

**Dogen Sangha Summer Sesshin at EarthSpirit,
September 2008**

**Talk Number 2:
By Eido Mike Luetchford**

Before I begin, just a few words about Zazen. After a day and a half of Zazen sometimes pains start appearing or we start to feel a bit tired – maybe this hasn't happened yet, but what I want to say is, please take charge of your own sitting. Of course, when we sit together formally in a room, we feel 'I shouldn't move' or 'I should put up with it' and of course that is useful; it is a kind of discipline of sitting together. But at the same time, please don't feel trapped by the situation. If you move because your posture needs adjusting, it doesn't disturb anybody, really it doesn't. You can see that if someone next to you moves because their legs are painful or something like that, it's not disturbing at all. So do something about your situation if you want to; don't feel trapped into some kind of hell. We are not looking for heaven, and we are also not looking for hell and this kind of thing: 'I hope the bell rings soon, I hope the bell rings soon...' Or if you really, really didn't sleep well and you can't keep awake and are thinking 'Ah, I've got to go in there and sit again' – don't. Go for a walk instead. I am not encouraging everyone to go for a walk instead of Zazen because that's really not what we are here for. But, please, take charge of your own sitting. Feel responsible for yourself and don't feel trapped by the formal situation; it's important.

I took a long time to say that Chapter 1 is about some fundamental conditions. Nagarjuna rejects the traditional interpretation of the *Abhidharma* and says that there are some fundamental things about reality, that there are four of them not five or six or seven and he gives them names, but doesn't talk about them in any more detail.

So I will move on to Chapter 2, which is a very strange chapter entitled 'Examination of What Has Moved and What Has not Moved'.

What he basically says is that there is no such thing as movement. (*Chuckles*). Immediately we think 'Ah, yes, like the frames in a film. All the frames are still pictures, but when you play them, they're moving.' But we are not really in a film; so it's very hard for us to find the real meaning of this. But he says quite clearly that what we see and experience as movement, is not movement. We can look at that at various levels. Anybody who knows anything about quantum physics can look at it from that level because quantum physics states quite clearly that particles do not move from one energy position to another. They disappear from one position and appear in another position. There is a whole field in atomic physics concerned with how that can possibly happen and a lot of theories. Of course, it is only theory, but it has some kind of parallels.

Another way is to look at it from the Buddhist perspective of everything being just at this moment, just at this moment and between moments we build a kind of smooth scenario. But whichever way you look at it, it is quite difficult to really

feel and believe that what we see as movement isn't movement; of course, it is - but it's not. So that's that chapter. It's quite difficult to translate because of the way it is expressed in Sanskrit, because of the different verbal forms which are very similar.

Chapter 3 is an examination of the organs of sight – that means the eyes, I suppose – and by inference the other organs of the senses. He does an examination of sight and he says the same is true of all the other senses. Basically, he looks at sight and kind of explores it. We normally think we are looking out at something. We may feel that a kind of ray goes out of our eye. But any examination of physics, of the theory of light, will tell you that all you actually do is point your retina in that direction and beams of light come back into the eye. So you are receiving something, but it doesn't feel like receiving; it feels like looking. He talks about whether there is somebody who is seeing and whether there is something seen; so that involves an issue which he is touching on in lots of chapters, which is the difference between a subject and an object or the difference between me and the other.

This is a very consistent theme through many of the chapters. He explores the organs of sight and then says that hearing and tasting and all those are the same. And really it is based on the fact that we say, 'I tasted the chocolate and the chocolate tasted nice'. But what he wants to move towards - and Dogen does the same thing - is that the 'taste of the chocolate' and the 'nice' are actually all one thing. We can't talk about them without saying 'there is a taste' and 'there is a chocolate which tasted'. There is my tongue and there is something which is nice, but actually the experience is just one. The experience of tasting chocolate which is nice can't be had without the taster, the chocolate, and the 'nice', but they are not separate things. This doesn't mean that the chocolate and my tongue is all a kind of solid mass, it means that the situation is indivisible. If you take the tongue away, the chocolate and the 'nice' don't work; if you take the chocolate away, the tongue and the 'nice' don't work. That kind of theme he talks about a lot.

