

Something You don't Like Now, but will Like Later

by Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu

Interpreted into English by Santikaro Bhikkhu

A Dhamma lecture given at Suan Mokkh on 2 September 1988

In the late 80s and early 90s, until his health deteriorated too much, Ajahn Buddhadāsa 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 Buddhadāsa Indapañño Archives in Bangkok (suanmokkhbkk@gmail.com).

Today we'd like to talk about the thing that now you don't like – or you might even hate it – but which later you will like – and maybe even love it. Please listen carefully.

Something You don't Like Now...

This thing which you probably don't like or may not even know about, is the life which is above and beyond positive and negative.

This is something natural, something that anyone can have, can use, can know, can practice and can benefit from. So there is no need to waste any time thinking about whether I am a Christian, whether I am a Buddhist or whatever. Because we are talking about something beyond such categories, something natural, available to all of us, something that does not depend on anyone particular religion.

In ordinary words we just call this 'this life,' but it is a kind of life in which nothing can come in and condition, concoct, fabricate nor create what we call positive or negative. A life where nothing has the ability to stir up positive and negative – that means pleasantness and unpleasantness, liking and disliking, satisfaction and dissatisfaction. This is what we mean by life that is free of positive and negative.

These things which disturb or concoct and fabricate the positive and

negative are of both an external sort, meaning the sights, sounds, odors, tastes, touches and mental objects which we experience, and then there are also some internal things which disturb and concoct. These internal things are nothing but the things we call the ‘defilements,’ the impurities of mind.

For those of you who believe in a religion which holds that there is a ‘God,’ then you must understand that God wants you to be free of positive and negative, to have a life that is not concocted and stirred up by positive and negative. Even the God YHWH of Judaism, of the Old Testament in the bible, even this God showed very clearly that he did not want mankind to be trapped within good and evil – that is within positive and negative. He very clearly forbid Adam and Eve to go and waste their time knowing about positive and negative, good and evil. All of us who believe in a God should understand that God does not want us to get caught up in and trapped by positive and negative.

Although that is what God wants, we are not very interested. Most of us are not interested in such a life and we don’t want it. So we are not very satisfied with this wish of God. However, if we pay careful attention to this matter we will start to get interested and we’ll begin to even desire such a life. And so we are going to use the time we will have today to talk about this so that, before long, you begin to appreciate the life that is beyond positive and negative. We’d like to do this relatively quickly, so that you don’t have to wait too long. If you wait too long, you might be dead before you ever learn about it.

To understand this matter, we first have to know the difference between two things. The first thing is what we call the mind or the heart. The second thing is ‘I’ or ‘me’ or we can say egoistic consciousness. These two things are very different, and so we need to understand this difference before we go on.

Our troubles begin when we experience life with ‘I,’ when we have this feeling of ‘I’ and ‘me.’ When there is just the mind, when we just experience the mind, there is no problem. This experience of ‘I’ though, is where all our troubles begin. Because this is basically ignorant, foolish and stupid, and from this ignorance there arises craving, blind desires and then a foolish clinging to things. And from this clinging and attachment, there arises ‘I,’ the feeling or concept of ‘I,’ that ‘I am,’ ‘I’ exist – which is an illusion, it has no real truth to it, it’s just an illusion which is concocted by our attachment. This attachment stirs up this experience of ‘I’ which is the cause of all our problems. But when there is just mind, just experience of mind, this is something that is purely natural and there is no problem with it.

When somebody insults us or disparages us, yells at us, criticizes us, who

does it bother, who is touched by it or what is touched? Usually it is ‘I,’ ‘I am’ touched by this yelling and criticizing and so ‘I’ hurt; the mind is not touched by it – we should see the difference here, when we are criticized, yelled at or whatever, that the thing that is touched by this is the feeling of ‘I’ and not the mind, the natural mind itself.

