，一點一點地顯露出來，這種顯露是一個人的自由意志的眞正產品，因爲這種自由意志會創造善業，善業又會產生善果，而這些善果又是以後業果的善因，這樣發展下去，一個人便具有開悟的潛力，能明心見性而成佛。到此，一個人不僅擺脫了**輪迴**，並且還獲得完美的智慧和慈悲，使他可以教導別的衆生走向同樣的正道。

業的研究眞是一個龐大的主題，我可以談幾個小時也談不完。下面幾個題目更是意味無窮：

㈠善業和惡業能互相抵消嗎？

㈡業能被消除嗎？

㈢惡業的果報能因懺悔而減輕嗎？

照着我剛才所談有關業的大概，各位或許可以找到這些問題的答案。

最後，我要强調兩點：

㈠善業或惡業必然會產生其個別的果報。我們日常生活中的行爲、言語、念頭都會影響我們的未來。所以，一個聰明的人就知道要如何去做人。

㈡請記住，只有當你與本性契合時，才能使業不發生影響，證入本性，才能擺脫**輪迴**。因此，如何一步步去與本性契合，體會到本性就是你，乃是佛陀教義的精華。我誠懇地建議各位勤學勤修。

在我們修學中最大的障碍乃是我們的「我」的概念，它是我們一切無知和苦痛的核心。

下一次我們就要討論到這個核心。讓我奉告各位那個核心的確是非常非常的頑硬。

，有沒有自由意志活動的餘地？』一個更澈底的問題是：『所謂自由意志是否僅僅是主觀的看法？自由意志仍然是某些業的果。』例如一個女兒不同意她父母的意見，決定要嫁一個青年。這個女兒或許會以爲這個決定是她的自由意志。但在業的法則下，這個決定極可能是她過去和這位青年以及和她的父母業的關係所造成的果。她依照自由意志而行動只不過是她主觀的想法而已。

在美國，人民有投票或不投票的自由。這一種自由是從自由意志取得的呢？或者是業果預先所決定的呢？

我們可以舉出許多例子，似乎都說明在業的法則下沒有自由意志活動的餘地。這是不是意味着一個人的命運是業所前定，自己沒有辦法改變它？這個說法正確嗎？佛陀說並不正確。那麼爲什麼一個人能改變他的命運，他又如何能改變他的命運呢？爲了幫助各位瞭解一個人的命運並非全然爲過去的業所決定，我必須請你們回想一下我在討論本性時的那一段話。我說過因和果，就像生與死一樣，在開悟的境界下失去了它的意義，因爲這業報不論是好是惡，在本性中，根本就沒有一個接受業報的人去承受。所以到了極點，在一個人開悟時，業的法則，是應用不上的。一個開悟了的人所做，所說，所想的無一不是出於自由意志，或者說是本性的顯露，而非過去的業的果。

佛陀的一切教義，針對一個目標，那就是使每個人明心見性。因此一切的方法都以使每個人漸漸的與本性契合爲目標。

本性具備人的各種善的品質，如慈、悲、喜、捨，這一切好的品性都是善業，會產生善果。因此，在修養自己和本性契合的過程中，這些好的品性會像偶然穿透深厚雲層的太陽光芒

的僧伽。這件事產生重大的影響，比他接受一個王子做徒弟的影響更大得很多。

乙、當高僧菩提達摩（Bodhidharma）從印度到中國的時候，他深受梁武帝的歡迎。武帝問他說：『我蓋了那麼多的廟宇，建了那麼多的寶塔，對佛、法、僧捐獻了那麼多的錢，又做了無數其他的善事，我的功德如何呢？』菩提達摩的回答使武帝大失所望。他說：『陛下，沒有什麼功德可言。你所做的福德只能帶給你人世間的報酬。』菩提達摩是說：你在來生中將會有大福報，有權勢，有財富，然而你仍然要在生死**輪迴**中流轉，不能解脫。

丙、佛陀在他的教儀中，多次强調地說：研究實行佛所說如何方能脫離**輪迴**的教義，並且向別人解說，即使僅寥寥幾句，其功德也遠勝過對宇宙間恒河沙數的一切諸佛作隆重供養。

丁、佛陀又教導我們說：

一個人如對佛、法、僧作無數的供養，幫助許多衆生，又作了許多別的善事，而將其積累的功德只求謀自己的利益，或是把利益傳給自己的子女或親戚——比如希望發財，或在今生及來世能享長壽——那麼他只能得到極有限的果報。