I'll keep moving forward and then we can have more time for questions every now and then.

Chapter 4 is an examination of the *Skandhas*. Some of you will have heard of *Skandas*. There are five of them and they are variously translated as 'aggregates' which is a really weird word to me, the 'aggregates'. 'Aggregates' is something you mix in concrete, isn't it?

Collectable things?

Yes, I think that's the meaning of aggregates and that's the sense in which he means it, but it's not a very commonly used word. Another translation is 'constituents', parts of something. He goes through the five aggregates or the five constituents, the five *skandhas* and examines the traditional interpretation that the aggregates are caused by apparent causes which bring them into existence and those aggregates then cause the things in the world. He talks for instance about the fact that if physical form has a cause, i.e., something that caused the physical form, made it come into existence, then they are not separate. So a lot of this examination is around the theme of 'not separate'. The

reason he concentrates on this theme of 'not separate' - whether it is between a cause and effect, or an eye and what is seen, or an actor and the action, - is that our language divides the world into pieces and then puts the pieces into theories. He says that is the only way we can talk about it, but that it is not actually always like that.

He goes through the different *skandhas*, five of them. Does anybody know what they are? There are various different translations, but one translation is 'form' (i.e. physical form), 'feeling' (i.e. sensual feeling, not emotional feeling), 'thinking' (i.e. perception), and conceptual constructions.

Is that volition?

Yes, they are different translations. If you look at the actual Sanskrit words, it is very difficult to exactly differentiate between them. So the first one is physical and the others are mental, it would seem. There is also another, completely different interpretation of the five *skandhas* which is entirely physical. But that's not what he deals with. If you look in dictionaries of ancient Buddhist writings, it is very difficult to pin the five skandhas down absolutely exactly. Different translations will give slightly different words and so on. But in any case his theme doesn't depend on the meaning of the *skandhas*; it depends on whether there are things called *skandhas* that cause things to happen or cause things to come into effect. That's the theme.

If you think I should stop for questions, you should stop me.

Chapter 5 is an examination of the six elements. Again these are categories in the *Abhidharma*. The six elements are: earth, water, fire, wind, space, consciousness and these were used to explain the nature of reality in ancient times. Nagarjuna again takes one of them— space — and has a look at it. He talks about what space really is. Dogen does the same. There is a story in *Shobogenzo* where one monk says to another 'What's space?' ('ku' in Japanese). 'Show me what space is.' And the second monk goes like this (*trying to grab a chunk of air*). The first monk says 'No, it's not.' So the second monk says 'Well, show me what it is?' so the first monk grabs hold of the first monk's nose and says 'That's space!' (*Chuckles from the audience*) – How can a nose be space? But anyhow, that's the story.

So, what is space? Science says that space is full of energy, of course. So do we have space or don't we have space? Nagarjuna looks at it from many points of view, from his position in the second century.

Chapter 6 is the examination of emotion and the person who feels emotional: the 'emotional'. Again this is an examination of the way we separate with words things which are in fact one. He doesn't specifically talk about 'anger', but it is quite a good example to give you a feeling for what he looks at. We often feel that there is something called 'anger' and 'anger' actually exists somewhere. So we say 'If you don't let it out and keep in inside, then it will build up' and so on. We come to believe that there is actually some kind of substance called 'anger' or some substance called 'love' or some substance called 'dislike' that actually exists and is flowing around us. Nagarjuna says that the emotion we feel and the

'we' that is feeling it are inseparable and that is the basis of the chapter. So again the theme is non-separation in reality.

I think this is a very interesting topic ...how to work with this, how to make good use of it in real life for example dealing with depression or anger. Could you give us any examples, if it's possible to make use of Nagarjuna's wisdom?

Ah, completely impossible. (Chuckles).

Impossible?

Somehow I can really relate to that. When you get angry, it's all-consuming.