When the mind is foolish, stupid, it considers itself to be ‘I.’ The foolish mind takes itself to be ‘I’ and then when there is criticism or disparagement, this ignorant ‘I’ is touched, is disturbed, is hurt by it. But that pure natural mind which has no ignorance is not touched at all. It’s just this ignorant concept of ‘I’ that is hassled and hurt. There is a very big difference here that we need to see between the ignorant illusion of ‘I’ – which gets hurt and harmed – and the pure natural mind – which is not touched at all. But this is something very few people have come to see, we can’t tell the difference between ‘I’ and the mind, we take the mind to be ‘I,’ we take ‘I’ to be the mind. We have modeled up the two and so we have made our lives into a tremendous mess.

Please look carefully and observe that the mind can be kept from suffering. It’s quite easy for the mind, the pure natural mind to avoid suffering, pain, and misery. But ‘I,’ ‘me,’ no matter what you do, I cannot avoid suffering. There is no way you can prevent me from being hurt, from being miserable. There is a tremendous difference between the two. There is really no difficulty in keeping the mind from experiencing suffering and misery, but it is inevitable that ‘I will’ suffer and hurt. You should see this difference very closely in your own life.

It is quite easy for the mind to be without suffering, very simple, but it is impossible for ‘I’ to be free of misery, pain or what we call *dukkha*. Suffering, pain, misery, dissatisfaction is a product of ‘I.’ ‘I’ is what causes our pain. ‘I’ itself is an illusion, the product of ignorance, where the foolish mind is concocted – this joke, this illusion, this trick of ‘I,’ of ‘me,’ of ego. And once this illusion arises, it causes pain, suffering. Having to carry around the burden of ‘I,’ the burden of ego, this in itself is inevitably painful and miserable. Just having an ‘I’ is in itself a drag. The ego is automatically painful and so there is no way that ‘I’ can be free of suffering. But the mind that is free of ignorance, attachment and ego is naturally, completely free of any pain, sorrow, and dissatisfaction. This is the difference.

Let us stress once again that when we are insulted or yelled at, it’s ‘I’ that is touched, the ego, and not the mind itself. The mind is outside of, beyond the influence of any external activity like insults, being yelled at, being criticized, being abused. The mind is beyond this, outside of this. But ‘I,’ ego, is under the influence of all these external factors and activities. And so ‘I’ must suffer from

the power of all those things. The mind itself is free of that influence, the mind is beyond being touched by those things and so makes no problem of them; but 'I' allows itself to be touched and conditioned by all those external things, and therefore it suffers. Please discriminate between these two cases, it will be of great value to you.

When there is just mind, then there is no 'I.' The mind that is pure and natural, free of ignorance, and free of attachment exists just as it is. But when ignorance leads to foolish clinging and grasping at things, then 'I' is born and when 'I am' born, 'I' drives out, chases away the mind, and then there is only 'I.' Sometimes there is just mind, other times there is just 'I,' but it is always one or the other, there is no mixture or in-between-state. Imagine that there is a kingdom of mentality – a mental kingdom – and then the natural pure mind is ruler of this kingdom. But then if 'I' comes in, stages a revolution and takes over the throne, then 'I' rules the kingdom of the mind – the mental kingdom. And then there is no mind – there can only be one ruler – either mind or 'I.' When 'I' rules, it takes over all the functions and systems of the kingdom and works it to the will of 'I' which is rooted in ignorance and blindness. So everything happens according to 'I,' this leads to all kinds of problems. If there is 'I' on the throne, then mind cannot be there, and when 'I' is on the throne it dominates all the working of this kingdom. But when 'I' is not there, then the natural mind can sit on the throne again. Things are always like this: sometimes 'I' disappears and there remains only the mind; but sometimes the mind is chased away and there remains only 'I,' one or the other, and the difference is complete and absolute. It's the difference between black and white, something we need to look into.

With this difference, this complete and utter difference between mind and 'I,' we should learn how to separate the two. Learn how to remove the 'I,' to take the 'I' away from mind. When 'I' comes in, then learn how to get rid of it, or learn how to free mind from the 'I;' either way, learn to keep the two apart, so that we don't let 'I' take over the show. Whenever there is losing or winning, these are things that happen to 'I.' The mind itself can neither lose nor win. This discriminating, judging, thinking of winning and losing is something that occurs only to the 'I,' the ego, and the mind itself is untouched by that. All of these dualities, like winning and losing, are something that happens to 'I.'

