

Dhamma Questions & Responses

by Ajahn Buddhādāsa

Interpreted into English by Santikaro Bhikkhu

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In the late 80s and early 90s, until his health deteriorated too much, Ajahn Buddhādāsa gave regular lectures during the monthly international retreats held at Suan Mokkh and then Suan Mokkh International Dharma Hermitage. Usually, Ajahn spoke in Thai and Santikaro Bhikkhu interpreted into English live. Audio recordings are now available from www.suanmokkh.org and www.bia.or.th. The following is a transcription generously made by a Dhamma volunteer. If you noticed possible improvements to the text and would like to contribute, please kindly contact the Buddhādāsa Indapañño Archives in Bangkok (suanmokkhbkk@gmail.com).

What is the difference between dhātus and dhammas, if any?

The root of both these words is the same – that which upholds itself, that which maintains itself. So the root meaning is identical in both words. But, when it comes to using these words, putting them into practice, the term *dhātu* is a more scientific term, whereas the word *dhamma* is a more religious or moral term. So the difference is primarily in how they are defined and how they are used, which means there's not such a big difference.

In the everyday city life would there be any real tangible benefit from the casual study of these laws such as impermanence, conditionality, not-self etc.?

The principle of *idappaccayatā* or conditionality is the interdependency of all things. This law especially can be studied anywhere or everywhere because this law governs the entire universe, the entire cosmos is under this law of conditionality, of interdependency. So this can be studied anywhere, whether in the city or outside the city. The laws such as impermanence and not-self or *anattā* are related to specific situations, specific problems. But still they both can be studied both in the forest and in the city. It's not dependent so much upon the place, for the law of *idappaccayatā* covers everything and so it can be studied anywhere at any time.

So anywhere where the laws of time and space apply, right there the law of *idappaccayatā*, the natural principle of conditionality can be studied right there and then, whether at home, in the market, or in the forest.

The laws of impermanence, un-satisfactoriness, and not-self are included within the law of idappaccayatā and therefore are also universal.

How does Dhamma and the laws of Dhamma or nature relate to ecology into one's duty towards the environment?

Everything that can be called an ecosystem or an ecology is under the laws of nature; the law of nature governs all ecosystems and all ecology, and the law of nature stipulates how things work. For example, if things are done in this way, our environment will be dirty, but if things are done in that way our environment will be clean. The law of nature itself just governs how causes and results interact, as for our responsibilities or duties regarding the environment, this is something that human beings create themselves and so that's something human beings must discover and decide upon themselves. However, if those responsibilities which human beings decide upon, if they are incorrect according to the law of nature, then the result of these responsibilities will be pain, trouble, and *dukkha*. However, if those responsibilities are correct in terms of the law of nature, then the results will be well-being, comfort, and peace. So if we speak about the responsibility towards the environment, we should understand that it be in line with the duty according to natural law, which is the third meaning of the word Dhamma.

Evolution seems to have developed greater varieties of individual characteristics that support the concept of self in man than in most other beings. Why therefore fight against natural conditions by trying to eliminate self, no matter how noble the cause of peace may be?

The thing about self is that whenever the concept of 'self' arises, there is *dukkha*. There is *dukkha* right then and there, and then out of that concept of 'self' further arises egoism and selfishness. So due to this concept of self, one harms both oneself and others, one abuses both oneself and others. One should be careful to discriminate between different levels of understanding and practice; for example, although there may be the concept of self, if it is dealt with correctly, if we practice properly, there will be some benefit in that self and it will not harm others or oneself so much. But if the concept of 'self' arises and we deal with it unwisely, then it will be the source of great harm for both oneself and others. So on an ordinary level we should never forget that self must depend on itself. We must depend on ourselves because there isn't anyone else who can do it for us. Therefore, on the beginning level, when getting started, we'll still be operating on the level of self, but on the highest level of Dhamma one sees that any kind of self, no matter how good, how noble, any kind of self is *dukkha*, that any kind of self is a burden and so one seeks to eliminate all

concepts of self. But on an ordinary level one is abandoning evil and harmful concepts of self and tries to develop a better self, a less troublesome self. But once any feeling of sense of self is gone, then problems and difficulties concerning how one must help oneself are finished. One no longer has to be concerned with depending on oneself or helping oneself.

