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Chapter 1

Buddha's "The Four Noble Truths"



Yogi, detail from *The Land of the Veda*

About the author...

In his *Buddha, The Word*,¹ Paul Carus (1852-1919) compiled some of the fundamental teachings of the Buddhist Canon. The selection here, "The Four Noble Truths," is briefly abridged and composes an excellent introduction to Buddhist thought. At the World Parliament of Religions in 1893, Carus became deeply influenced by Eastern philosophies and published a number of works seeking to bridge Western and Eastern thought.

1. Paul Carus. *Buddha, The Word*. 1915.

About the book...

After his enlightenment, Buddha elucidated the "Four Noble Truths" in his first instruction to his disciples; briefly stated, these truths explain how (1) all who live suffer, (2) suffering is a result of self, (3) suffering can be avoided, and (4) suffering can be extinguished by the "Eightfold Path." The reading selection after this one continues Carus' compilation of Buddha's teaching with the "Eightfold Path."

From the reading...

"Inconceivable is the beginning of this *Samsara*; not to be discovered is any first beginning of beings, who, obstructed by ignorance, and ensnared by craving, are hurrying and hastening through this round of rebirths."

Ideas of Interest from "The Four Noble Truths"

1. Describe in general terms the Four Noble Truths.
2. Name and describe the groups of consciousness. Is the Consciousness Group, itself, one of the groups of consciousness or is it dependent upon the other groups? Explain.
3. If the self or Ego-entity is not real, then how does the illusion of it arise and of what kind of phenomena is it composed? Explain Buddha's comparison of the self to an ocean wave.
4. What are the Three Warnings? Of what is it that they warn?
5. What is *Samsara* and how is it related to the First Noble Truth? Describe "the Wheel of Existence."
6. Name and describe the kinds of craving that form the origin of suffering? What is the cause of evil choices and actions?
7. Describe how one escapes from the "Wheel of Existence." How is suffering to be overcome?

8. What exactly is being sought in Buddhism? Is awakening or realization just annihilation of the self? What, then, is *Nirvana*? Can one experience *Nirvana* while living?

The Reading Selection from "The Four Noble Truths"

[Introduction]

Thus has it been said by the Buddha, the Enlightened One: It is through not understanding, not realizing four things, that I, Disciples, as well as you, had to wander so long through this round of rebirths. And what are these four things? They are the Noble Truth of Suffering, the Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering, the Noble Truth of the Extinction of Suffering, the Noble Truth of the Path that leads to the Extinction of Suffering.

As long as the absolutely true knowledge and insight as regards these Four Noble Truths was not quite clear in me, so long was I not sure, whether I had won that supreme Enlightenment which is unsurpassed in all the world with its heavenly beings, evil spirits and gods, amongst all the hosts of ascetics and priests, heavenly beings and men. But as soon as the absolutely true knowledge and insight as regards these Four Noble Truths had become perfectly clear in me, there arose in me the assurance that I had won that supreme Enlightenment unsurpassed.

From the reading...

And did the thought never come to you that also you are subject to death, that also you cannot escape it?

And I discovered that profound truth, so difficult to perceive, difficult to understand, tranquilizing and sublime, which is not to be gained by mere reasoning, and is visible only to the wise.

The world, however, is given to pleasure, delighted with pleasure, enchanted with pleasure. Verily, such beings will hardly understand the law of conditionality, the Dependent Origination of every thing; incomprehensible to them will also be the end of all formations, the forsaking of every substratum of rebirth, the fading away of craving; detachment, extinction, *Nirvana*.

Yet there are beings whose eyes are only a little covered with dust: they will understand the truth.

First Truth: The Noble Truth of Suffering

What, now, is the Noble Truth of Suffering?

Birth is suffering; Decay is suffering; Death is suffering; Sorrow, Lamentation, Pain, Grief, and Despair, are suffering; not to get what one desires, is suffering; in short: the Five Groups of Existence are suffering.

What, now, is Birth? The birth of beings belonging to this or that order of beings, their being born, their conception and springing into existence, the manifestation of the groups of existence, the arising of sense activity—this is called Birth.

And what is Decay? The decay of beings belonging to this or that order of beings; their getting aged, frail, grey, and wrinkled; the failing of their vital force, the wearing out of the senses—this is called Decay.

And what is Death? The parting and vanishing of beings out of this or that order of beings, their destruction, disappearance, death, the completion of their life-period, dissolution of the groups of existence, the discarding of the body—this is called Death.