一個人做了上述同樣的善行，如果將一切功德都廻向別的衆生，救助他們解脫**輪迴**之苦，他的功德遠勝過抱着自私目的的人。

一個人做了上述的善行，却沒有任何特殊目的或願望，他的功德比上述兩種人更要大得多了。

㈣業與自由意志：

這是一個時常聽人提到的問題。問題是：『在業的法則下

能延續許多年，也可能要等到其他的業果成熟時，方纔爲人感受。

丙、各種業果可以合併，也會累積。

以上三點說明頗爲簡短，我沒有時間詳細的討論。但是下面的例子或許可以幫助解釋上面的三條特質。

甲、富蘭克林發明了電，艾廸生將電變成了光。無疑地這兩位科學家大大地改變了人類的生活。而這兩個發明的影響，仍在一天一天的擴大。

乙、美國國會的修改稅法，立刻影響了幾千萬美國人的荷包。許多美國人在他們今生的餘年都會受到這個業果。如果其中有死後再投生美國的人，那麼他們在來生中也會感受到這批國會會員決策的影響。

丙、多少年前美國人奴役黑人的業，合併和累積起來所產生的果，成爲美國一項重要的內政問題。

丁、愛因斯坦發明了原子能的理論。這一個發明，以及所有參加曼哈吞計劃Manhattan Project 的人的聯合努力所產生的果（好的壞的）是如此的複雜，我們到今日也許纔開始體會到這些發展的意義。

㈢各種業果大小的比較：

這一類的比較在許多佛教的經典中都有記載。我要舉幾個例子，讓各位對如何可以創造更有力的業果，能有自己的看法。

甲、有一天，佛陀在街上行走，碰見了一個衣衫襤褸的乞丐，是在當時印度的嚴重階級社會中屬於所謂「不可接觸」的一種人。佛陀對他不僅很友善，而且還收他爲徒弟，列爲聖潔

錢如命，但對一切衆生却仁慈、和藹，從不傷害別人或殺生，而且還救了許多有情的性命。

那個富有却時常生病而短命的人，是因爲在前生很慷慨地幫助別人，大量的施捨，却愛打獵、殺生，常使衆生憂慮、不安和驚恐。

以上的例子使我們多少可以明白，爲什麼世界上的人，雖然同爲人類，却在容貌、性格、壽命、健康、智力、命運方面有着很大的差別。更值得注意的是一個人出生時的環境會如何地影響他或她的命運。出生在那一個種族，那一個國家，那一個時代，或具有那一種膚色——這一切因素都會產生重大的差別。然則是什麼使這個嬰兒投生在這樣不同的環境中呢？因此相信這一個人在出生前（以往世）有不同的業因造成現在這樣不同的果，豈不比說那僅是偶然的或是神的意旨更來得合理嗎？再者，假使一個嬰兒沒有前生，神又將依據什麼來作這樣不同的賞罰的判斷呢？

㈡業也會影響別人，且不僅造成來世的果，也會影響今生。

「業果是不可思議的！」佛陀這句話不僅意味業果的複雜性，而且還指示我們要預知一個業果什麼時候成熟是很難的。

可是，一般說來，業很像燃點一枝蠟燭。蠟燭會立刻照亮了一間屋子，一直到點完爲止。業同樣地也有下面各種特質：

甲、業不只影響造業的人，而且也會影響別人，果報的範圍依業的大小而定。

乙、多般的業立即產生果報，這個果報會延續下去直到業盡爲止。業報的性質和大小，決定業果持續時間的長短，它可

來改善別人的生活，這樣的業可能使人再生爲一個富有和前途燦爛的人。

丙、救人性命、不殺生，解脫別人的憂慮，治癒別人的病痛，慷慨地資助醫院和醫學研究，或幫助別人改善生活環境，這種業可以使人再生爲長壽健康，爲衆所愛戴的人。

丁、研究佛法，以及用著作或講述的方法介紹或傳授別人佛法和正確的知識，虔誠地尊敬佛、法、僧和其他宗教的聖賢，或者靜坐，使心念專一。這種業會使人再生爲有智慧、知識、辯才，以及有學者風範的人。