For me, a friend is a person I care for, someone I'm attached to, but attachment leads to dukkha. I learned that this week. But without attachment the person would not be a friend for me, so can you explain what friendship is for a Buddhist?

If we look at this matter deeply we'll see that a friend arises only because there is attachment to self, because if we didn't attach to 'self' there would be no friend. This merely follows the law of *idappaccayatā*, the way causes and conditions lead to new causes and conditions endlessly. Because we attach to self, we have certain desires and then because of these desires we want someone that is a friend to help us achieve our desires. This is how out of attaching to self, a friend is born. But if one has no more desires or attachments, then there is no need, and there is no friend. However, when one is on this more ordinary level of life, when one still has desires and therefore needs friends, it's important to find the kind of friends who can help us to achieve the things we really need to achieve. These are called 'good friends' or *kalyāṇamitta*, those friends who help us to realize the most important things in life. So this is basically a moral issue, it's a matter of *sīla-dhamma*, of morality. Just dealing with ordinary life in the world, it's not an issue of *paramattha-dhamma* or of absolute truth, of supreme truth – the kind that liberates. This kind of question has to do with life on the beginners level. One should never forget the principle that one must help oneself, that you can only depend on yourself. Therefore, a friend is merely someone who helps us depend on ourselves more quickly, more easily. We can never depend on that other person, but a good friend can help us to discover how to depend on ourselves. We should never forget this principle. This was a very important principle of the Buddha's "*Attā hi attano nātho*" (One must depend on oneself, no one else can help us. There isn't anyone else we can depend on).

Since there is no 'I,' no 'me,' and no 'mine,' I know it really wasn't my father who died of cancer, or my friend who died of AIDS, and on an intellectual level I know that everything is impermanent. But what advice do you give to people who are still hurting years after a loved one's death, and how does one get rid of the memories which are still so strong of having watched these wonderful people deteriorate?

The first response to this question is the same as we have just mentioned – if there's no attachment to self, there won't be any problems like this. One will not have any difficulties about the way nature takes its course. But once there's a sense of self, then the self will look for people and things that are of use to it, that benefit it, or the self will feel a desire to be thankful to the people and things that have helped it. Once there is a sense of self we create this feeling of 'mine' about other things, either the things that we want to get something from, or the things that have benefited us. Now this is once again on the ordinary level of morality. It's just a natural, instinctual morality that beings, that lives will help each other. This is one way that the law of *idappaccayatā* (conditionality) works. It's just natural that things in nature will help each other. For example, a small chick can help pick the ticks off the face of an adult chicken. The large chickens can't pick the ticks off their own faces, there's nothing they can do about them, but they can go up to a small little chick, put their head down, and the chick will pick the ticks – ticks are little insects that suck blood, there are many of them in the forest. This is just something natural, a natural kind of morality. If on this level animals and people would learn to work together properly, we would live without any problems. If we can live without selfishness then we can live together in ways that we just help each other to deal with worldly situations.

This natural morality and this instinctual helping of each other just follows from the law of *idappaccayatā*, through the flow of causes and conditions which makes up nature. So if someone dies, whether we die or the friend dies, if one understands the law of conditionality, then one will understand death. Instead of creating a problem or *dukkha* out of it the death of whoever will be understood as just being thus. The 'thusness' of it will be understood. It will be seen as 'just that.' That's the way things happen, and then there will be no attachment and no *dukkha* to the situation. So by understanding the law of conditionality, *idappaccayatā*, we can respond wisely to any situation. There's a secret to nature that all *dukkha* occurs because of ignorance (*avijjā*) and attachment (*upādāna*), and there's a place in the scriptures where the Buddha recommends to kill the mother and kill the father. The Buddha actually said this, however, father and mother have a different meaning here. Father represents ignorance and mother represents attachment. So when we speak on the highest level of Dhamma it's okay to kill the mother and the father, because it's ignorance and attachment which gives birth to this sense of self. If we kill that ignorance and