These dualities, this winning and losing, are products of 'I' or of the deluded ignorant mind. The pure mind does not deal with such things – they only arise out of ignorance. Whether you are going to work or are going to play sports or something, this is something that 'I' does, it's not something done by the mind.

‘I’ work, ‘I’ play, ‘I’ win, ‘I’ lose, and all these various dualities of good and bad, positive and negative, they arise from ‘I.’ They are products, they are the domain, the kingdom of ‘I.’ The mind does not mess around with such things, the mind is beyond them. But when there is the foolish, ignorant mind, then it creates ‘I’ and all the dualities of winning and losing. When the ignorant mind concocts ‘I,’ then ‘I’ work, ‘I’ play, ‘I’ win, ‘I’ lose, and on and on and on. It’s essential to discriminate between I and the mind itself. Please do so.

There is something deep and secret which is able to turn the mind into ‘I.’ This thing that can transform the mind into ‘I’ is called *upādāna* – in Thai, it is called *upadan*, in the language of the Buddha, it’s called *upādāna*. We ask you to learn this word because once you understand its meaning it will be very clear. It’s often translated into English as ‘attachment,’*¹ but the translation ‘attachment’ is nowhere near as good as the original *upādāna*. There is a lot of ambiguity to the English word ‘attachment,’ so you better off learning *upādāna*, which is ‘complete attachment,’ is the fullest or the deepest meaning of the word ‘attachment.’ This *upādāna* is what turns the mind into ‘I.’ If we can understand this thing, *upādāna*, then we will be able to control things or to prevent the mind from being transformed by *upādāna* into ‘I,’ into ‘me & mine.’

The mere or pure mind, the natural mind exists in a way that is difficult to talk about, but when this mind is conditioned by ignorance, when ignorance and stupidity come in, then there arises *upādāna*. This is when the mind grabs on to something, attaches to something with ignorance – *upādāna* is grabbing on to, attaching foolishly, ignorantly. When the mind has grasped, attached to something ignorantly, then that mind, under this influence now of *upādāna*, regards itself as ‘I.’ So in this way the *upādāna* drives out the natural mind, and then there is just the foolishness of ‘I.’

If we play sports just for the enjoyment of it or play sports for the health or exercise of it, then it’s the pure mind which plays. But if we engage in sports in order to win or to lose, then it’s ‘I’ that plays. The pure mind just plays in a natural way and it goes on very smoothly, but ‘I’ plays in order to win or ‘I’ may lose. This creates tremendous troubles for us. When we do things with ‘I,’ the results are completely different from when the pure mind is what acts.

If you can tell the difference between playing sports with mind and playing sports with ‘I,’ then that would be quite a wonderful understanding, which would be of tremendous benefit to you. We should also have the same kind of understanding about work. Any work we do, we should find the difference

¹ * = words said in English by Ajahn Buddhadasa

between working with mind and working with ‘I.’ If the mind is what is working, that means working with mindfulness and wisdom – everything goes smoothly and peacefully. There is sufficient success, everything that needs to be done is done, is accomplished properly, without the mind being hassled or getting into any problem. But if we engage in various businesses or into the work of earning a living with ‘I,’ then we make all kinds of troubles for ourselves. So work, earn a living, do whatever business you have to do without ‘I.’ Learn to not let upādāna come in and turn it into ‘I’ work, ‘I’ earn a living, and so on. Just do the work with mindfulness and wisdom, with a mind that is pure and natural – and then everything will go along easily, smoothly and the mind will be at peace. See, learn how to tell the difference between these two ways of doing things and it will be obvious to you which way is superior.

If we work with the pure mind the sweat comes out as holy water which is cool. But if we work with ‘I,’ with ego, with ‘Igo,’ then the sweat comes out as hot water which torments us.

So observe the difference between the work of the pure mind and the work of ‘I,’ observe the difference between the two, and then learn how to work just with mind, to do the various duties and activities of work that belong just to mind. If we can do this, then we will also learn the difference between the life of the pure mind and the life of ‘I,’ of ego. And then, we will be able to live a life that is just a life of the mind, a mind that is pure – rather than a life that is trapped within ‘I,’ ego, Igo, all the egoistic concepts* and delusions that burden the ordinary life of people. And then we will know the life of pure mind. And when we know the life of pure mind, there will be a life that is free of the influence of positive and negative. That will be a life which is cool, which never is scorched or burned by any heat. It’s a cool life which is free of *dukkha* (suffering, misery, and pain).