You're angry – the world is angry?

No, my anger. It's like it takes over. It's not something separate; it's not that it's happening to me; it's me and the anger altogether. Maybe we should realise that it's not separate. It's the idea that it's separate that makes it difficult to deal with.

Well, we are becoming clear about it with the advances in biology and those kind of sciences, psychology and so on, that actually our moods are caused by endorphins in our blood and so on. We are realising that what we're feeling is us. It's not that 'we are feeling it' which is how we have to express it in language but 'we are it'. Yes, noticing that fact and becoming clearer about that fact itself, is all we can do. We can't say 'Right, now I know that, I am going to use it in my daily life'. That's why I said, it is absolutely impossible to apply. However, to realise clearly the nature of reality has a great power. Somehow it's a catalyst. We can see this in our own lives. Sometimes for no apparent reason after a period of difficulty or something like that, we suddenly realise the situation in a flash. We might realise how stupid we have been or something and that realisation itself changes the situation completely. We think that if we learn something, we then need to apply that learning, i.e. to think about the idea, put the idea into practice to solve our problems. But it's not necessary to do that with Nagarjuna's teaching or Buddhist teaching. What's necessary is to see clearly and recognise clearly the nature of ourselves. And doing that, which is not an intellectual exercise only, but an exercise of our whole body and mind, we know when we realise something through and through. When we do, it changes us and changes the world. I don't know how.

Doesn't exactly the same happen though when we don't realise it?

No. If we don't realise, we don't realise it. And if we realise it, we realise it.

But whether we realise it or not, everything is still in a constant state of change, isn't it?

Ah, yes, the world goes on changing, yes. But something happens which solves our problems. Realising how we are solves our problems. We feel so often that to solve a problem is to remove it; but that is not always true. The solution to a problem is often to understand...; no, not 'to understand' that suggests some

kind of thinking, but 'to realise' what the situation is. This itself solves the problem.

The difference between 'You make me angry' and 'I am angry' is quite profound, isn't it?

Yes.

There is something else in there. Some psychologists say that we have stimulus and response and if you look at it from the Pavlovian point of view, your response is determined by the stimulus. But with free will there is a space between stimulus and response and you can choose your response, you can choose not to be angry.

You can learn not to be angry...

Yes, that is exactly what Mike is saying. That if you understand how we function, you can use this moment to choose your response.

Yes. I'd like to add further that language restricts us in explaining it. Because we can choose, I agree completely, we can choose how to act. But that suggests a space for thinking about it and then making a decision: 'Ah, shall I ...?' – It's not that kind of choice. Nagarjuna's theme of separation draws our attention to the fact that human beings have separated life into two. We've abstracted the mental side. We have developed a way of organising the mental side and then we want to use that to control the physical side. We call that intelligent behaviour. But watch a spider weaving its web or an ant running about: How do they decide what they are going to do next? Their behaviour, as any animal's behaviour, is incredibly sophisticated. Are they running about thinking 'Ah, yesterday I decided to hide some nuts here; so today I am going to hide the nuts over there'? This is how nature programmes talk about it: 'Now the squirrel is running around collecting nuts for the winter'. 'Ah, winter is coming...' (laughter).

This is how we talk about it because we abstract the mental from the physical. But life itself, unseparated, contains intelligence. We can live life without separating it. One way is to separate, to think and then make our actions obey our thoughts and that is the way that human society has developed and it's valid. Look at our civilisation – it's great. But it's not the only way. We can live without abstracting thought from action and reality because most of the world does, and you can see from the behaviour of living things that their behaviour is intelligent. We even talk about cells and cell membranes and how signals pass from the cells outwards and inwards; incredibly intelligent behaviour. But there is no little brain there that's abstracting and thinking 'Send signals out now; I'm going to get them back'.