attachment then there is no more self to be creating problems and dukkha. If we speak in the normal way of morality, if we speak in an ordinary, popular, and moralistic religious way, then to say to kill one's father is a horrible thing, but in the language of the highest Dhamma, of the Dhamma that liberates, one must kill one's mother and father. There are some sayings of the Buddha or *Buddhavasita* of the Buddha which stupid people cannot understand, and they get some people very upset and confused for they don't understand. One of these is the saying that which we just mentioned – to kill one's mother, to kill one's father. Another is to be an ungrateful person, an *akataññū* person. The word *kataññū* in the language of morality, in people language, means to be grateful, so in the ordinary meaning to be an *akataññū* person is to be an ungrateful one. So some people when they hear this – to kill one's father and mother and be a very ungrateful person, they think that this is a real criminal teaching. However, the Buddha is not speaking in people language here, but rather in the highest Dhamma language. The things that give birth to the self are not our biological parents but merely ignorance and attachment, which give rise to the self. Once the 'self' concept is born then one attaches to this as 'my mother' and to that as 'my father.' Now all that the Buddha said to get out of dukkha, to escape from dukkha, was to 'kill the mother and kill the father,' and be an *akataññū* person. However, in Dhamma language *akataññū* doesn't mean to be 'ungrateful,' but rather *akata* means 'that which is not made, not formed, not created;' so the thing which is unconcocted, unaffected by a cause or condition. *Aññū* means 'to know.' So *akataññū* here means 'be one who knows that which cannot be affected or concocted by anything.' These words cannot be understood by people who do not understand the language of Dhamma. If we interpret everything in the simple language of morality, we will get very confused.

When I first repeated these words of the Buddha I was severely scolded and reviled by many people, they called me a liar. They said that the Buddha would never say such a thing as kill one's mother and kill one's father, and so they just started getting angry with me right away and didn't even listen to the explanation. So this is a certain kind of problem that exists also.

So therefore, we ask that you listen very carefully with an open mind, until you understand the Dhamma meaning of our words very profoundly. There are other sayings such as this one, that the ordinary moralistic Buddhists never talk about, but with an open mind one can come to understand them.

Buddhism is only concerned with the quenching of dukkha, and all other concerns and questions not directly related to that are ultimately unimportant. However, it seems that humanity is spread out along a long road of evolution, and it is only those who naturally occupy a position towards the end of the road, namely near to Nibbāna and the realization of not-self, who are naturally, spiritually, and intellectually mature enough to be able to accept benefit from and understand such a refined pure practice and philosophy as Buddhism. Meaning that all those others further back along the road who are not so spiritually and intellectually mature, who make up the vast bulk of humanity, are not capable of accepting such a refined religion, and it could be said that its very refinedness may be the thing that prevents the spiritual growth and progress on a simpler level. Therefore, can it be said that Buddhism, especially Theravāda Buddhism, is a religion that appeals and is directed towards a select majority and it may explain why even though Buddhism is the most advanced evolved knowledge of mankind, it remains confined to a small section of the world?

Much of what you say is true. The reality which is called ‘Nibbāna’ is not understood easily or without effort and practice. This is very true. In fact when the Buddha first awakened to dependent origination, and to Nibbāna, he thought it was so difficult and profound that it wasn't worth trying to teach. However, later he decided that there would be some people who were capable of understanding what he had discovered. So he decided to teach and then the readings of the Buddha were recorded and passed on. Of course these are very difficult for many people to understand and we have to admit that there are still people who are rather stupid, who cannot understand these things. So there are various ways that have been developed to help these people. However, at this point let's be very careful about ourselves. If we say that these things are difficult to understand, we don't mean that they are impossible to understand. If these were impossible to understand then there would be no Buddhism. Although difficult, they can be understood. So each of us here should not use their difficulty as an excuse to say ‘I can't understand them, this is too difficult, this is beyond me.’ People who have that attitude are truly stupid, are too stupid to understand the teaching. The approach of someone who is wiser and more intelligent is to do what is necessary to make oneself capable of understanding these things, instead of denying the possibility of understanding. That is, to listen carefully, to reflect deeply, to practice, and to put forth effort in order to be able to understand these things. It's not possible to understand them all at once. If you're waiting to be zapped by a magic wand, then you'll be very disappointed. But if you invest some time and effort, you'll get your money's worth. By making yourself capable you'll come to the point where you can understand these things more and more. This is something important to understand – to take a wise approach in the difficulty of these matters instead of