戊、儘管一個人殺生、打獵、捕漁、傷害別人，危害別人的生命，製造或售賣武器，或者搶刼，他仍然有轉生爲人的可能，但他却會短命，意外喪生，或得可怕的瘋症或痼病。可是，如果一個人的生命中這種罪業太重大了，他將不再轉生爲人而轉生爲畜牲，鬼，甚至爲獄囚。

一本佛經中，記載着有人問佛說：

爲什麼有的女人生得醜陋却富有？

爲什麼有的女人生得美麗却貧窮？

爲什麼有人貧窮却健康、長壽？

爲什麼有人富有却多病、短命？

佛陀的答覆是：

醜陋却富有的女人，是因爲在前生脾氣暴燥，容易發怒，但却很慷慨，供養三寶（佛、法、僧稱爲三寶），佈施衆生。

美麗而貧窮的女人，是因爲前生仁慈，永遠面帶笑容，說話的聲音柔和，但是很吝嗇，不願捐獻或幫忙別人。

那個貧窮却健康、長壽的人，是因爲在前生非常吝嗇，視

㈡這裏所謂的「善」「惡」並不是人類制定的律則或法典所界說的那些善惡，除非這個法律是順乎自然的。讓我舉個例子，當民主政體初制定時，婦女並沒有選舉權。在那個時候，大家認爲安於這個狀況的婦女是「善」，反抗這狀況的是「惡」。這種判斷當然不正確。自然之道是：人類應該完全是平等的。因此，婦女與男子有同樣選舉權的制度才是公正的制度。而那些在當時反對不平等選舉制度的人們，在事實上才是善的。

這個業或因果律的力量是非常强有力的，它支配着宇宙萬物，根據佛教的說法，只有開悟或體證了本性的人才能擺脫它。在開悟時，這條因果律便失去了它的意義，而生死**輪廻**也就不能產生作用。本性既然是最究竟的，那末體認本性的人，便不受果報，無論善報或惡報，果報對他是不起作用的。佛陀這個有關業律失效的特殊說法，極爲重要，這點我以後當再加說明。

有了上面有關業的簡單說明，讓我們再進一步看看業的作用。

㈠業果決定再生：

在佛教的經典中，我們可以看到無數的例子，說明什麼樣的因產生什麼樣的果。今生和前世的業決定來生的生存形態。一般地說，我們可將業果提綱挈領地簡述如下：

甲、誠實、慷慨、仁愛、慈悲、解脫別人的痛苦，或者做利益別人的事，這樣的業都會產生往生天界的果報。

乙、對貧苦的人慷慨施捨，對有困難的人給予協助，對佛、法、僧或其他宗教的聖賢奉獻供養，或者傳授知識或技術，

、餓鬼，以及囚居地獄的獄囚等不同形態，形成了佛法中所說的**輪廻**，即是繼續不斷的生死，生了死，死了又生。

在印度教和佛教中，這些行爲有一個共同的名稱——業。業的意思是一個生命和若干衆生的行爲或許多行爲的總和所產生的果。這些果有善，有惡，也有不善不惡的（即所謂無記），善果、惡果決定了那個生命或這批衆生的未來，例如善者生天，惡果墮入地獄等。所以業的作用是多生論的核心，就像物理和化學作用乃H_2O能變顯各種形態的基本原因一樣。

我把上面所說的作一個比較如下：

物理和化學作用——→產生無形的能，即是所謂熱——→使H_2O分子的加速或遲緩的活動——→使H_2O顯出不同的形態。

業——→產生一種無形的力量，即是所謂業力——→產生衆生善、惡或中性的果——→形成生存形態的改變：輪廻。

在亞洲，業的概念極爲重要。亞洲的各種宗教，依據這一條業的定律，建立了一個普及公認的道德規範：善有善果，惡有惡果。

我們必須指出，佛教在這條道德規範上還加了更多的演義。按照佛教的說法：

㈠所謂善果或惡果並不是一種裁判的結果，也不是有一個像神一樣的超世俗的權威所給予衆生的一種酬賞或懲罰。善業或惡業所產生的善果或惡果純然是一個爲自然律所支配的自然現象。它是自動的、完全公正無私的。如果神與它有關係的話，那麼神也必定得依照這條自然律、這條道路而行。這個因產生這個果，那個因產生那個果。神不會因爲祂對某某人的愛惡而改變自然界所行的道路。

