

Das Buddhistische Haus

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What should the new religion look like?

by Dr. Paul Dahlke

One thing is certain: the religious situation of modern people is even worse than the social situation, and religious reconstruction is even more necessary than social reconstruction. Why?

Because the root of the religious goes deeper than the root of the social, because man is more of a religious than a social (or as Aristotle says: a political) being. One can well imagine someone living outside any social community, for example as Robinson, and yet still being a fully-fledged human being.

However, it is impossible to imagine that someone can remain a fully-fledged human being without any religion. After all, it is the religious, not the social disposition that ultimately distinguishes humans from animals. The animal is also socially inclined, often far more so than the human being; but it is not religiously inclined and so religion is ultimately the flowering of all humanity and this flowering must not be allowed to wither.

That is why we say once again: one thing is certain - we need a new religion! And why do we need it? - Because the old one no longer fits. And why does it no longer fit? Because we have outgrown it - in our thinking. Our thinking no longer allows us to take the dogmas of the old religion for truth. Even if we wanted to, the mind forbids it and it is incorruptible. Just as a child can never return to its mother's womb once it has left it, the mind can never return to the womb of faith once it has left it.

The symbol of faith is a dogma; for faith, because it is at odds with reality, requires dogma precisely in order to assert its authority over reality. The symbol of dogma is the Church. We are therefore able to answer the question from the outset: What must the new religion not look like? The answer is: it must not be a church and must not have the possibility of becoming a church. This means that it must not be based on dogma and that it must not be a religion of faith.

But is religion even possible without faith? Are religion and faith not equivalent, like day and sun?

With this question, we approach our actual task.

The Middle Ages, the Dark Ages, is the time of devout religiosity - a time of great but terrible and violent uniformity, between faith and knowledge.

This uniformity, because it was not based on harmony with reality and therefore required violence to maintain it, crumbled as knowledge began to adapt to this contradiction or experience. From the ruins of scholasticism, a world view emerged that began with the overthrow of the astronomical view of the world and has now found its provisional conclusion in the so-called theory of relativity. The result of this scientific upheaval, which has taken all these centuries to mature, is briefly this: There are no absolute values.

Natural science and its view of world events floods the thinking of modern mankind like a tremendous stream and brings this mankind, if it takes the trouble to think at all, into irreconcilable contradiction with the demands of the old religion, which is based precisely on the belief in the absolute "soul" or "God".

Scientific thinking ultimately consists of adapting to reality. The fact that natural science was right in creating its new world view is evident from the fact that its ability to adapt to reality and, accordingly, its ability to make predictions has increased. Even if we do not know what we have in our hands; even if all the concepts with which science works are only so-called working hypotheses, we know very well how we can use what we have in our hands, and this result has been achieved through the gradual transformation of the old rigid thought values into mobile ones, of absolutes into relativities.

In the midst of this general movement of all values in world affairs, the religions of faith, i.e. primarily Christianity, with their absolute "soul", "God", stand like backwardness, which leads to serious discord and friction with every attempt at thought. Religion, if it is to be effective, must not contradict reality. This demand was not urgent as long as scientific thinking itself remained in a state of unreality, i.e. in the belief in absolute values. The existing unity between religion and science, which the Middle Ages offered, was due to the ignorance of its science, which in its way worked with the same dogmatic-absolute values as religion. In centuries of labor, natural science has now expelled all rigid values, has completely moved on and we are now faced with the question: What do we do with these backward, rigid remnants of faith, called religion? What do we do with these absolutes "soul", "God", which also protrude into modern thinking like the stagnant debris of a lost world?

But is Christianity really backward? Could it not be that science and faith complement each other in such a way that science sets the pace, so to speak, for religion? That it processes the part of world events that presents itself to the senses in such a way that a supernatural within world events within world events does not become an impossibility, but on the contrary a necessity? Only science has revealed the astonishing order within world events. Only this order has made it possible to find its laws. But does this not prove the existence of a higher, guiding force? So that modern natural science, when it arrogantly says: "We don't need God, we explain everything by law", could perhaps be like the inexperienced person who says: "We don't need coal, we now burn gas". Just as gas necessarily presupposes coal, it could be that scientific law necessarily presupposes the ordering God, and that it is precisely the resolving work of science that makes the belief in an absolute, indissoluble thing a necessity - precisely as a foil, as a reflex, as the "not" of all these infinite relativities.