a stupid approach. In fact Buddhism, in addition to trying to preserve very profound insight into the true nature of things, also has developed a number of techniques and practices for people of weaker commitments and intelligence. If you study these you'll see that some of these later inventions or creations of various teachers, still have the same purpose. For example, there is a common practice for people in Thailand who are called *asim* – these are the old Chinese grandmothers who like to hang around the Chinese temples. A common practice for them is to chant the words *Amitābha*, *Amitāyu*. They're told that if they chant these words eighty thousand times, that when they die a special carriage will wait on the roof of their house in order to take them to Nibbāna. Now at first those who have an understanding of the original teachings of Buddhism will consider this to be rather stupid and superstitious, but if one looks more closely one can see what the teacher who thought up this method was trying to do. The purpose was to get these people to say *Amitābha*, *Amitāyu* eighty thousand times with the understanding that eventually anybody but a real fool would start to wonder, well what do these words mean? Only a real fool would chant them endlessly without asking and inquiring as to their meaning. The word *amitābha* means 'infinite light, boundless light, immeasurable light,' and *amitāyu* means 'infinite life, boundless life, immeasurable life.' Immeasurable life is that which is eternal, which is the synonym for Nibbāna. The same is true for boundless, immeasurable light. So while chanting this eighty thousand times one has the possibility to start to wonder, well what does this mean? This can then be the spark for the beginning of an understanding of what Nibbāna and what Buddhism is really about. So some of these Mahāyāna practices which at first may seem rather foolish or superstitious, if we look closely until we see the original intention of some of these practices, then we will see that they too are designed to lead people towards an understanding of the highest Dhamma. But for people who are on a certain level they can't get there directly and so there are some things available to help them to get to a put [??] place or a level where they can understand. It's true that the highest Dhamma teachings are very difficult to understand, but they are not impossible to understand, and we all ought to put some time and effort into getting ourselves ready so that we can understand them. There's no need to automatically consider oneself to be incapable and therefore to give ourselves no chance of realizing the best thing there is to realize in life.

In Theravāda Buddhism such techniques are not used. Theravāda Buddhism merely encourages people to think and reflect deeply about *dukkha*, and then to think and reflect in the causes of *dukkha*, to investigate where *dukkha* comes from. Through investigation one sees that all *dukkha* comes from ego, so without ego there is no *dukkha*. Then to investigate further that this ego merely comes from being stupid about desire, because of our ignorance we attach to desire as there being someone who desires, and so the ego is born out of this

stupidity about desire. Then investigating why does one desire. Desire happens merely because of ignorance about the feelings – not understanding how feelings are merely natural occurrences, one takes them to be real and important and create desire out of that. Then not understanding how the feelings merely come from contact, because the sense organs are always there ready to experience the world and the world is full of things to be contacted. It's just natural that contact will occur. We have these kind of nervous systems in this kind of world and so contact is natural. Contact happens and due to contact there are the feelings or *vedanā*. Since the feelings are not understood there arises desire and through even more ignorance the desire is attached to as being someone who desires and then ego is born, then due to this ego there is selfishness. So this is the approach of Theravāda Buddhism – to explore dukkha and its' causes in this way. This is a very scientific approach, it's systematic, it's rational; it can be investigated and recreated, and proven by each of us for ourselves. This is an approach that is appropriate for our times, for the era when science is highly developed. It's not necessary for us to go to some of the old techniques, for example, the old Chinese grandmothers. We are in these times able to use this scientific approach of investigating dependent origination – how dukkha arises due to ego, which arises to attachment through the desirer, which arises because of desire which comes from ignorance about feelings, which arise naturally due to contact. Exploring dependent origination then is the scientific approach favored by Theravāda Buddhism.

