

To: TNI ARCHIVES
Subject: FURTHER THOUGHTS ON BUDDHISM

BECAUSE THERE ARE TNI MEMBERS WHO STILL HARBOR THOUGHTS THAT BUDDHIST AND LBL REGRESSION PHILOSOPHY ARE CONNECTED IN A PANTHEON OF IDEAS I WOULD OFFER A FEW FINAL WORDS. I HAVE SAID THIS BEFORE BUT IT IS IMPORTANT TO KEEP IN MIND THAT BUDDHIST RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHY BEGAN VERY EARLY. IN THE 5th CENTURY B.C. MY FEELING IS THAT BUDDHA WAS TRYING TO COMBAT THE VERY PREVALENT PAGAN ANIMIST PHILOSOPHY WHERE SOULS OF SOME FORM EXISTED IN ALL LIVING THINGS CONNECTED TO NATURE. CERTAINLY, GREEK PHILOSOPHY HAD THE CONCEPT OF A HUMAN SOUL BUT BUDDHA WANTED TO GET AWAY FROM A PHILOSOPHICAL THESIS OF A REAL SUBSTANTIAL SELF.

I BELIEVE BUDDHA AND HIS FOLLOWERS WANTED TO FOLLOW A PATH OF WHAT THEY CONSIDERED A GREATER TRUTH. IN ORDER TO KEEP THE MIND IN CONTROL OF OUR SENSES AND EMOTIONAL IMPULSES RATHER THAN BE DRIVEN BY THEM AND TO ERADICATE DELUSION, CRAVING AND HOSTILITY INCLUDING ADDICTIONS AND OBSESSIONS THEY NEEDED TO ELIMINATE SELF. THIS CALLED THIS, "A LIBERATION FROM IGNORANCE." ADHERANCE TO THIS RELIGION DEMANDED THE "CASTING OUT OF SELF-AWARENESS." THEIR HEAVEN WAS NIRVANA THAT WAS A STATE OF BLISS WHERE THE "BOUNDARIES OF THE FINITE SELF HAVE BEEN ELIMATED." BUDDHISTS BELIEVE THAT THE REDUCTION AND EVENTUAL ELIMINATION OF SELF REDUCES SELFISHNESS AND EVEN A FEAR OF DEATH OVER THE LOSS OF PERSONHOOD. THE PROCESS IS CALLED "REDUCTIONISM" AND COULD BE ACHIEVED BY DEEP MEDITATION.

TO BE FAIR, THERE ARE DIFFERENT SECTS OF BUDDHISM SUCH AS THE PERSONALISTS WHO RETAIN THE IDEA OF PERSONHOOD BUT DON'T LIKE THE WORD SOUL. THE MAJOR SCHOOL ARE THE MADHYAMIKA WHICH MONKS OFTEN SAY ARE FOR LAY PEOPLE. THEIR TASK THEY SAY IS TO, "RENDER THE CONCEPT OF THE SELF AS EMPTY." REDUCTIONISM IS A MAJOR CONTROVERSY BETWEEN BUDDHISTS AND HINDUS WHO SAY THAT IF WE HAVE A BODY THAT THINKS, THIS REQUIRES THE IDEA OF SELF. IN TNI, WE FEEL THAT PL AND LBL REGRESSION INVOLVE DUALISM BETWEEN BODY AND SOUL. MANY NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF HINDUISM SUCH AS DEMONS TO INSTILL FEAR ARE CERTAINLY NOT PART OF OUR BELIEF SYSTEM BUT THE DUALISTIC POSITION IN HINDUISM IS THAT WE ARE MADE OF A SPIRITUAL SUBSTANCE (THE SOUL) THAT RETAINS A SEPARATE IDENTITY FOREVER WE DO RECOGNIZE.

THE HINDU OPPONENTS OF BUDDHISM ESPECIALLY IN INDIA ASK HOW CAN BUDDHISTS BELIEVE IN REINCARNATION AND KARMA BECAUSE ON PRACTICAL GROUNDS KARMIC OVERTONES IN LIFE WOULD DEPEND ON THEIR BEING A CONTINUOUS SELF—THE SOUL.

WHEN BUDDHISTS SAY ALL PAST EVENTS EXIST IN A WAVE/STREAM NOT ATTACHED TO SELF, HUNDUS AND OTHER RELIGIONS ASK: "HOW CAN THE CONSEQUENCES OF ACTIVITIES A STREAM COUNT AS REWARD OR PUNISHMENT FOR THE INDIVIDUAL?"

WELL, WE MIGHT ASK, HOW DID BUDDHA EXPLAIN REINCARNATION.? TO BE BLUNT, I FEEL HE AND HIS FOLLOWERS DID SO IN A VERY WEAK, RATHER EQUIVOCAL MANNER. AS I HAVE SAID IN ANOTHER PAPER ON THIS SUBJECT, BUDDHA WAS QUOTED AS OFTEN SAYING: "I DON'T KNOW." HIS THOUGHTS ON TRANSMIGRATION—A WORD COMMON FOR HIS TIME—DEVIATED FROM THE BELIEF OF MANY THAT A SPIRITUAL SUBSTANCE MIGRATED FROM BODY TO BODY. HE USED AN EXAMPLE OF A WAVE THAT WAS THE SAME TYPE OF VAGUE METAPHOR OF DEATH BEING SNUFFED OUT LIKE A CANDLE WITH A NEW ONE LIT IMMEDIATELY THAT BUDDHISTS SAY STAND FOR DEATH AND A RENEWED LIFE. BUDDHA TAUGHT THAT WE FLOAT ON A WAVE OF LIFE THAT RISES BENEATH US AND THEN AT DEATH CRASHES ON A SHORE AND ALL ELEMENTS ARE GONE. NOTHING IN YOUR NEXT INCARNATION WILL BE THE SAME AS WHAT EXISTS WITHIN YOU IN YOUR CURRENT LIFE. RIDING ON TOP OF A WAVE WAS A WAY OF SHOWING THERE WAS NO PHYSICAL OR PSYCHIC SUBSTANCE THAT RETAINS EXISTENCE BY PASSING FROM LIFE TO LIFE. BUDDHISTS SAY THIS EXAMPLE SHOWS A DENIAL OF SOUL IDENTITY.

MICHAEL NEWTON