And what is Sorrow? The sorrow arising through this or that loss or misfortune which one encounters, the worrying oneself, the state of being alarmed, inward sorrow, inward woe—this is called Sorrow.

And what is Lamentation? Whatsoever, through this or that loss or misfortune which befalls one, is wail and lament, wailing and lamenting, the state of woe and lamentation this is called Lamentation.

And what is Pain? The bodily pain and unpleasantness, the painful and unpleasant feeling produced by bodily contact—this is called Pain.

And what is Grief? The mental pain and unpleasantness, the painful and unpleasant feeling produced by mental contact—this is called Grief.

And what is Despair? Distress and despair arising through this or that loss or misfortune which one encounters, distressfulness, and desperation—this is called Despair.

And what is the "suffering of not getting what one desires?" To beings subject to birth there comes the desire: "O that we were not subject to birth! O that no new birth was before us!" Subject to decay, disease, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair, the desire comes to them: "O that we were not subject to these

things! O that these things were not before us!" But this cannot be got by mere desiring; and not to get what one desires, is suffering.

The Five Groups of Existence

And what, in brief, are the Five Groups of Existence? They are Corporeality, Feeling, Perception, [mental] Formations, and Consciousness.

From the reading...

"... the belief in an Ego-entity is merely an illusion"

Any corporeal phenomenon, whether one's own or external, gross or subtle, lofty or low, far or near, belongs to the Group of Corporeality; any feeling belongs to the Group of Feeling; any perception belongs to the Group of Perception; any mental formation belongs to the Group of Formations; all consciousness belongs to the Group of Consciousness.

[Our so-called individual existence is in reality nothing but a mere process of these "bodily and mental" phenomena, which since immemorial times was going on before one's apparent birth, and which also after death will continue for immemorial periods of time. In the following, we shall see that these five Groups, or *Khandhas*—either taken separately, or combined—in no way constitute any real "Ego-entity," and that no Ego-entity exists apart from them, and hence that the belief in an Ego-entity is merely an illusion. Just as that which we designate by the name of "chariot," has no existence apart from axle, wheels, shaft, and so forth: or as the word "house" is merely a convenient designation for various materials put together after a certain fashion so as to enclose a portion of space, and there is no separate house-entity in existence:—in exactly the same way, that which we call a "being," or an "individual," or a "person," or by the name is nothing but a changing combination of physical and psychical phenomena, and has no real existence in itself.]—

Dependent Origination of Consciousness

Now, though one's eye be intact, yet if the external forms do not fall within the field of vision, and no corresponding conjunction takes place, in that case there occurs no formation of the corresponding aspect of consciousness. Or, though one eye be intact, and the external forms fall within the field of vision, yet if no cor-

responding conjunction takes place, in that case also there occurs no formation of the corresponding aspect of consciousness. If, however, one's eye is intact, and the external forms fall within the field of vision, and the corresponding conjunction takes place, in that case there arises the corresponding aspect of consciousness.

Hence, I say: the arising of consciousness is dependent upon conditions; and without these conditions, no consciousness arises. And upon whatsoever conditions the arising of consciousness is dependent, after these it is called.

Consciousness whose arising depends on the eye and forms, is called "eye-consciousness."

Consciousness whose arising depends on the ear and sound, is called "ear-consciousness."

Consciousness whose arising depends on the olfactory organ and odors, is called "nose-consciousness."

Consciousness whose arising depends on the tongue and taste, is called "tongue-consciousness."

Consciousness whose arising depends on the body and bodily contacts, is called "body-consciousness."

Consciousness whose arising depends on the mind and ideas, is called "mind-consciousness."

Whatsoever there is of "corporeality" in the consciousness thus arisen, that belongs to the Group of Corporeality. There is of "feeling"—bodily ease, pain, joy, sadness, or indifferent feeling—belongs to the Group of Feeling. Whatsoever there is of "perception"—visual objects, sounds, odors, tastes, bodily impressions, or mind objects—belongs to the Group of Perception. Whatsoever there are of mental "formations" impression, volition, *etc.*—belong to the Group of Mental Formations. Whatsoever there is of "consciousness" therein, belongs to the Group of Consciousness.

And it is impossible that any one can explain the passing out of one existence, and the entering into a new existence, or the growth, increase, and development of consciousness, independent of corporeality, feeling, perception, and mental formations.