So the basic question for the thinking person is this: Are there any facts within world events that make the existence of a supersensible, transcendent, higher power, in short: God, a mental necessity? For the question: "Is God" can never be answered by itself; God is precisely that which is not accessible to any intellectual conclusion, no matter how far and wide these conclusions may reach. "God" always remains that which lies beyond the horizon. Thus the question of the intellectual necessity of God can only be answered from within the world. Are world events such that they make "God" mentally necessary?

Of course, modern science is right when it refuses to see proof of God's existence in the order, i.e. regularity, that prevails in the universe.

In fact, this regularity is completely explained as a gradient. It is not divine laws, but laws of fall that prevail here, and you don't need God to fall - not us, not the molecules, not the celestial bodies. At any given moment, the entire mass of the world can be seen as a gradient taking place according to certain laws. Every gradient is a balancing process. Every equalization presupposes differences, but nothing can be said of this play between equalization and difference, which the physicist calls "world events", other than that it rolls back into a beginningless series. Every attempt by science to give this beginningless series a stake has taken the heaviest revenge on science itself, because with every such attempt it also tries to violate reality. All world events, insofar as they belong to the masses, are explained as a gradient. Every moment of this gradient is explained - not by the fingers of God, but - by its own preconditions. That is why we said above: We do not need God to fall. But the question is, do we not need him to get up?

There is an area within world events that is quite "rebellious" towards the laws of the Fall: the prayers of the inner life, in short: the will. The will never, ever submits to the laws of the Fall and thus to predictability. It is stubborn and so it could be that the intellectual necessity for the existence of God does not lie in the realm of necessity, but precisely in the realm of freedom. Because I have the will and therefore the freedom of will, has the existence of God perhaps become a necessity?

If I had free will, if the will were free, then man himself would be creative, i.e. God himself. It does not take a great deal of judgment to find out that the will is not free. Both faith and science have turned to this problem with great zeal, because both felt that their own existence depended on the solution to this problem. Since morality in the sense of the religions of faith is only possible with freedom of will, faith has made the unintentional joke of teaching a human being who is a creature of God and yet is supposed to be endowed with free will. On the other hand, science has endeavored to drag the will over into its realm of fall phenomena and has declared it without much ado to belong to the realm of necessity, that is, to be unfree.

The fact that both interpretations are possible, and that both could be defended with much effort - one by depth of faith, the other by science - shows that they are both wrong. Is the only move in chess free or unfree? It is both, which means neither: it is the result of its predecessor and the question of freedom or lack of freedom could therefore only be answered by this predecessor. The latter, however, would push it back into its predecessor and so on in a series that offers no conclusion in itself. The fact that the game of chess has a first stake after all falls under the same problem; here too, the question of whether free or unfree is pushed back onto the predecessor. Similarly, the fact that the bearer of the will, the "I", has a first stake after all, does not apply here; for this first stake has preconditions, regardless of where they lie and where they may be sought, and the problem is pushed back onto them.

Thus, for the unprejudiced thinker, neither the realm of lawfulness, as it prevails in the realm of the fall, nor the realm of unlawfulness, as it prevails in the realm of the will, is a necessity for the existence of God. Only the unity of both realms, coinciding in the fact that there is something at all, that there is not nothing, would remain as the ultimate reason.

But what is true of this fact is also true of the other two: it rolls back into a series that only has a beginning and only gives a decision if what is to be decided first has already been decided beforehand. For the unprejudiced thinker, the fact that there is something at all results in nothing but the prospect of a series without a beginning: such a series, however, contains neither a mental necessity for, nor a mental necessity against the existence of God; the whole question remains necessarily undecided in relation to it.

If one strictly adheres to this impartiality of thought, one realizes that reality does not grasp the whole God problem at all. But reality alone is what matters here. For when someone thinks, his thinking only has value if and insofar as he remains in harmony with reality. But neither "There is a God" nor "There is no God" can be heard from this reality; nothing at all can be heard from

it, but it stands there in the impenetrable, dark silence of beginninglessness. The world, reality, has more to do than to argue for or against God. Every moment of reality is always only itself and always points back to itself.