So the way we think about life doesn't actually often match the world around us. But that's not to deny the value of thinking; it's the value of thought that has created the whole of civilisation, good and bad. But this separation is something that Nagarjuna wants to point to and to point us back into a non-separated life, that means our living itself contains everything that's needed. We don't necessarily have to sit down and think our way through our life. Often if we do

that, we suffer and we have a hard time; not always, we can have good times thinking about life as well.

Chapter 7: 'Examination of the Formed World' – 'formed world' is *Samskrta*; and there is another chapter called 'Samskara' which is the same – 'sam' means together and 'skr' is the verb 'to make'. So the crude translation of 'sam-skr' is 'make together' and the best way to interpret it is 'the examination of the formed'.

What does he mean by the 'formed'? He means the world in front of us that we see, that is formed. Now, the Abhidharmans had this theory about dharmas arising, continuing and then ceasing. They said the whole world is formed by these little dharmas – maybe we could call them atomic particles – coming in, existing, disappearing. And all these billions and billions of things coming in, existing and disappearing cause the unceasing changing of reality. That was their theory. But Nagarjuna demolishes that by saying things like 'Well, what causes them to arise?' and if what causes them to arise is something non-existent, then where is it and what causes that thing to arise and what causes the thing that caused that thing to arise and you have got infinite regression. So what he is talking about here is something similar to what we discuss in science in modern day times about the origins of the universe. Only we have got back to the big bang. What caused the big bang? Nothing caused it. So where did it happen from? Well, it didn't happen from anything. Well, what was there before that wasn't there before? So it's the same problem. The Abhidharman theory is a world resting on explained nothingness and he says that you can't have that kind of situation. And he goes through it in great length.

What's his conclusion?

In conclusion, the process of dharmas arising, continuing in existence and ceasing are an illusion. They are as unreal as the city of *Ghandarva*. The city of *Ghandarva* was a legendary city somewhere in India and was full of gods, I think.

So, is it that we haven't so much got an explanation for the cause of the universe as a disagreement, completely deconstructing the view that he would have received?

Yes, and he is rejecting causal explanation to a degree. But we have to be careful there because he doesn't reject cause and effect. That would be silly and Buddhism doesn't reject cause and effect. But he rejects a causal explanation because you can't find a primary cause.

So he says it didn't appear and it didn't disappear either?

Ah yes, he says so, yes.

It's both appearing and disappearing.

And neither appearing nor disappearing.

Cause and effect are ... (inaudible) are the same thing, the same instant – is that right?

You can say so, but we have to be careful because it's obvious to us all that things that happen to us have a cause. We cause things and then we have to experience the effect and that is the foundation of science. So when we say things like 'cause and effect are the same thing', we have to be very careful to explain what we mean. It's necessary to say that there is a different point of view: One point of view says that everything we do has a cause and everything we are doing now causes something else and that's the basis of our whole world and the basis of our life. So what we do now is a cause, the effect happens sometime in the future.

However, Buddhism believes that this world is just this instant; the future doesn't actually exist. It's a potential. The only thing that exists is the present, which keeps appearing. If we take that point of view - which is a really weird way to look at things - then what is happening now is an effect of something that happened in the past and it's also a cause of something that will happen in the future. So we can say cause and effect are the same or we could say cause and effect don't really make any sense. But it doesn't mean that they don't exist. It's a different point of view.

And Nagarjuna said it's a perspective. He is asserting the nature of reality; so the two things can coexist, cause and effect and they're instantaneous.

Yes, that's right. It's a paradox; it's a philosophical paradox. It's a paradox between determinism and freedom which has been around for thousands of years. But it's also although we don't recognise it as such, a very real and important problem in our lives whether we are determined by what we do and where our freedom lies. So it's real. It sounds a bit up in the clouds and philosophical, but actually we are all in that situation, in that paradox.

So it's just the same as Dogen, really; quite fundamentally.

Yes.

Is he ultimately saying that if you believe that any of these ways of explaining, any of these views ultimately represent the real situation or if you can represent the real situation, then you just are misunderstanding the nature of..., eh,... if you are trying to understand the nature of reality, by understanding it, by inventing frameworks and perspectives...