Since the Buddha's time many people have tried to find all kinds of ways to get free of self. There is a great variety now of techniques and approaches available. For example, in Tibetan Buddhism, they've got what is called 'Tantra' or it's often called 'Tantric Buddhism.' They borrowed many techniques from Hinduism and incorporated them into their own form of Buddhism. One large aspect of Tantra involves sex. Instead of avoiding sex they engage in sex totally in order to achieve the highest forms of sexual experience. Many people misunderstand this and use it as an indulgence or an excuse to get obsessed with sex. But the purpose, supposedly, the way it's supposed to work, is that through experiencing the highest aspects of sexuality and sexual experience, that one sees how deceitful, how elusive it all is, that these experiences and the pleasures that come from them, no matter how powerful or special, deceive the mind – they trick the mind into attachments. And so the purpose is one will recognize that and then transcend all the sexuality and sex, and then realize liberation from self. If you understand what is supposed to happen, it is a way to get rid of the self also, but we don't recommend that you use this approach because it's a very tricky approach and the vast majority of people just get stuck in sex, they get ensnared and trapped in it – although many of the people want to think they are able to do it – but most of them get stuck, so we are not recommending this approach, we are just trying to illustrate the

principle that, since the Buddhist times, many many forms of practice have been developed to get free of self. We, however, recommend that which has always been since the very beginning the central pillar or principle of Buddhism, and this is at the core of all these newer practices and techniques, which is to investigate the reality of dependent origination, to study dependent origination until one sees that the self is just something that originates dependent on other things. And so the self is not really a self. This is the original way and still the best, safest approach for getting free of self. And one when the mind is free of all feelings and thoughts and concepts about self, then there is no way that any *dukkha* can happen.

So don't forget that, if it will free us from self, then that is what we are looking for; if it will free of us from self, that is what Buddhism is all about. Never forget that the essence of Buddhism is to get free of all thoughts, illusions concerning self, and then one will be free of all *dukkha*. But some of the approaches, for example this tantric approaches which use sex, or other approaches which involve inflicting pain on the body, these approaches are very dangerous. One can get lost in them as well as doing other kinds of various harms to oneself and others. One must be very careful. You can use whichever approach that you think will work, but understand what work in me that it will get us free of self. [??] We recommend living correctly, the safest approach has always been to learn how to live correctly, in body, our physical actions, in speech – what we say and think – and in mind, which can be summarized simply as living the noble eightfold path. When one lives in the way that is described as the noble eightfold path, then there is no room for self to arise, so there is no chance of *dukkha*. This is the safest approach and the one we recommend to all of you – to live in the way which is called 'right living' or the 'noble eightfold path.'

To put this in terms that are most appropriate for people who live in such an age of science as this, we can summarize this correct way of living as 'to not attach to positive and negative.' When things make contact, when sights, sounds, smells, etc. make contact, don't regard them as being positive or negative. If you don't regard them as positive and negative, you won't not attach to them, and then this won't be the cause of ego, selfishness and *dukkha*.

To put in words that a child can understand, we can say that the positive pulls us in and the negative pushes us out. The positive pulls in and the negative pushes out. So don't let anything pull you in or push you out, and then you will be free.

An important law of nature is the law of evolution. Let me add this is according to modern science, it has not been absolutely proven. During evolution only those individuals were able to survive and to give their genes to the next generation who were highly selfish and who had a strong desire to sexuality and good food, and who were able to learn from the past and to think about the future. Thus the development of dukkha is inseparably related with the development of the human mind. Dukkha is a natural part of it – without dukkha, no human mind. According to the law of evolution, the quenching of dukkha means quenching of a natural part of the mind. The law of evolution says ‘dukkha is in line with nature.’ Buddhism says ‘dukkha is not in line with nature.’ That is a misunderstanding. Do you deny the law of evolution as a law coining the nature of mind?