The pure mind is something that is original, that is natural and original. ‘I,’ ego, the egoistic mind is a new product, something that is been newly produced by ignorance. The original mind is cool and at peace, but this newly produced ‘I’ is an illusion, a concoction arising from ignorance, from wrong understanding, and this makes life hot and painful. The life of the pure mind, of that original, natural mind, is cool and free, but the life of ‘I,’ of ego, of me & mine is full of suffering, it’s dominated by pain and sorrow and dissatisfaction. So understand that ‘I’ and mind are completely different, please understand this.

That original, natural mind lives in a state of ‘just like that,’ it has a quality or state to it that is ‘just like that’ or ‘just that way’; but the ignorant ‘I-mind,’ the ignorant ego has destroyed that natural, original condition. So it is important

to protect that original mind that is ‘just like that.’ The original mind exists or goes along with causes and conditions, with circumstances, and respond to them wisely. The natural, original mind has knowledge which is able to prevent the arising of ‘I,’ of Igo. And so that original mind, that has correct and proper knowledge, can maintain that state of ‘just like that’ or ‘just that way.’ But if there is foolishness... So it is very important that there be correct knowledge and understanding, otherwise the mind will just float – it will just float around, drifting, going with the flow – and then it won’t have the knowledge to protect it, and so various causes and conditions will ‘concoct’ it. This is a tricky word to explain, but the various circumstances and situations will condition the mind, will program it, will cook it up, will stir it, will concoct it into ‘I.’ When there is ignorance, that is a lack of this correct knowledge, then the mind gets cooked up and concocted into ‘I,’ and then that state, that natural, original state of ‘just like this’ is lost, is destroyed. So it is essential that we have this correct knowledge so that the mind does not just float in ignorance, but so that the mind can maintain its original, natural state of ‘just like that.’

It’s necessary to make a very special study into this matter. It is important for you to make this special study in order to see that ‘I,’ ego is a new product that arises later, that it is not original. This is something you can discover for yourself. If we consider the fetus in the womb, it’s obvious that this fetus has no thoughts or concepts of ‘I,’ it’s in no way thinking of ‘I’ or Igo. And then when the infant is newly born, it does not think of itself, it does not think of ‘I,’ of ‘me,’ of ‘mine’ because it can’t think yet, it has not begun thinking yet and so it has not produced the ‘I.’ But then as the senses of the infant begin to function – the nervous system including the eyes, ears, tongue, nose, body and the mind – both the physical and mental aspects of the senses begin to function, and then through this sense-experience the child begins to have certain experiences which are pleasant, which are agreeable, which it likes, and then other experiences which are unpleasant and disagreeable. For example, the child has its first taste of milk – it drinks mother milk. There arises the feeling of deliciousness – it tastes good – and then after that there arises the feeling ‘I’m delicious.’ This I arises afterwards, it’s stirred up by the pleasant, agreeable feeling, by the deliciousness of the milk. This I is a new product, ego was not there from the beginning, it arose later because there wasn’t the proper knowledge to understand things correctly.

...But You will Like Later

When the mind lacks proper understanding then there arises this ‘I’ as we have

described, this mind clings to things as positive and negative. When 'I' arises then positive and negative are born and these create all kinds of dangers, these are very dangerous for 'I' because they make it impossible for there to be peace. When there is the positive and negative, clinging to good and evil, there is no way that there can be any true and real peace. This clinging to good and evil, clinging to positive and negative is the root cause of what we call suffering. We'd like to point out that this is what in Christianity is called original sin.* Original sin means merely regarding things as good and evil, as positive and negative*, and once we regard them like that, then we create all kinds of problems out of that attachment. Through this regarding things as good and evil, then there arises all the problems that human beings experience. This is the meaning of original sin. The original natural mind is free of all that. It's beyond the influence of positive and negative, it does not know the positive and negative. But then I arises later and causes all these difficulties. So it's very important to discriminate between the natural mind and Igo.