By making models...

Making models, yes, and a model can never be the same as the real thing.

No, but the model is very helpful as long as the model is fairly close to what we are going to do, as long as whoever made the model based it on their real experience. So if somebody writes a book about swimming, you expect them to know how to swim. If somebody has never swum but has seen people swim, writes a book about how to swim, it is a little bit suspect. And if you read a book about how to swim, it does not mean you know how to swim. But you get in the

water and then you say: "Ah, I see...It's completely different from what you wrote, but it was quite helpful to read the book."

Isn't there a danger of just going along with these concepts because they relieve our suffering?

Which concepts relieve our suffering?

We might hang on to any concept if it relieves our suffering.

I am trying to think of a concept that relieves my suffering. Usually they make me suffer; all my concepts make me suffer, even the nice ones, because I dream about nice things which aren't here and I want them. My happiest times are when I am not thinking about concepts and I just seem to be quite happy in the present, like a child. That's when I feel most content.

So is he just taking away all the concepts then? Obviously the Abhidharmans ... (inaudible)

Yes, conceptual categorisation of reality is what the *Abhidharma* is. What Nagarjuna says is that reality is not those categories.

He is not offering a solution; he is refuting the other...

Yes, and because he is refuting that, lots of people said he was a nihilist, that he was just saying 'everything is rubbish'. But he is not saying 'everything is rubbish' although it appears so. What he is saying is 'No, not that idea, no, not that, no, not that, no... it's something here – real'. So, he is not a nihilist although he has been labelled as one because of his constant denials. And you can see the same in Dogen. Dogen is a bit more personal; he talks about people with ideas not just the ideas. He says they are like 'dogs in the street' or 'mad men' or 'there are some ragged monks who do so-and-so'. But he is doing the same thing, 'No not that, no, it's not that theory; reality is not a theory'.

So to return to an earlier point, you seem to imply that thinking that we think our way through life is sort of OK or it works in our civilisation...

It created our civilisation.

Yes, but in fact that's an illusion because we might think that we think our way through life. But if you look at what we actually do, then you notice that whatever we say – whether we say, we think our way through life or not – in fact we don't.

Yes, that's what I'm saying. A good example is that we are all talking but where are the words coming from? We're led to believe that we think about what we are going to say and then say it but we very, very rarely do. We might have some kind of vague, fleeting something and then words come out. I am not thinking what I am going to say and then say it; although what I am saying hopefully makes some kind of sense, it's not coming from thoughts about the words I am going to produce. So where does it come from? What puts it together in a way that makes sense? I am saying that speaking itself contains the

structure of speaking; living itself contains the structure of living. What human civilisation has done is to split it in two and said 'We must order things abstractly and then make the things fit into the abstract order that we have created'. And we believe that that's what we do and we are taught to try and do it; 'Think before you act' and so on. What I am saying is that is not necessarily necessary.

When you speak, isn't what is structuring that a kind of social reality of whatever you have been brought up with; the language and everything is kind of unconsciously manifesting itself. So that is quite different from thinking and then speaking.

Yes, there are some interesting modern theories about how language is produced coming from people who are studying artificial intelligence; one quite famous researcher called Daniel Dennett has written quite a lot about trying to demolish the model that somewhere in our brain is this control centre where things come in (Cartesian Theatre). This is the way we are taught to believe, to look at ourselves: Things come into the control centre and then something decides, I decide and then, I direct my body. He says it doesn't work, it doesn't hold water. Which is all to the good because it supports the Buddhist teachings of Nagarjuna and Dogen. But of course, they can't explain it in the same terms.

Chapter 8: 'Examination of Action and Agent'. 'Action' is something we do and 'agent' is the person who does it. 'I pick up the book' and what he says is that I and the book in the act of me picking up the book are not separate. That doesn't mean that I and my hand and the brown book all merge into some sticky mass; it means that in that real act, I and my hand and the book are indivisible. If I say 'I pick up lots of books', that's an abstraction and in that abstraction I can imagine lots of books and me picking them up. But in reality, not abstracting, when I pick up the book, there is something real which is indivisible. That's me, my hand and the book; so I, my hand and the book are one.