廣大無際的虛空常用來描擬本性，以說明它的無相對性，無差別性，以及在時空上的無限性。既然人的終極本質是這樣的，那麼當一個人到了開悟或體證本性的時候，生死的概念便不適用了。可是我們大都尚未開悟，在此時此際討論這如虛空的本性，對我們益處不大。因此我們首先應當瞭解清楚這直接影響我們日常生活的多生論。

要澈底瞭解多生論，我們必須先解答一個重要的問題——究竟由於什麼原因能使生命從一種形態，譬如說吧，人，轉生成另一種形態，有如畜牲？

要瞭解這個問題，最好仍舊用H_2O這個例子。首先研究一下H_2O各種形態改變的原因，例如爲什麼水會化成蒸氣或者冰能溶爲水。

物理學上解釋這一連串的變更原因如下：

物理或化學作用⟶產生無形不可捉摸的能，即是所謂熱⟶使H_2O分子的活動加速或遲緩⟶使H_2O顯出液體、固體、氣體等不同的形態。

這個例子頗爲明顯，無須再加解釋。我只要舉幾個物理和化學作用的例子，各位立刻就會明白這些作用便是形成水、蒸氣、雪、冰等各種形態的原因。例如太陽的幅射、生火、讓電流通過金屬線、在水中溶解某種化學物質等，這些大家熟悉的例子，也即是產生不同量的熱，最後改變H_2O的形態的作用。

根據佛學，在宇宙中間經常進行着一種與此類似的自然現象，那就是，一個生命在過去和現在所做的各種行爲產生了相等於熱能的一種無形的力量，由於這一種力量使生命從一種生存形態變到另一種生存形態。因此我們才有天人、世人、畜牲

美國紐約華美協進會主辦
中華學術講座

在我們日常生活中的佛教

第二講：業的眞諦

沈家楨主講

周胡安素
陳　　綱由英譯中

于一九七六年十一月八日

在上星期討論生死概念的時候，我們談到一生論和多生論。還用了大家都熟悉的自然現象——H_2O的多種形態，液體、固體、氣體等——來說明我認爲印度教與佛教所提倡的多生論比一生論更爲接近眞理的信念。覺得H_2O是人類靈魂的一個很好的譬喻。

接着，我們也看到H_2O却不是宇宙的最後本質，現代的科學研究逐漸演進說「能」可能是宇宙最後的本質。這一點和佛陀的教義相契合：靈魂不是人最根本的本性；最根本的本性是不可思議的，此中沒有相對的觀念，沒有界限，沒有生死，而且是與宇宙合一無間的。我們通常把牠叫做本性或佛性。佛陀在大覺大悟時的名言便是：『一切衆生都具佛性。』

other?

(2) Can karma be erased?

(3) Can the effects of bad karma be minimized by confession of other kinds of repentance?

With the general idea of karma I have presented to you today, you may be able to find the answers to those questions.

In conclusion, I wish to emphasize two points:

(1) Good or bad karma will inevitably produce its respective effect. Our daily doings, speech, and thoughts will affect our future. A wise person knows, therefore, how to live properly.

(2) Remember that the law of karma stops operating and you become rid of **saṁsāra** only by identifying yourself with Original Nature. How you may gradually identify yourself with Original Nature, and realize that Original Nature is you, is therefore the essence of Buddha's teaching, and I sincerely recommend that you study and practice it.

Among all the hindrances in our cultivation, the greatest one is our concept of self, which is the core of all our ignorance and suffering. Next week, we shall attack that core, and, let me tell you, that core is indeed very, very hard.

that is, to identify oneself with Original Nature. All methods are therefore designed to enable one to be gradually in harmony with Original Nature.

Now, Original Nature possesses all kinds of good human qualities, such as loving-kindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity. All these good qualities could be good karma, which produces good effects. Therefore, during the process of cultivating harmony with Original Nature, these good qualities will be revealed bit by bit, like an occasional ray of sunshine penetrating through a heavy cloud. These revelations are the true products of a person's free will. Because such free will creates good karma and good karma produces good effects, which, in turn, are good karma for the next effect, and so on, a person has the potential to become enlightened, to recognize Original Nature, and to become a Buddha.

One will thus not only be rid of **saṁsāra**, but will also gain the perfect wisdom and compassion necessary to teach other sentient beings to follow the same path.