We can respond to this quite simply and briefly. There isn't just one evolution, but there are many many lines of evolution, the vast majority of which has failed which have ended in extinction or death. These are all forms of evolution which are incorrect but that kind of evolution or that line of evolution which has survived is that which is correct. The incorrect lines of evolution have failed due to their incorrectness and it's only the correct line of evolution which succeeds and leads to true survival, and it does so because of its correctness. Isn't it better to follow the correct line of evolution so that the evolution of life leads to no *dukkha*? The implication here is, if one is still experiencing dukkha, one has not yet followed the highest line of evolution and one is not really surviving – if one looks at dukkha it's hard to call that 'survival.' Buddhism is asking, 'Is it not better to follow the correct line of evolution so that there is no dukkha?' To live correctly, to evolve correctly is to live without any attachment to life, without any sense of self or ego in life, and then everything will be correct – by removing the self and ego everything is correct – and then this form of evolution will lead to true survival of the fittest. The correct form of evolution can be called 'survival of the fittest,' but to be really fit one must be free of self, free of ego.

We don't stress sex or the material sensual things that support sex and sexuality. We don't stress these the way modern society does because they easily become excessive, and when these things become excessive or incorrect, out of balance, then they become the basis and the object for all forms, all kinds of egoism and selfishness. All the wars that have troubled humanity arise in the end because of this imbalance or excess of sexuality, sex and materialism. Because of this obsession with sensual pleasures and sex, and with luxuries, the vast majority of tragedies that humans have inflicted upon themselves are due to this excess, due to this imbalance. Instead, we stress a correctness – although there might be sex, it's not excessive, it's not out of place, out of balance, it's dealt with correctly and wisely. There will be material things but they are not excessive, they don't become an obsession like they have for most of the world

now. And then when these kinds of material things and sex and the like are in proper balance and are not excessive but are sufficient, then we don't have the kinds of problems with selfishness which create the wars and crimes and the exploitation and the destruction of the environment and all these other things. Any kind of evolution which leads to excess or imbalance – and we can see many forms of these in the modern world – is not the correctness of true survival of the fittest. The true survival of the fittest is truly correct and there is nothing excessive, there is nothing out of balance. This will bring about the highest evolution of the human mind, of human life.

To put it briefly, the positiveness & negativeness which cannot be controlled has tremendous power over us and has no benefit whatsoever, but the positive and negativeness which can be controlled has no power over us and has benefit for us.

Can you explain the difference between the science of religion and others sciences related to the mind such as psychology, psychiatry, neurology? Talking about the spiritual aspect of nature, how would you define the word 'spiritual'?

First, let's consider what is meant by 'science.' For us, when we speak of science we mean that which can be proven directly through our own experience, that which can be investigated, experienced, and proven directly, where we don't have to rely on logic or belief or anything like that – which by the way much of what is called 'science' nowadays cannot be proven, it's deduced using logic – but for us, science can be directly experienced and proven through our direct experience, and other people can recreate these experiences for themselves, thus proving it for themselves. So this is what we mean by 'science.' The science of religion is science of the mind. Much of the science that we are familiar with nowadays is merely material or physical science. Even a lot of psychology deals much more with chemicals and neurons than with mental things. Most of modern science is material and dealing with physical things which is pretty much outside the scope of religious science or the science of religion because science of religion is interested in mental or spiritual things. When we say this religious science or especially Buddhism is concerned with mental things, we mean problems for the mind – those things which are problems and therefore painful for the mind, which of course means *dukkha*. So religious science is the science which leads to an understanding of these mental problems and then a way of ending or solving the problems. Take for example modern psychology. This can come in two basic forms. There's a certain kind of psychology in the world that, although it deals with mental things, is primarily for the purpose of tricking people. Billions of dollars of research are poured into a kind of psychology which is just used to deceive people – whether through propaganda or brainwashing or advertising and other related fields.

Although this could be called a science of the mind, it is in no way religious because it has no intention to help people, it's just deceiving and taking advantage of people. But another kind of psychology deals also with the mind but it has the intention of helping people to end their mental problems. Any psychology which helps the mind to develop further in order to have control over itself, any kind of psychology that leads to self-control – or even further elimination of the self – this could be considered religious science. We could talk of spiritual psychology which leads to freedom from self, and then there is the ordinary worldly psychology which, instead of helping people to control themselves, is used instead to control and manipulate and exploit people. This is the primary difference between what we could call 'religious science' and 'worldly science.' Worldly science is often material, and then worldly science is especially used to take advantage of people instead of helping them. In the end, the word 'spiritual' simply means to deal with the most profound and important problem of the mind which is the problem of the *dukkha* created by attachment to self. So 'spiritual' simply means the realm of attachment to self and getting free of attachment to self.