The Three Characteristics of Existence

All formations are "transient"; all formations are "subject to suffering"; all things are "without an Ego-entity." Corporeality is transient, feeling is transient, perception is transient, mental formations are transient, consciousness is transient.

And that which is transient, is subject to suffering; and of that which is transient, and subject to suffering and change, one cannot rightly say: "This belongs to me; this am I; this is my Ego."



A View of Benares, from The Land of the Veda

Therefore, whatever there be of corporeality, of feeling, perception, mental formations, or consciousness, whether one's own or external, whether gross or subtle, lofty or low, far or near, one should understand, according to reality, and true wisdom: "This does not belong to me; this am I not; this is not my Ego."

Suppose, a man who is not blind, were to behold the many bubbles on the Ganges as they are driving along; and he should watch them, and carefully examine them. After carefully examining them, they will appear to him empty, unreal, and unsubstantial. In exactly the same way, does the monk behold all the corporeal phenomena, feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and states of consciousness—whether they be of the past, or the present, or the future, far, or near. And he watches them, and examines them carefully; and, after carefully examining them, they appear to him empty, void, and without an Ego.

Whoso delights in corporeality, or feeling, or perception, or mental formations, or consciousness, he delights in suffering; and whoso delights in suffering, will not be freed from suffering. Thus I say

How can you find delight and mirth,

Where there is burning without end?
In deepest darkness you are wrapped!
Why do you not seek for the light?

Look at this puppet here, well rigged,
A heap of many sores, piled up,
Diseased, and full of greediness,
Unstable, and impermanent!

Devoured by old age is this frame,
A prey of sickness, weak and frail;
To pieces breaks this putrid body,
All life must truly end in death.

The Three Warnings

Did you never see in the world a man, or a woman, eighty, ninety, or a hundred years old, frail, crooked as a gable roof, bent down, resting on crutches, with tottering steps, infirm, youth long since fled, with broken teeth, grey and scanty hair, or bald-headed, wrinkled, with blotched limbs? And did the thought never come to you that also you are subject to decay, that also you cannot escape it?

Did you never see in the world a man, or a woman, who being sick, afflicted, and grievously ill, and wallowing in his own filth, was lifted up by some people, and put to bed by others? And did the thought never come to you that also you are subject to disease, that also you cannot escape it?

Did you never see in the world the corpse of a man, or a woman, one, or two, or three days after death, swollen up, blue-black in color, and full of corruption? And did the thought never come to you that also you are subject to death, that also you cannot escape it?

Samsara, The Wheel of Existence

Inconceivable is the beginning of this *Samsara*; not to be discovered is any first beginning of beings, who, obstructed by ignorance, and ensnared by craving, are hurrying and hastening through this round of rebirths.

From the reading...

"Long time have you suffered the death of father and mother, of sons, daughters, brothers, and sisters. And whilst you were thus suffering, you have, verily, shed more tears upon this long way than there is water in the four oceans."

[*Samsara*—the Wheel of Existence, lit., the "Perpetual Wandering"—is the name by which is designated the sea of life ever restlessly heaving up and down, the symbol of this continuous process of ever again and again being born, growing old, suffering, and dying. More precisely put: *Samsara* is the unbroken chain of the fivefold *Khandha*-combinations, which, constantly changing from moment to moment, follow continuously one upon the other through inconceivable periods of time. Of this *Samsara*, a single lifetime constitutes only a vanishingly tiny fraction; hence, to be able to comprehend the first noble truth, one must let one's gaze rest upon the *Samsara*, upon this frightful chain of rebirths, and not merely upon one single lifetime, which, of course, may be sometimes not very painful.]

Which do you think is the more: the flood of tears, which weeping and wailing you have shed upon this long way—hurrying and hastening through this round of rebirths, united with the undesired, separated from the desired this, or the waters of the four oceans?

Long time have you suffered the death of father and mother, of sons, daughters, brothers, and sisters. And whilst you were thus suffering, you have, verily, shed more tears upon this long way than there is water in the four oceans.

Which do you think is the more: the streams of blood that, through your being beheaded, have flowed upon this long way, or the waters in the four oceans?

Long time have you been caught as dacoits, or highwaymen, or adulterers; and, through your being beheaded, verily, more blood has flowed upon this long way than there is water in the four oceans.

But how is this possible?