This is the first thing that the real thinker has to learn and it is astonishing that so few people have grasped and understand this. The watchword of reality is "beginninglessness". In it, however, God has no place at all, indeed, strictly speaking, the idea of God cannot even begin to form in it, just as insoluble slag cannot begin to form in a red-hot crucible. It would be one of the most important and instructive experiments to see whether an uneducated child's brain could ever fall for the idea of God of its own accord? I think not, if it is kept uncontaminated by popular opinions and ideas. Of course, this would also be one of the most difficult attempts, because it would require the pupil to be placed, so to speak, under an airless bell in his spiritual training. It is doubtful whether the experiment could ever be carried out, and if it were, it would not be conclusive either, because a failure can never be considered proof. Kaspar Hauser had no concept of God when he was "born", but he was later taught one. What emerges from this? Nothing! It speaks neither for nor against.

If no science can prove anything against the existence of God and no faith can prove anything for it, then the whole question seems to be doomed to insolubility and indifference towards all religions becomes a necessity. But that would be a premature judgment; for the next question of the unprejudiced thinker will be the same: Are God and religion synonymous? Must one always come to terms with God before one can come to religion? Does the path to religion necessarily go through God?

Human thinking has become so obsessed with the idea that religion is belief in God or, to put it more philosophically: that religion is the relationship between the finite and the infinite - a contradiction in terms, since the two have no relationship at all - that the possibility of arriving at religion by eliminating the concept of God is not considered at all and all the boldness of religious "re-creation" is allowed to fizzle out in mere variations of the human-divine relationship. Man is then faced with the two exclusions: either to believe unconditionally or to reject religion unconditionally.

With the unusual circumstances in which we have found ourselves as a result of the world war and the accelerated development of the last few decades, the tendency towards both the one and the other has increased; just as in such times of spiritual inferiority everything tends towards the opposites. On the one hand, efforts are being made to throw religion completely overboard in religion-free schools and replace it with mere moral instruction (a suburban Berlin community has already made a start on this); on the other hand, faith, with the enormous sacrifices it demands of real thinking in dogma, is making its demands more strictly than ever. If a religion of faith has any prospect of success today, it can only exist in unconditional devotion to God, i.e. to the God-idea - precisely as Catholicism. Protestantism, with its cheeky attempts to add a drop of thinking to the cup of faith, has run itself into the ground with these attempts, which it calls "religious development". Where there is thinking, there is no room for faith, just as where there is light, there is no room for darkness. Thinking and faith do not complement each other, they are mutually exclusive. Catholicism has never forgotten this. That is why its (unspoken, but practiced) motto was always: All or nothing! That is why, during the World War, it kept itself much further away from the embarrassments than Protestantism, which harmed itself and did the nation no good through its careless and irreligious entanglement with the national idea. Therefore, where religious inclinations exist at all (and they still exist among the majority of people), religion in the form of Catholicism, i.e. in a form which, transcending state and race, is addressed to all people, is what is given under today's conditions. It is certainly more than a mere coincidence that the first foreign power to establish official relations with post-war Germany was the Vatican. Germany is as religiously troubled as it is politically and socially, and the hope is that it will be a willing breeding ground for new seeds of faith.

For the time being, people are tired of tearing each other apart in the name of the various imperial and national goods. Apart from a few local backwardnesses, the "Christian-national" has played out for the time being. Just as the political trend is towards a League of Nations and world arbitration, the religious trend is towards the brotherhood of man and world religion, and preachers who preach along these lines are not preachers in the wilderness today. This is proven by the rapid spread (as far as one can judge from the reports) of the newest religious current, the newest Catholicism: the Bahai world religion, whose legitimate representative is currently the "Bab" Abbas Effendi in Tiberias (Palestine). Abbas Effendi summarizes the goal of his religion in the sentence: "The time will come when people will not ask themselves: are you a German, a Persian, a Christian, a Muslim, a Jew, but only: are you Bahai? That means: how far does your goodness, your pure humanity go?"