In order to know and understand nature, and to practice correctly in line with nature, one can either go into the forest and learn your method of realizing Dhamma, or go into the laboratory investigating the law of nature our duty [??] by doing research. What do you think about the latter approach?

In brief, we need both approaches. For studying physical things as well as psychic phenomena the laboratory is better. For dealing with things that are purely material or just purely mental phenomena, psychic phenomena, the laboratory is best. But for studying spiritual things, the forest is best.

In order to unveil the secrets of life scientists must destroy life by using animals in experiments. For example, problems like aids can only be solved if one understands the immune system fully. Since we cannot use humans we have to study the immune system in animals. What do you think about this problem? Do you think it is inappropriate to kill a few animals to save many human lives?

There's an important principle to be understood which is not a Buddhist principle but it's a principle important in all religions, it's a fundamental religious principle which is that to kill with selfishness, to kill animals selfishly, that is with ignorance, with anger, with hatred, with greed and so on, is considered evil or in some religions it's called 'sinful.' To kill selfishly is evil or sinful, this is a universal religious principle. However – and that applies in the laboratory as well as elsewhere – if there is the same kind of activity going on but the motivation is not selfish, if it isn't motivated by ignorance, greed,

anger, hatred, and so on, then we don't call that 'killing.' If it's done with true mindfulness and understanding or wisdom, we don't call it killing and we don't say that it is evil or sinful. For example, if there is truly necessary research, and it is done with wise motives, with valid reasons, and there's nothing selfish involved, we don't call that killing or sinful. What it comes down to is, is it being done selfishly just for the benefit of a few or for oneself – for example to make a name in the scientific community and so on – or is it being done unselfishly for the common benefit, for the benefit of the majority or of all? This is the deciding factor - whether it's done selfishly or with mindfulness and wisdom.

The basic principle is that to cause something or someone to die, if it is done with selfishness that is called killing, but to do something which causes something to die, but it is done without selfishness but with genuine understanding, then that is not called killing. For example, abortion: if abortion is done selfishly, that is killing or murder, but if there are proper reasons for the abortion, then that is not considered killing or murder.

If we use this principle as far as doing experiments on animals, then wouldn't the same principle apply to doing experiment on human beings because it's just the choice of society that we chose to experiment on animals, but it's considered immoral to experiment on human beings. We could choose to experiment on neither or on both, also.

To cause something to die through selfish intention, through selfish motivation is called killing. But if there is no selfishness, just wisdom, genuine intelligence, then it's not called killing. For example, an executioner. If according to the constitution and the laws of the country, if a person has been condemned to death by the courts, and according to the laws of that society, the person is condemned to death, then there is one person called the executioner whose duty it is to carry out the laws of that society. That is not called killing, it is merely called doing one's duty. Another example is when farmers plow their fields – whether he's a rice farmer in Thailand, or the corn farmer in America or the wheat farmer in Russia – when the farmer ploughs his or her fields, many animals will die, that's inevitable. If the intention is wise without greed, anger and delusion, then that is not considered killing, it's just doing the duty. Farmers have to plant the food in order for people to eat, so the farmer is just doing his or her duty and not killing. And another example is, if you shoot a gun in self-defense and as a result someone dies, that is not considered killing. If one is merely protecting oneself, defending oneself, then one is actually one's duty correctly.

So to cause death and to kill are not the same thing. To kill is to cause something to die with selfish intention. But to cause the death of something for a higher purpose – if the purpose is merely selfish that is called killing – but if

there is a higher purpose, then it is not called killing. So don't think that these two things are the same. To cause death and to kill are not the same.

We've used over two hours, the speaker is out of energy and the listeners probably don't have much energy left either so we'll close today's meeting.

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Transcribed by Anonymous (3408-q&a.kkk). Reformatted in 2014

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