Karma is such a vast subject that I could talk for hours without exhausting the material. Topics like the following could be very interesting:

(1) Can good karma and bad karma offset each

subjective opinion.

In the United States, people have the freedom to vote or not to vote. Is this freedom obtained by a kind of free will or is it still predetermined by karmic effect?

We could find many examples, all of which seem to indicate that there is no room for free will under the law of karma. Does this mean the fate of a person is predetermined by his or her past karma, that that person has no way to change it? Is this correct? Buddha said it is not correct. Why and how, then, can one change one's fate?

To help you to understand that one's fate is not entirely predetermined by one's past karma, I must ask you to recall what I said before about Original Nature. I said that cause and effect, just like birth and death, loses its significance at the enlightened level, because with Original Nature there is no one to receive the effect of karma, whether it is good or bad. Therefore, at the extreme, when one is enlightened, the law of karma is not applicable, so all that the enlightened one does, says, or thinks is from free will or is a manifestation of Original Nature and is not the effect of past karma.

All of Buddha's teachings aim at this one goal:

children or relatives—such as making more money or enjoying a longer or better present life or future lives—produces limited effects.

One who does the same good deeds mentioned above but dedicates all the merit produced to helping and saving all sentient beings from suffering in **saṁsāra** receives much greater merit than the one with selfish purposes.

One who does the same above-mentioned good deeds with no specific purpose or desire receives infinitely greater merit than the two cases mentioned above.

(4) Karma and free will:

This topic has been often discussed. The question is, "Is there any room for free will under the law of karma?" A more penetrating question is, "Might not so-called free will be simply subjective opinion? Free will is still an effect of certain karma." For example, suppose a daughter goes against her parents' wishes and decides to marry a younger man. The daughter might think that that decision was made by her free will, but under the law of karma that decision could very well be an effect of her past karmic relations with this young man and her parents. That she acts with a free will is only her

The emperor asked him, "What merit do I have, since I have built so many temples, erected so many pagodas, made so many offerings to Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha, and have done numerous other virtuous deeds?" Bodhidharma's reply greatly disappointed emperor Liang. Bodhidharma said, "Your Majesty, there is none. You have gained no merit. What you have done produces only wordly rewards, that is, good fortune, great power, or great wealth in your future lives, but you will still wander around in **saṁsāra**."

(**C**) In many of Buddha's teachings, he emphasized that to study and explain to others even a few sentences of his teachings that show how one can be rid of **saṁsāra** creates infinitely greater merit than the effect even of making tremendous offerings to Buddhas all over the universe in a number equal to the number of grains of sand in the great Ganges River.

(**D**) Buddha also taught:

One who makes numerous offerings to Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha, helps many other sentient beings and does many other good deeds, and dedicates all the merit accumulated thereby to a purpose of one's own interest or to the benefit of one's own

system of slavery used by many Americans over a long period of time has produced effects which constitute a major domestic problem in the U.S.

(**D**) The theoretical discovery of atomic energy by Albert Einstein and the joint effort of all the participants in the Manhattan Project produced such complicated effects, good and bad, that we are probably just beginning to realize the significance of these developments.

(3) Comparison of the magnitude of effects of various kinds of karma:

Such comparisons are recorded in many Buddhist scriptures. I would like to give you some examples to enable you to form your own ideas as to how you may create karmic effects of greater magnitude.

(**A**) One day, while walking on the street, Buddha met a beggar who was a so-called untouchable in the strict caste society of India during his time. Not only was Buddha friendly with him, but he accepted the beggar as a disciple in the holy Saṅgha. This action had a tremendous effect, which was infinitely greater than the acceptance of a prince as his disciple.

(**B**) When the monk Bodhidharma went from India to China he was welcomed by the emperor Liang.

(**A**) Karma not only affects the doer but also affects others. The magnitude of the karma determines the sphere of its effect.

(**B**) Most of the karma produces an immediate effect and the effect will last until it is "consumed." The nature and magnitude of a karmic action determine the duration of the effect, which may last many years or may not be felt until some other karmic conditions mature.

(**C**) Karmic effects can combine and accumulate.

These three points are rather condensed. I do not have time to give you a detailed description of them. The following examples, however, might assist you to understand better.

(**A**) The discovery of electricity by Benjamin Franklin and the conversion of electricity into light by Thomas Edison changed the lives of human beings tremendously and the effect is still growing.