Now don't think that the suburban Berlin community mentioned above, which has thrown religion out of its school curriculum altogether, would answer differently to the "Bab" from the Sea of Galilee when asked about its goals. When people speak and think without being influenced, it always comes out that the highest thing they strive for is precisely this pure humanity. In this search for pure humanity, Catholicism in all its possible forms, whether it is based in Rome or in Tiberias, and the most extreme non-religious movements coincide. Only the one does not consider pure humanity possible without God, while the other wants to create it directly from a mere moral lesson.

Shouldn't every thinking person come to the conclusion that religion has its roots not in belief in God, but in humanity? And so we are now asking the question that mankind should have been asking since time immemorial and is not: What is religion?

Let us not be misunderstood: this question has been asked infinitely often, but never impartially, but always, as they say in telegram style, with an unpaid reply. We know this reply in thousands and thousands of different forms: Religion is belief in God or the relationship between man and God.

This answer is quite inadequate because it is biased and because it leaves the realm of reality. Reality, however, is our only and highest judgment seat. If we abandon it, we will be on the high level of what we think and believe, where every gust of wind tosses us to and fro. We may only decide to take such a step if there is absolutely no other option.

What possibility should compel us to do so? We answer: the search of man!

What one seeks, he does not know. Thus we can give a very general answer to the question for the time being: What is religion? And this answer is: it is an expression of human searching, that is, of what man does not know and what he hopes to recognize when he is able to see beyond this life.

And what is it that man does not know? We answer: he knows far too much of the phenomena of life through the help of science; but he does not know the best, namely the reason for life, the primal cause of life, the force on the basis of which life exists and is experienced. In this sense one can say: religion is a doctrine of force. A doctrine of vitality, and because people have not been able to create this doctrine of vitality from reality, they have turned to the transcendent, to faith, that is, to "God".

It is not 'God' that is ultimately the focus of man's search, but this primordial ground of existence, and it is only because this primordial ground cannot be found that it is believed to exist in 'God'. This must be noted, and in the whole evaluation of the religions of faith, one must never forget that "God" is nothing more than a conceptual support that one had to and must necessarily apply to reality as long as it did not have the necessary inner support, the necessary backbone within itself.

This backbone, which alone could give reality support in itself, is precisely this primal ground of life, the force through which life exists and lives itself.

How hopelessly human thinking faces this question is shown by the behavior of modern natural science, which, deliberately and consciously putting aside the question of the origin of life, only deals with the phenomena and has achieved its astonishing successes despite this neglect, indeed precisely because of it.

Modern science has perhaps recorded this as its main success, that it clearly recognizes that the question that constitutes the essence of all religion is not its field at all, and it only remains truly scientific insofar and as long as it holds on to this insight. The field of science is limited to that which in some respect presents itself to the senses and which can therefore be compared, measured and calculated in advance. We call this field "re-reality" (see the essay "World and I", New Buddhist Journal 1920). The primordial ground of life, the force through which life exists, can only be sensual and can therefore never be the subject of science. It is the real thing in life and thus it can be said that science is concerned with the countless re-realities, religion with the only reality of life, precisely the force through which life exists.

This brings us back to the beginning of our essay. We said there that we need a new religion because science has given us a new worldview. This is not to be understood in the sense that we have to adapt the new religion to the new world view, or even that it has to emerge from it - science, because it only deals with the sensual, can never provide a religion - but rather that the new religion must not contradict this new world view, which unquestionably gives a certain side of world events and gives it correctly, as is shown by the ability to predict - I say: that the new religion must not contradict this new world view. But this is what all religions of faith do by embracing, or attempting to embrace, the entire field of science and thus venturing into an area in which the religiously dogmatic view must necessarily lead to intellectual friction, even outright absurdity. Religion, as going to the primordial ground of life, and science, as going to the phenomena of life, have separate spheres, of which only one relationship is required, namely: that they do not contradict each other and thus the sense of reality, and since both religion and science have understood each other correctly, it will follow that they will never again come into conflict with each other.

Now the question arises: Is the comprehension of this primordial ground, i.e. religion, an absolute necessity for man? Could not his spiritual needs be satisfied from the sensual realm of world events, that is, from science?