Inconceivable is the beginning of this *Samsara*; not to be discovered is any first beginning of beings, who, obstructed by ignorance, and ensnared by craving, are hurrying and hastening through this round of rebirths.

And thus have you long time undergone suffering, undergone torment, undergone misfortune, and filled the graveyards full; verily, long enough to be dissatisfied with all the forms of existence, long enough to turn away, and free yourselves from them all.

Second Truth: The Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering

What, now, is the Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering? It is that craving which gives rise to fresh rebirth, and, bound up with pleasure and lust, now here, now there, finds ever fresh delight.

[In the absolute sense, it is no real being, no self-determined, unchangeable, Ego-entity that is reborn. Moreover, there is nothing that remains the same even for two consecutive moments; for the Five *Khandhas*, or Groups of Existence, are in a state of perpetual change, of continual dissolution and renewal. They die every moment, and every moment new ones are born. Hence it follows that there is no such thing as a real existence, or "being" (Latin *esse*), but only as it were an endless process, a continuous change, a "becoming," consisting in a "producing," and in a "being produced"; in a "process of action," and in a "process of reaction," or "rebirth."

This process of perpetual "producing" and "being produced" may best be compared with an ocean wave. In the case of a wave, there is not the slightest quantity of water traveling over the surface of the sea. But the wave structure, that hastens over the surface of the water, creating the appearance of one and the same mass of water, is, in reality, nothing but the continuous rising and falling of continuous, but quite different, masses of water, produced by the transmission of force generated by the wind. Even so, the Buddha did not teach that Ego-entities hasten through the ocean of rebirth, but merely life-waves, which, according to their nature and activities (good, or evil), manifest themselves here as men, there as animals, and elsewhere as invisible beings.]

The Threefold Craving

There is the "Sensual Craving," the "Craving for Eternal-Annihilation." "Existence," the "Craving for Self-Annihilation."

[The "Craving for Eternal Existence," according to the *Visuddhi-Magga*, is intimately connected with the so-called "Eternity-Belief," *i.e.*, the belief in an absolute, eternal, Ego-entity persisting independently of our body.

The Craving for Self-Annihilation is the outcome of the so-called "Annihilation-Belief," the delusive materialistic notion of an Ego which is annihilated at death, and which does not stand in any causal relation with the time before birth or after death.]

But, where does this craving arise and take root? Wherever in the world there are delightful and pleasurable things, there this craving arises and takes root. Eye, ear,

nose, tongue, body, and mind, are delightful and pleasurable: there this craving arises and takes root.

Visual objects, sounds, smells, tastes, bodily impressions, and mind-objects, are delightful and pleasurable: there this craving arises and takes root.

Consciousness, sense impression, feeling born of sense impression, perception, will, craving, thinking, and reflecting, are delightful and pleasurable: there this craving arises and takes root. If, namely, when perceiving a visual object, a sound, odor, taste, bodily impression, or a mind object, the object is pleasant, one is attracted; and if unpleasant, one is repelled.

Thus, whatever kind of "Feeling" one experiences, pleasant, unpleasant, or indifferent—one approves of, and cherishes the feeling, and clings to it; and while doing so, lust springs up; but lust for feelings, means Clinging; and on Clinging, depends the "Process of Becoming"; on the Process of Becoming (*Karma*-process), depends (future) "Birth"; and dependent on Birth, are Decay and Death, Sorrow, Lamentation, Pain, Grief, and Despair. Thus arises this whole mass of suffering.

This is called the Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering.

Heaping up of Present Suffering

Verily, due to sensuous craving, conditioned through sensuous craving, impelled by sensuous craving, entirely moved by sensuous craving, kings fight with kings, princes with princes, priests with priests, citizens with citizens; the mother quarrels with the son, the son with the mother, the father with the son, the son with the father; brother quarrels with brother, brother with sister, sister with brother, friend with friend. Thus, given to dissension, quarreling and fighting, they fall upon one another with fists, sticks, or weapons. And thereby they suffer death or deadly pain.



Crossing Over, detail from *The Land of the Veda*

And further, due to sensuous craving, conditioned through sensuous craving, impelled by sensuous craving, entirely moved by sensuous craving, people break into houses, rob, plunder, pillage whole houses, commit highway robbery, seduce the wives of others. Then, the rulers have such people caught, and inflict on them various forms of punishment. And thereby they incur death or deadly pain. Now, this is the misery of sensuous craving, the heaping up of suffering in this present life, due to sensuous craving, conditioned through sensuous craving, caused by sensuous craving, entirely dependent on sensuous craving.