A thing has happened that involved all that carrying on.

Is it a bit like saying that when the world was created in the Big Bang and what we are doing now are all still happening at the same time?

Yes..., you could say...

It's an action and a result.

A cause and effect thing...

We have to be careful because the Big Bang is an idea; we're not ideas.

Oh, ok, ... (inaudible) Oh, forget it... (Laughter).

What we could say is: The creation of the world, me and you, the carpet and the Dragon Room at EarthSpirit are all happening now. So the creation of the world wasn't in the past; it's now.

So the real Big Bang is at this moment.

Like we see stars that have long disappeared; but we can still see their light.

Yes.

So, in effect, in a way they are still there in this moment when we see their light.

Yes.

It's very interesting, isn't?

Yes; it's quite difficult to think about; it drives you mad. This is why we practice Zazen after the talk. (Laughter) ... to stop thinking about it.

(Inaudible)... How limiting is our use of language in making sense of what's going on in our mind?

Good question...

Because there isn't a word in the English Language – there may be in the languages people know in this room – that describes I wouldn't have said the "thing" that we were talking about when cause and effect... There is nothing in the English Language that allows me to articulate that...therefore embedded in my mind..

No, because it is not happening in your mind. So, abstractions will always be abstractions. We can't put reality into our mind. Our mind is part of reality but reality is not part of our mind.

I want a new language.

Alright. (Makes a crowing sound – laughter).

So much better.

Or Pavel will talk to you in Czech or Henrik will talk to you in Swedish...Ralph will talk to you in poetry – that's another language.

So that was 'Examination of Action and Agent': Some of these are quite short chapters.

The next chapter is an 'Examination of What Precedes'; what he means is 'what precedes the present moment'. This chapter is a criticism, a rebuttal of a theory that was existent about our experiences. We think of ourselves and our experiences as happening to us. So he says we think that if a person is having an experience, then in the way that we talk about it, the person who exists, who's having the experience, must be a person who has not yet had the experience. And the experience that is being had by the person must exist as an experience without being had; and then he kind of deconstructs it. He is deconstructing our language and again you can see the theme, the person and their experience are... 'interdependent' is not enough ... are one thing. Although language forces us to say 'I am experiencing something', actually, that experience I am having is an inseparable reality. It sounds abstract, but it's actually true and this is the

point. I think John said earlier that studying ancient works by people two thousand years ago, or eight hundred years ago sometimes forces us to look at things in a different way, in a way that we are not taught to look at things and maybe in our particular society or culture things aren't looked at in this way at all.

You can get the same experience by going to live in a completely different culture, finding people doing things in a completely different way. When I first went to live in Japan, I had a very angry first year because these people were all doing things the wrong way! And I slowly realised that it wasn't the wrong way at all, it was just a different way.

Chapter 10: 'Examination of Flames and Burning Wood'. Just as Dogen does, Nagarjuna discusses lots of topical themes in the Buddhist world of his time. 'Flames and Burning Wood' were used as a kind of metaphor for cause and effect; If you have a log with some flames on it, what comes first, the flames or the burning log? Can the flame exist without the burning log, is the log burning without the flame? And so on and so forth... Again, we are back to the same thing: non-separation of the real situation. He hammers it in quite a lot because there was so much analysis of the type that is in the *Abhidharma* that theories were out of control. So he wanted cut through all this theorising and reposition reality at the centre of the explanations.

If you read lots of Buddhist books written by scholars who don't practice Zazen or who don't necessarily practise anything, they discuss things in a theoretical, abstract world, which has very strict rules in the scholarly tradition; they're discussing things based on abstractions. But all of the theory of great Buddhist masters like Nagarjuna and Dogen and many others, although it's theory, is attempting to describe their real experience, reality itself, not based on their thoughts about reality but based on their real experience; and their real experience is based on practising Zazen, which is only one way to experience reality. Even Dogen says there are many, many thousands more ways because we are always experiencing it, but Zazen is particularly simple and stupid so we can't miss reality. Well, yes, we can, but we have to try quite hard.