(**B**) An action taken by the U.S. Congress to change the tax law will immediately affect millions of American pockets. The effect can be seen by many Americans in their lifetime, and it could also be felt by them in the next life if any of them happened to be reborn as Americans.

(**C**) The combined and cumulative karma of the

people on earth, although all human beings, vary so much in appearance, character, lifespan, health, mental ability, and fate. It is even more interesting to note how much the circumstances in which a person is born can influence his or her destiny. Which race, which nation, which skin color, which era—all these factors make a great difference. Would it not be more logical to think that something was going on before one's birth that caused all those effects than to say that it is purely accidental or even to say that it is God's will? If a baby has no past life, then on what grounds does God judge whether to reward or punish that baby by causing him or her to be born under different circumstances?

(2) Karma also affects others and produces effects in the present lifetime as well as in future lives.

"Karmic effect is incomprehensible!" This statement of Buddha suggests not only the complexity of karmic effects but also the difficulty of predicting when a karmic effect will mature.

Generally speaking, however, karma is like the action of lighting a candle. The candle will light the whole room immediately and will last until it is consumed. Similarly, karma has the following characteristics:

Why are some women beautiful but poor?

Why are some people poor but with good health and long life?

Why are some rich yet ill and short-lived?

The Buddha's answers were:

The woman who is ugly-looking but rich was short-tempered in her past lives——easily irritated and angered——but was also very generous and gave offerings to the Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha and offered things to many sentient beings.

The woman who is beautiful but poor was, in her past lives, very kind, always smiling and soft-spoken, but was stingy and reluctant to make offerings or help other people.

The person who is poor but in good health and enjoying a long life was, in his or her past lives, very stingy or reluctant to make donations, but was kind to all sentient beings, did not harm or kill others, and also saved many other sentient beings' lives.

The person who is rich but often ill, or who is short-lived, was, in his or her past lives, very generous in helping others but loved hunting and killing and caused sentient beings to feel worried, insecure, and frightened.

The above examples give us some idea why

from killing, relieving others' worries, curing others' illnesses, generously helping hospitals and medical research, or aiding environmental improvement may cause one to be reborn as a human being with a long life and good health, a person to be liked and supported by many people.

(**D**) The karma of studying and introducing Dharma and the right knowledge to others by means of teaching or writing, giving sincere respect to Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha and the saints in other religions, or meditating to concentrate on the mind can produce the effect of being reborn as a human being with wisdom, intelligence, eloquence in speech, and the qualities of a good scholar.

(**E**) Despite such karma as killing, hunting, fishing, doing harm to others, endangering others' lives, manufacturing or trading weapons, or robbing, one may be born as a human being again, but he will have the possibility of a short lifespan, accidental death, frightening insanity, disastrous illness, etc. However, if those karmic activities were dominant in the being's life, then the rebirth will be in the form of an animal or ghost or even a hell-dweller.

In one of the Buddhist texts it is recorded that someone asked Buddha:

Why are some women ugly-looking but rich?

the effect, whether it is good or bad, and no one to whom any effect can apply. This unique explanation, taught by Buddha, of the nullification of the law of karma is very important. I will explain it later.

With this brief explanation of karma as background, let us now go a step further to see how karma works.

(1) Karmic effects determine rebirth:

In Buddhist texts one may find numerous examples telling what cause produces what effect. The karma of present and past lives determines the form of existence in the next life. Generally speaking, we may outline these karmic effects as follows:

(**A**) Such karma as honesty, generosity, kindness, compassion, the relieving of others' suffering, or the creation of major benefits for others may produce the effect or result of being reborn in heaven.

(**B**) Karma such as giving generously to the needy, aiding those in difficulty, making offerings to the Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha or saints in other religions, or giving others knowledge or skills that will improve their way of life, may cause one to be reborn as a human being with a wealthy and bright future.

(**C**) Karma such as saving others' lives, refraining

natural law or path. This cause produces this effect. That cause produces that effect. God would not change the natural path by his like or dislike of a person.

(2) The "good" and "bad" referred to here are not defined by any code or law created by human beings, unless such a code or law follows the natural path. For example, when democracy was first devised, women did not have the right to vote. At that time, women who complied with that status were considered "good" and those who fought against it were considered "bad." That judgment was incorrect, however. The "natural path" is that human beings are all equal, and thus, the system which gives women equal voting rights with men is the truly just one. Therefore, those who opposed the unequal voting system were actually the good ones.