Heaping Up of Future Suffering

And further, people take the evil way in deeds, the evil way in words, the evil way in thoughts; and by taking the evil way in deeds, words, and thoughts, at the dissolution of the body, after death, they fall into a downward state of existence, a state of suffering, into perdition, and the abyss of hell. But, this is the misery of sensuous craving, the heaping up of suffering in the future life, due to sensuous craving, conditioned through sensuous craving, caused by sensuous craving, entirely dependent on sensuous craving.

Not in the air, nor ocean-midst,
Nor hidden in the mountain clefts,
Nowhere is found a place on earth,
Where man is freed from evil deeds.

Inheritance of Deeds (*Karma*)

For, owners of their deeds (*karma*) are the beings, heirs of their deeds; their deeds are the womb from which they sprang; with their deeds they are bound up; their deeds are their refuge. Whatever deeds they do-good or evil-of such they will be the heirs.

And wherever the beings spring into existence, there their deeds will ripen; and wherever their deeds ripen, there they will earn the fruits of those deeds, be it in this life, or be it in the next life, or be it in any other future life.

There will come a time, when the mighty ocean will dry up, vanish, and be no more. There will come a time, when the mighty earth will be devoured by fire, perish, and be no more. But, yet there will be no end to the suffering of beings,

who, obstructed by ignorance, and ensnared by craving, are hurrying and hastening through this round of rebirths.

Third Truth: The Noble Truth of the Extinction of Suffering

What, now, is the Noble Truth of the Extinction of Suffering? It is the complete fading away and extinction of this craving, its forsaking and giving up, the liberation and detachment from it.

But where may this craving vanish, where may it be extinguished? Wherever in the world there are delightful and pleasurable things, there this craving may vanish, there it may be extinguished.

From the reading...

"This, truly, is the Peace, this is the Highest, namely the end of all formations, the forsaking of every substratum of rebirth, the fading away of craving: detachment, extinction—*Nirvana*."

Be it in the past, present, or future, whosoever of the monks or priests regards the delightful and pleasurable things in the world as "impermanent," "miserable," and "without an Ego," as a disease and cancer; it is he who overcomes the craving.

And released from Sensual Craving, released from the Craving for Existence, he does not return, does not enter again into existence.

Dependent Extinction of All Phenomena

For, through the total fading away and extinction of Craving, Clinging is extinguished; through the extinction of clinging, the Process of Becoming is extinguished; through the extinction of the (*karmic*) process of becoming, Rebirth is extinguished; and through the extinction of rebirth, Decay and Death, Sorrow, Lamentation, Suffering, Grief, and Despair, are extinguished. Thus comes about the extinction of this whole mass of suffering.

Hence, the annihilation, cessation, and overcoming of corporeality, feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness, this is the extinction of suffering, the end of disease, the overcoming of old age and death.

[The undulatory motion, which we call wave—which in the spectator creates the illusion of a single mass of water moving over the surface of the lake—is produced and fed by the wind, and maintained by the stored-up energies. After the wind has ceased, and no fresh wind again whips up the water, the stored-up energies will gradually be consumed, and the whole undulatory motion come to an end. Similarly, if fire does not get new fuel, it will become extinct. just so, this Five-*Khandha*-process—which, in the ignorant worldling, creates the illusion of an Ego-entity—is produced and fed by the life-affirming craving, and maintained for some time by means of the stored-up life-energies. Now, after the fuel, i.e., the craving and clinging to life, has ceased, and no new craving impels again this Five-*Khandha*-process, life will continue as long as there are still life-energies stored up, but at their destruction at death, the Five-*Khandha*-process will reach final extinction.

Thus, *Nirvana* or "Extinction" (Sanskrit: to cease blowing, to become extinct), may be considered under two aspects:

1. "Extinction of Impurities," reached at the attainment of *Arahat*ship, or Holiness, which takes place during the life-time.
2. "Extinction of the Five-*Khandha*-process," which takes place at the death of the *Arahat*.]

Nirvana

This, truly, is the Peace, this is the Highest, namely the end of all formations, the forsaking of every substratum of rebirth, the fading away of craving: detachment, extinction—*Nirvana*.