The great masters developed their theories from that very simple experience. Thus Nagarjuna wanted to cut through all this theorising that was based only on theory and substitutes for it. His theories are based on reality as he experienced it. The world can judge whether what he experienced is something that we can accept as real or not. Only we can judge that.

So, Mike, would this be an example of Nishijima's three philosophies and the one reality? This would be an example of the third kind of philosophy, would it? It's philosophy but it's philosophy rooted in an understanding of the present moment being reality, Buddhist reality?

Yes. It's quite complicated, isn't it? We have to look at things from different points of view to make sense of them. Usually we like to polarise our views. This way to look at things is right; that way to look at things therefore is wrong. That's what happens between political parties for example. 'They're all

completely wrong and I am right' and the other side saying, 'No, they're all completely wrong and I'm right'.

But Buddhism says: 'Not right or wrong, but we need different viewpoints', just the same as you need to look at things from different angles. There is an old simile about lots of blind men standing round an elephant, trying to guess what animal it is. We need to look at the elephant from lots of different perspectives because we are so rooted in our own particular subjective view; we need to accept lots of different viewpoints on reality. The viewpoint of immediacy or the present moment is an unusual viewpoint. So that is one of Buddhist philosophy's contributions to the philosophical world. How about this for a viewpoint: 'Cause and effect happen at the same time. The past isn't real, the future isn't real. What you are saying is just a theory.' How about that for a viewpoint? – 'Oooh!' the scholars go, 'No, that's not acceptable.' – Here's another viewpoint: 'That's black – no, it's not – it's white.' The scholars go: 'Oh, you can't have black and white together. It's either black or white'. So Buddhism is introducing a philosophical point of view that is unusual and breaks all the rules by not rejecting the others.

Chapter 11, a very short chapter: 'Examination of Starting Point and Ending Point'. There was a lot of discussion, then as now, about the origins of the world and whether the world would go on forever or whether it would end some time. According to Nagarjuna, the Buddha says there is no starting point and no ending point to the world; the world has no beginning and no end, and if there is no beginning and no end, there can't be a middle either. He ends by saying that not only do we not know the beginning of this life, we actually don't know the beginning of anything. We don't know the beginning of an effect, the beginning of a cause, a characteristic or that which is characterised, a perception or a person who is perceiving.

That's the end.

The beginning...

The end of the beginning of the end.

I'll stop there; but you can start to see consistent themes. Although his subjects in the chapters are different, there are some kind of consistent themes that he is developing. One is this point of view of the present moment, another is the point of view of unity of experience and so on, in many different phases, and he develops them throughout the book.

To be continued tomorrow...But we have just a couple of minutes, if there are any questions.

(Inaudible)... 'When you die, the world dies with you' – what does he say about this? Because for each of us the world exists only as far as we perceive it and when we die, there is no world left. Maybe it's there for other people...(inaudible)

I don't agree that there is no world after we die.

How do you know?

I don't know. How do you know?

I don't.

So, I don't agree. 'When we die, the world dies with us'. Certainly, I suppose, we could say that after we are dead, we can't experience anything. In that sense there is no world. But from a common sense view, after I die, I am sure everybody else will carry on living.

But assuming we die, we can't have the same effect can we? We are a cause of things happening, while we are alive. But we are less likely to cause things to happen when we are dead.

You could cause plants to grow on the top of your grave, ...

That's true.

...cause the soil acidity to change, cause your family to weep, and so on; so we can have quite a powerful effect by dying. But after we die, the world disappears; yes, in a sense it does. After we die, the world stays as it is; yes, in a sense it does. Which one is right? We'll have to wait and see.

There is a Swedish poet who says that we think when life ends, death begins, but when life ends, death ends.

Yes, you can say so; (the bell rings). The lecture has ended.

Thank you very much.