This law of karma, or cause and effect, is so powerful that it governs everything in the universe except, according to Buddhism, the one who is enlightened or recognizes Original Nature. Upon enlightenment, this cause and effect loses its significance, just as **saṁsāra**, or recurring birth and death, ceases with enlightenment. Since Original Nature is the Ultimate, there is no one to receive

multi-form nature of H_2O.

I would like to draw this comparison of the above mentioned analogies:

physical or chemical actions	→	intangible form of energy called heat	→	change of intensity of activity of H_2O molecules	→	change in forms of H_2O
karma	→	intangible force called the karmic force	→	effects, good, bad, or neutral, upon activities of beings	→	change in the forms of the being: saṁsāra

This concept of karma plays a very important role throughout Asia. Asian religions have established a famous universal moral code, based upon this law, that good deeds produce good effects and bad deeds produce bad effects.

It should be pointed out that Buddhism gives this moral code additional qualifications. According to Buddhism:

(1) The so-called good effect or bad effect is not a judgment nor is it given as a reward or a punishment by a supramundane authority, such as God. The good or bad effect produced by good or bad karma is purely and simply a natural phenomenon governed by natural laws that act automatically, with complete justice. If God has anything to do with it, then God must also act according to the

instantly know that these actions are the causes of water, vapor, snow, ice, or other forms of H_2O. Such actions as radiation from the sun, setting a fire, passing electricity through certain metallic wires, and dissolving certain chemicals in water are all familiar examples of processes that produce heat in differing intensities and that ultimately change the form of H_2O.

According to Buddhism, a similar natural phenomenon is going on in the universe: that is, various actions carried out by a being in the past and present cause a certain kind of intangible force comparable to heat that causes the being to change from one form of existence to another. That is why we have the different forms of heaven-dweller, human being, animal, ghost, and hell-dweller, which constitute **saṁsāra**, or continuous life and death.

In Hinduism and Buddhism, these actions bear a common name—**karma**. Karma means an action, or combination of actions, by a being or beings, which produces effects. Those effects, which could be good, bad, or neutral, determine the future of that being or those beings. Karmic actions, therefore, are the heart of the multi-life theory, just as physical and chemical actions are the basic causes of the

nature, then when one is enlightened or recognizes one's Original Nature, the concept of birth and death becomes inapplicable. Since most of us have not been enlightened, it does not help us too much to discuss Original Nature at this stage. We first have to establish a clear understanding of the multi-life theory at the mundane level, which directly affects our daily lives.

To appreciate thoroughly the multi-life theory, one must first answer an important question, which is: what causes such changes from one form of existence, say, a human being, to another form, say, an animal?

To help us understand the answer to this question, it is useful to refer to H_2O again. Let us first examine the causes of changes in the forms of H_2O, say, from water to vapor or ice to water.

From physics we learn the following chain of causation:

physical or chemical action	→	intangible form of energy called heat	→	change of intensity of activity of H_2O molecules	→	change in forms of H_2O

This illustration is quite obvious and needs no explanation. I will just give you a few examples of physical and chemical actions and you will

In last week's discussion of the concept of birth and death, the one-life theory and the multi-life theory were introduced. I also used a familiar natural phenomenon, the multi-form of H_2O, to illustrate my belief that the multi-life theory taught by Hinduism and Buddhism is closer to the truth than the one-life theory. We found that H_2O is a good analogy for the human soul.

Then, we observed that H_2O is not the ultimate substance of the universe. Modern science is gradually concluding that energy could be that ultimate. This agrees with Buddha's teaching that the soul is not the ultimate nature of a human being and the Ultimate is something which is incomprehensible: without duality, without boundary, without birth and death, and with no difference from the universe. Original Nature and Buddha-Nature are two popular names given to this Ultimate. The famous statement made by Buddha upon his enlightenment was "Every sentient being has Buddha-Nature."

The vast, boundless, and empty space is usually used as an analogy to Original Nature to signify the lack of duality and discrimination of the latter, its limitlessness in both time and space. Since the ultimate existence of a human being is of such a

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LECTURE 2:

THE TRUTH OF KARMA

By Dr. C. T. Shen

President

The Institute for Advanced Studies of World Religions

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