything else. Since everything is necessarily interconnected to everything else, any attempt to differentiate a thing (or a group of things) from every other thing inevitably goes against the doctrine of interdependent arising. That attempt clouds the true nature of reality from our vision and, thus, hinders us from grasping and comprehending the truth itself. Now we are going to see why the Zen tradition focuses so much on the value of silence. Language uses concepts, and conceptualization is always differentiation, and differentiation blocks us from the true nature of reality because it attempts to sever the relation of the necessarily interconnected things of the world. Let me give you an example to explain this point. Suppose you entertain a concept of *human* in your mind. Is there anything that you are differentiating from humans with your concept of human? Yes, you are differentiating from humans everything else that is not human. This way, using any concept in your thought necessarily results in the division of the whole world that cannot be divided, which makes us unable to see the true nature of reality and, thus, makes our enlightenment impossible. This is why silence is so much valued in the Zen tradition: not just silence of not talking but also complete pause of your thoughts in your mind.

The truth cannot be verbally expressed because any use of language/concept involves differentiation, and differentiation goes against the interdependent arising that is the very mode of existence. Now we can understand why the Buddha simply raised a flower when he was asked the question, “What is truth?” Any verbal answer would have inevitably distorted the nature of truth that cannot be verbally expressed. The Buddha could have also kept silent gently smiling, or he could have said, “Have a cup of tea,” “Birds are singing beautifully,” etc., all of which are completely unrelated to the given question. Another Zen riddle we discussed above may also be understood in the same light. “There is a reflection of the moon on the surface of the water. Is that water or the moon?” This question itself is nonsensical. The only good answer to nonsense is more nonsense. So, the student answered, “Last night I saw the North Star in the southern sky.” The master, of course, responded positively. Shall we now turn to the very first puzzling dialogue we introduced at the beginning of this class? In the Zen tradition, “What is the Buddha?” is itself a misleading question. In Buddhism, the Buddha is often another name of truth, but the question requires a verbal answer of what truth is when the truth cannot be verbally expressed. The master’s answer “Dogshit!” actually

means “Nonsense!” (Westerners would have used “Bullshit!” to mean nonsense, but Koreans were not much familiar with the shit of bulls because they were not cattle-raising people, although they had dogs in their neighborhood. Koreans would say, “The guy is dog-barking” when Westerners want to say, “The guy is bullshitting.”) The Zen tradition is full of jokes and humor—foul language and even beatings are sometimes allowed for instructional purposes. Wouldn’t it be exciting to have a lot of fun and get enlightened?

The Zen tradition takes the value of nonattachment quite seriously. For instance, although the doctrine of interdependent arising is of paramount importance, one should not be attached even to the teaching of this doctrine. So, although everything is empty of intrinsic essence, the teaching that everything is Emptiness is itself also empty of intrinsic essence. But that that everything is Emptiness is Emptiness is also empty of intrinsic essence. ...that that that everything is Emptiness is Emptiness is Emptiness is in its turn also empty of intrinsic essence.... And this constant process of infinite negation is the very state of nirvana! Another example of Zen riddle may also show how the Zen tradition approaches the teachings of Emptiness and nonattachment. “In order to get enlightened, kill your master and the Buddha!” Perhaps this is the most puzzling riddle one can encounter in Buddhism. But we can now make good sense of it. One should not be attached even to the teachings of his/her master and the Buddha, especially when the teachings were given in the form of verbal expressions, because the Buddha, the master, and their teachings themselves are also empty of intrinsic essence.

I have tried for fifty minutes to convey the teachings of this tradition of the wordless transmission of truth. Those who have understood my lecture must now realize that everything I said in this class is empty of intrinsic essence. Please do not be attached to anything I said if you are going to get enlightened.