To this question we reply, coming back to the above comparison of the young creature under the glass bell: As little as a brain under the glass bell, i.e. protected from all foreign influences of thought, would voluntarily come up with the idea of God, just as little would it voluntarily renounce the question of the primordial ground of life. The fact that the renunciation of religion and its replacement by scientific nourishment is considered possible at all is precisely due to this unfortunate and momentous equation of religion and belief in God. Religion is a necessity, belief in God is not a necessity and can therefore perhaps be replaced by the results of science. But what religion is irreplaceable, and so it takes an unheard-of degree of mental illusion for a mind to allow itself to be fobbed off with the wonders of heaven and earth and to neglect to ask about the next miracle, the miracle of its own existence.

Of course, education can do anything; perhaps it could also bring about the alienation of man from what is most important, i.e. from himself. But even if human development wanted to move in this direction, it would not be allowed to do so; religion is needed for a very obvious purpose: it must provide humanity with that measure of morality that is necessary for its well-being.

Real morality can only flow from religion. And why is that? - Morality is, in short, selflessness.

Everything else that people want to ascribe to the term "morality" will sooner or later prove to be wrong. Being moral means being selfless and nothing more. To be selfless means to exercise compulsion against oneself; for man's nature is based on selfishness, indeed it is selfishness. Man can only be truly compelled from within himself, from that which he has necessarily understood: that is, strictly speaking, he cannot be compelled at all, but can only compel himself - precisely from his own thinking. I must have grasped the primordial ground of life, that is, myself, in order to grasp real morality; for only from this primordial ground can the motive arise as to why I must be moral. This extends our definition of morality above to say that being moral means having to be selfless and this "must" comes solely from religion. Real morality must develop as a mental necessity from religion and there is only one characteristic of the reality of a religion: that it emits morality as a mental necessity.

So we now give a second answer to the question of why we need a new religion: we need a new religion because the old one has failed. And it has failed because it has ceased to provide the necessary moral content for humanity.

We are still too close to the inhumanities of the world war, in which religion was only used, i.e. abused, as a tool of the state's hunger for power, to be able to give a historically calm answer to the question of why religion failed in the world war. The inner indignation is still too strong to make such an answer possible. But we repeat it with the utmost, unwavering determination: it failed! And what is the point of salt if it is no longer salty? It is no longer salt. What is the incense for if it is no longer fragrant? It is no longer incense. It is precisely this shameful failure of religion that encourages the atheistic tendencies in their attempts to remove religion altogether. They want to replace religion with mere moral instruction. But these tendencies forget that there is no morality that exists solely for its own sake. Morality, if it is to be real, that is, if it is to bring about selflessness, must be rooted in religion, spring from it, otherwise it remains a sport, a matter of good will and personal decency and will most certainly fail where it is most needed. Morality is self-compulsion; self-compulsion needs motives, motives and these motives are only provided by religion. People who want to offer young people morality without religion will soon realize that they are building on sand. They are like the man in the Buddha's words who builds a ladder without having a building to which he can attach it.

Even assuming that humanity could live without religion, it cannot live without morality. And that gives the religions of faith the sad courage to appear again and again on the trampled fields of humanity with their sackcloth and to scatter the numb seeds of their baseless gospel with thoughtless certainty into this hideously furrowed face, which must squeeze tears from the eyes of every thinking person. These spirits know: humanity needs us! And that is why they dare, in the places of their spiritual defeats, in these places that are still steaming with the blood of the unfortunate, whose death is one great cry of indignation at the ineffectiveness of the religions of faith - I say, in these places they dare to appear again and again as givers and victors and offer their worthless gifts. When will humanity finally be outraged by such behavior! I say it will do so from the day when it has something better to put in place of the salt that no longer salts; this incense that no longer smells; this reality that no longer works; in short, from the day when it has a new religion. And now let us summarize the essence of this new religion in a single keyword: this new religion must be real, that is, it must not contradict reality as we know it through experience, and it must be effective, must have an effect on morality, must allow morality to emerge from itself as a mental necessity.