Enraptured with lust, enraged with anger, blinded by delusion, overwhelmed, with mind ensnared, man aims at his own ruin, at others' ruin, at the ruin of both parties, and he experiences mental pain and grief. But, if lust, anger, and delusion are given up, man aims neither at his own ruin, nor at others' ruin, nor at the ruin of both parties, and he experiences no mental pain and grief. Thus is *Nirvana* immediate, visible in this life, inviting, attractive, and comprehensible to the wise.

The extinction of greed, the extinction of anger, the extinction of delusion: this, indeed, is called *Nirvana*.

The *Arahat*, or Holy One

And for a disciple thus freed, in whose heart dwells peace, there is nothing to be added to what has been done, and naught more remains for him to do. Just as a

rock of one solid mass remains unshaken by the wind, even so, neither forms, nor sounds, nor odors, nor tastes, nor contacts of any kind, neither the desired, nor the undesired, can cause such an one to waver. Steadfast is his mind, gained is deliverance.

And he who has considered all the contrasts on this earth, and is no more disturbed by anything whatever in the world, the Peaceful One, freed from rage, from sorrow, and from longing, he has passed beyond birth and decay.

The Immutable

There is a realm, where there is neither the solid, nor the fluid, neither heat, nor motion, neither this world, nor any other world, neither sun, nor moon. This I call neither arising, nor passing away, neither standing still nor being born, nor dying. There is neither foothold, nor development, nor any basis. This is the end of suffering.

There is an Unborn, Unoriginated, Uncreated, Unformed. If there were not this Unborn, this Unoriginated, this Uncreated, this Unformed, escape from the world of the born, the originated, the created, the formed, would not be possible.

But since there is an Unborn, Unoriginated, Uncreated, Unformed, therefore is escape possible from the world of the born, the originated, the created, the formed.

Fourth Truth: The Noble Truth of the Path that Leads to the Extinction of Suffering—The Two Extremes and the Middle Path

To give oneself up to indulgence in sensual pleasure, the base, common, vulgar, unholy, unprofitable; and also to give oneself up to self-mortification, the painful, unholy, unprofitable: both these two extremes the Perfect One has avoided, and found out the Middle Path, which makes one both to see and to know, which leads to peace, to discernment, to enlightenment, to *Nirvana*.



Deer Park, Library of Congress

From the reading...

"There is an Unborn, Unoriginated, Uncreated, Unformed. If there were not this Unborn, this Unoriginated, this Uncreated, this Unformed, escape from the world of the born, the originated, the created, the formed, would not be possible."

Topics Worth Investigating

1. The Zen Master Bankei said:

Learn to abide in the Unborn for thirty days, and from there on, even if you don't want to—whether you like it or not—you'll just naturally *have* to abide in the Unborn... That way you'll be living buddhas here today, won't you?²

2. Peter Haskel. *Bankei Zen: Translations from the Record of Bankei* New York: Grove Press,

Explain Master Bankei's instruction in terms of the realm of the "Immutable."

2. Explain Buddha's doctrine of the "Middle Path" between the two extremes of pleasure and self-mortification. How does the Buddha's Middle Path compare with Confucius' Doctrine of the Mean?

While there are no stirrings of pleasure, anger, sorrow, or joy, the mind may be said to be in the state of Equilibrium. When those feelings have been stirred, and they act in their due degree, there ensues what may be called the state of Harmony. This Equilibrium is the great root from which grow all the human actions in the world, and this Harmony is the universal path which they all should pursue.

Let the states of equilibrium and harmony exist in perfection, and a happy order will prevail throughout heaven and earth, and all things will be nourished and flourish.³

3. Explain Buddha's conception of holiness. What forms the consciousness of the *Arhat*? Why does the holy person seem to have no hindrances?
4. In the *Apology*, Socrates states when he has been sentenced to death:

... we are quite mistaken in supposing death to be an evil...

Death is one of two things. Either it is annihilation, and the dead have no consciousness of anything, or, as we are told, it is really a change—a migration of the soul from this place to another. Now if there is no consciousness but only a dreamless sleep, death must be a marvelous gain.⁴

Contrast Socrates' notion of "annihilation" with Buddha's notion of extinction or *Nirvana*.

1984, 19.

3. Confucius. "Doctrine of the Mean." 500 BC. Translated by James Legge.

4. *Socrates' Defense (Apology)*. Translated by Hugh Tredennick. In *Plato: The Collected Dialogues*. Edited by Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969, 25.

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