When God first created Adam and Eve, they had not yet tasted the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, and so they had no 'I,' no ego. But after they had gone and eaten the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil, then 'I' arose and from this 'I,' they were clinging to things as good and bad, as positive and negative and they suffered for this, they had to endure great pain because of this. Originally there was no ignorance but through eating this fruit, there arose ignorance, and then suffering followed. This is the same as with the newborn infant. The newborn infant has not yet discriminated anything as good or evil, positive or negative, and so it does not suffer. But then, as time goes on, the child begins to know good and know evil, and from this discrimination ego/Igo is created, and then the child suffers. This is how original sin occurs in the life of all human beings. Through this discrimination of things being good, being evil, being positive, being negative, there arises all kinds of misery. And we go and attach to the good, to the positive way too much and it makes us crazy, at least neurotic, and sometimes even psychotic – because of this attachment.

So would you please interpret this passage from the Christian Bible, from Genesis chapters II and III which we've been talking about? Interpret it in this way, and then you will have a very valuable understanding – that originally Adam and Eve were free of ego and therefore free of suffering, but by eating that fruit, coming to know good and evil, discriminating things as good and evil, attaching to things as good and evil there arose 'I.' This is where the concept of 'I' first arose through this discriminating and attaching, and the result of that is the pain and suffering that we are still enduring today. This is how you should

understand the words ‘original sin.’

You should also know that we all have a certain great fortune, a good fortune that we have not yet received; there is a good fortune that we have not received yet. In the Bible, in the final book – the Book of Revelations – it speaks of another tree – the Tree of Life, the Tree of Eternal Life. That first tree, the Tree of Good and Evil, is crazy; all it does is lead to suffering – the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. But if we eat the fruit of the Tree of Life, it does away with original sin and all those problems. But we have not received that fruit yet. God has surrounded it with all kinds of weapons and all kinds of soldiers to prevent us from reaching the Tree of Life, the Tree of Eternal Life. But now the time has come for those of us who have been suffering the consequences of original sin up until this very day. Is it not time for us to look for, to go in search of this tree of life – the tree of life that will free us from all the lunacy, the idiocy of our attachments to good and evil, to positive and negative?

The opportunity is now arisen for you to receive that great fortune. You now have the opportunity to eat the fruit of the second tree. This opportunity is called the mindfulness with breathing cultivation of mind (*ānāpānasati bhāvanā*). The mindfulness with breathing cultivation of mind, this is a way for those of us who are still under the influence of eating that first fruit – that fruit that leads to attachment, to good and evil. This is a way for us to recover the natural, original mind. Recover it in a way that our understanding is complete and correct so that we can eliminate all the influence of eating that original fruit, that first fruit, by eating the second fruit. We now have this opportunity within the practice of mindfulness with breathing. This is not something you have to wait for any longer, the time has now come. It’s just a matter of whether you want it or not. If you want it, you now have the chance.

When the mind is under the influence of the first tree then it won’t be at all interested in this thing we are taking about. But when the mind has eaten the fruit of the second tree, then it will be most interested, it will even love this thing we are talking about. This is why, at the beginning, we mentioned, we talked about ‘the thing that now you are not interested in, that you don’t like, but that someday you may learn to love.’ Now you don’t really like this thing, but in the future you may learn to love it. If you come to eat the second fruit, then you’ll really want and need what we have been talking about.

Many many dozens of years ago there was a song which goes something like “Rio Rita someday your lips will say I love you.” (He heard this song before he ordained, which means over fifty [??] years ago)

And if you one day come to taste the fruit of the second tree, then you will sincerely want to be liberated from, to be completely freed of all that original sin and then you will truly love this thing we have been talking about.

This is what we have set out to discuss for today and we have now come to the end of our time, and today's talk is now finished.

If you sing this line over and over again, one day you will love it. You will love the life that is above positive and negative. Today you don't like it yet, but one of these days, you will like it.

• • • • •

Transcribed by Anonymous (3109aa.51). Reformatted in 2014

Audio files: 5125310902010.mp3 & 1988-09 (1) Something you don't like now but will like later.mp3

© Liberation Park, 2016