A religion that does not create morality is deaf and a morality that is not rooted in religion is groundless. But if religion is to be real, that is, if it is to create morality, it must be the result of an insight. This insight, however, can only concern the primordial ground of life, the force on the basis of which we exist. For only such an insight penetrates into those depths in which religion becomes morality itself. Only when the question of the origin of life, in which the essence of all religion is found, has found an answer in this sense can we speak of religion.

Everything else, no matter how well-intentioned, is fantasy and does not stand up to reality.

Our task is thus mapped out; but how do we solve it? How do we get to this primordial ground of life? Science does not touch the question at all, cannot and must not touch it, because in doing so it would make itself impossible, and where it does, it puts itself in danger; and faith solves this problem by jumping out of reality on its own authority, precisely through faith. Is there a third way?

Just as there is a third thing between the sensual and the supersensible: my own inner life, my thinking, my consciousness, there is also a third thing between the evidential knowledge of science and the faith of religions: direct experience. My thinking, my consciousness is neither sensual nor supersensible, neither an object of proof nor of faith, but is the true and only reality; the new religion must come from it, if it is to come at all. Experience is necessarily self-experience. Self-experience opens up the path to the primordial ground of life, provided that we find the guide who shows us this path.

Above, we gave an erroneous definition of religion with the sentence: "Religion is the relationship of man to God." Once we have understood that the primal ground of life, religion, can only exist in self-awareness, this sentence changes into the provisionally paradoxical sentence: "Religion is the relationship of man to himself".

Of course, this does nothing for our understanding, because this equation with the two unknowns cannot be solved. Our definition of religion says nothing other than that we need a teacher and a guide to be able to make something of this equation. This teacher and guide is Buddha and his teaching is what we call Buddhism.

It would exceed the task we have set ourselves with this publication if we were to give an account of the Buddha doctrine here. We have done this in so many other places that we can easily refer back to these passages (see the brochure "What is Buddhism and what does it want", also the essay "World and I" in the New Buddhist Journal 1920; the New Buddhist Catechism and finally the explanations to the Long Collection of Discourses, Sutta-Pitaka Vol. II). Here it may suffice to emphasize that the Buddha, in direct self-experience, understood the thirst for life as the force on the basis of whose life (not as world-life, but as I-life) lives and experiences itself, and that he thus understood the primordial ground of existence (not as world-existence, but as I-existence). Everything real is experience; every experience takes place in the personality and not in generalities, whatever they may be called. Buddhism gives that real religion which consists in an experience of man towards himself. But the fact that it gives something real is proven by the fact that it gives something that works. For the new insight that the Buddha gives with his Anatta and Kamma teachings throws up that real morality in which selflessness arises as a mental necessity. Here I must be selfless, not because the interests of humanity demand it, not because God demands it, but because the new insight compels me to be selfless. It is not the world, not God that is swinging the baton here - it is my own thinking that is swinging the baton and whether I want to, whether I don't want to, whether I follow easily and joyfully, whether I follow reluctantly and lamentingly - I have to be selfless if I don't want to run the sting into my own flesh. And no matter how often I sin against myself through acts of selfishness, my thoughts always force me back to selflessness.

Man's relationship to himself, without interpretation a meaningless riddle, is understood here in the Buddha's teaching as morality itself. And this is the stamp of perfection that this single teaching bears on itself, that in it morality and religion are united in such a way that in it religion becomes morality itself. In the religions of faith, morality is the path to religion, that is, to God, and religion, God, is the goal of morality. Here, however, in this new insight opened up by Buddhism, religion and morality stand as a given unity and thus offer the highest that the human spirit can bestow - the true trinity of experiencing, willing and hoping, which can only result from a full insight into reality.

Full insight into reality is only there where there is insight into the power on the basis of whose reality, that is, life experiences itself; which brings us back to the beginning of this treatise:

The misery of all religions is based on their equation with belief in God; the latter requires either blind faith or equally blind rejection. World events, however, offer no justification for either the one or the other; they teach nothing but beginninglessness, and this speaks neither for nor against God. So if Buddhism is to be the real religion that we offer it as; if it really opens up that ultimate insight into the power on the basis of which life experiences itself, then we will have to demand of it that it embraces the God problem in some way. And this he does; not, of course, by disputing God away and destroying him with proofs, but by quietly, indeed now and then smilingly, drawing us into the all-encompassing reality of his thought.

Buddhism as a doctrine of reality also faces the fact of "beginninglessness". No other religion has painted this fact in such an all-encompassing way, in such overpowering images as Buddhism. Those first beginnings of life, to which modern natural science timidly and bashfully gropes, are for him nothing but stages, kappa's in a beginningless game of blossoming and fading, of opening and closing, of development and shrinking. But he masters this beginninglessness, in which both science and faith drown, from the now, in the all-pervading, all-permeating insight of his experience. Precisely because this insight reaches into the forge of his life, to the germ and root of all existence, in such a way that it leaves nothing hidden behind in this now, that is why it leaves nothing hidden behind in the beginninglessness. For before the now there is always, always again the now, and once one now is seen through, so are they all. The beginninglessness is there - how could it be otherwise in a theory of reality; but it becomes resolvable, removable, loses its mystical power through the fact that the now, that is, the I experiencing itself in the now, understands itself as resolvable, as removable. An ego that understands with direct insight that it lives in every now also understands the beginninglessness. For here, beginninglessness becomes nothing but a function of this self-experience. Because I experience myself in every now, because I live myself into being again and again, the fact of my thinking is just as much a given in itself as is the abolishability, the finiteness, as is the beginninglessness. And as the thinker, quietly, penetratingly, lets the now slide completely, without residue, under the fingers of his thinking, as he understands it completely as Sankhara, as conditioning itself from and through itself, he also understands: This is how it has always been and with a single now I understand them all.

Ultimately, however, it is beginninglessness from whose mystical abysses the god rises. Once it is mastered - from the now - so is the God. The whole problem is solved - not in a proof for or against, but in the fact that it becomes invalid in itself. For someone who has understood himself as what he really is: a beginningless product of himself and as such endowed with self-cancellability as the ultimate possibility, the concept of God loses meaning and significance and becomes nothing but the result of a lack of insight into reality. The Buddhist does not fight against God - why should he, since he effortlessly, indeed often with a kind of outstanding humor, pulls him into the merciless circling of reality. The powerful teachings of the Long Collection, especially the Brahmajala Sutta with its story of the origin of the divine, may serve as proof.

This overcoming of the concept of God without a fight is the final proof of the reality of religion that Buddhism provides. The first proof is its compatibility with science, that is, with the facts of experience. This compatibility arises from the fact that Buddhism, as self-experience, that is, as the I experiencing itself in itself, lies entirely outside science, its facts and methods. While science plays itself out in the massive, sensual, comparable, Buddhism plays itself out in the power that, neither sensual nor comparable, is nothing but what it experiences itself as (in thinking and willing) - a power neither in the sense of science: as work performed, nor power in the sense of faith: as immortal soul, but power as direct experience.

The second proof is the creation of a real morality, that is, a morality which, as the result of an insight into my real nature, makes morality a mental necessity, a self-imposed constraint. And the third proof is this silent detachment from the concept of God, which at the same time is also a detachment from every compulsion to believe, from dogma and the church, and thus gives rise to a religion that is human in the most perfect and noble sense.

We are well aware that this new religion, as it presents itself to mankind in Buddhism, will have a difficult path to travel. For as self-awareness, indeed as consciousness experiencing itself, it makes great demands on the seriousness, honesty and sense of reality of the individual. But however great the difficulties of the path may be, we who are the quartermasters and spokespeople of this teaching must not become discouraged. After all, it is not the difficulty of the doctrine itself that makes its path so difficult; the doctrine itself is of perfect simplicity in accordance with its perfection. The difficulties of the path lie in the piled-up prejudices and mental preconceptions. Because the seed field is iced over by scientific and religious dogmas, the teaching has such a difficult path. But just as the sun melts away what obstructs its path to the young seed by showing itself, so the teaching will also melt away all these spiritual solidifications and icing by showing itself. Therefore, show, patiently show again and again, never tire of showing! Even if we do not immediately lure out the young seed, we are still helping to melt away the winter ice.

Veneration him, the teacher!