

「沒有我」或「不是我」？

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學習佛法的第一個絆腳石就是“natta”，通常英譯為“no-self”，意思是「沒有我」。原因有兩點：第一、「沒有我」的概念並不符合其他佛法，像是業力與輪迴。假如我是不存在的，誰要承擔業果和輪迴？第二、這似乎一開始就整個否定佛陀的教法：如果沒有「我」從修習佛法中得到利益，何必費心？許多書籍試著回答這些疑問，但如果你閱讀巴利三藏，你根本找不到答案。事實上，經上只有一處這麼記載：當有人單刀直入問佛陀「我是否存在」時，他拒絕回答。事後佛陀解釋：不論是回答「我確實存在」或是「我不存在」，都會讓人掉進斷、常二邪見之中，而不能修行佛法。因此，這個問題應捨置不答。要明瞭佛陀不回答的理由為何，我們首先必須知道佛陀對於「如何提問、如何回答、如何詮釋他的回答」是怎麼說的。

佛陀將所有的問題分成四類，即「四記問」：一、應一向記問，即對於所問，直接以肯定或否定的方式回答。二、應分別記問，即對於所問一一分析、定義、解剖後，始作肯定或否定的回答。三、應反詰記問，即不直接回答，而先反問對方，好比將球拋回給對方一樣。四、應捨置記問。最後一類的問題無關解脫。當老師被問到問題時，他的首要職責就是去分辨出問題屬於何類，並進而給予適當的答覆。舉例來說，你不能肯定或否定應捨置的問題。倘若你是發問者，你也得到了答案，你就應當決定這個答案要詮釋到何種地步。佛陀說有兩種人會曲解他：第一種人是不該望文生義卻望文生義，另一種人則是應該望文生義卻不去望文生義。

這些是詮釋佛法的基本原則，但如果我們檢視大多數作家如何處理「無我」的教法，就會發現這些原則竟被忽略。某些作家試著合理化「沒有我」的詮釋，而說佛陀否認「永恆不變」或「獨立存在」的我，但這是對佛陀應捨置記問予以分別。其他人則從一小部分看似符合「沒有我」觀點的經文作推論，但如果硬是為應捨置的問題從經文找出答案，就是不該望文生義卻望文生義。

因此，佛陀不對「我是否存在」（無論「我」是依他存在或獨立存在、永恆或無常）的問題回答，而是認為這個問題一開始就被誤導了。為什麼呢？無論你如何分別「我」與「他」，「我」的概念包含了自我認同與執著，也因此造成苦與煩惱。認為我是「依他存在（不認為有「他」，或我是獨立存在，都是同樣這種道理）；如果某人和萬物認同，他將為每一棵被砍斷的樹木痛苦。一個全然是「他」的宇宙也是一樣，其中疏離感和無用感薄弱，以致於不可能追求自己和他人的快樂。因此，佛陀告誡我們毋須理會「我存在嗎？」「我不存在嗎？」這類的問題，因為無論你如何回答，都只會導向苦和煩惱。

為了避免「自」、「他」問題所內含的苦，佛陀提供另一種方法來區分人生經驗，也就是「四聖諦」：苦、集、滅、道。四聖諦並非主張，而是經驗的分類。佛陀說，與其視這些經驗是我的或他人的，我們應該只是徹底了解經驗的實相，然後

善盡個人的責任。苦應知，集應斷，滅應證，道應修。這些責任就是了解「無我」的最好方法。如果你修習戒、定、慧三學讓心平靜，然後以四聖諦來看待經驗，此時心中將不再生起「我存在嗎？」「什麼是我？」的疑惑，而是「執這個現象會導致苦和煩惱嗎？這真的是我、我自己或我的嗎？如果這是煩惱卻不是真的我或我的，為何要執取呢？」等疑問。最後這三個問題值得回答，因為它們可以幫助你認識苦並斷除引發苦的貪執（殘餘的自我認同感）；最後，所有自我認同的習氣滅除，所剩的，就只是無盡的解脫自在。

因此，「無我」的教法不是沒有我，而是斷除苦因、達到究竟安樂的「不是我」。這時已無關「我」、「沒有我」和「不是我」的問題了。一旦完全的解脫自在，又何必去在乎誰在經驗解脫自在，或者「我是否存在」的問題呢？v



No-self or Not-self?

Excerpt from Noble Strategy

by Thanissaro Bhikkhu

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One of the first stumbling blocks in understanding Buddhism is the teaching on anatta, often translated as no-self. This teaching is a stumbling block for two reasons. First, the idea of there being no self doesn't fit well with other Buddhist teachings, such as the doctrine of karma and rebirth: If there's no self, what experiences the results of karma and takes rebirth? Second, it seems to negate the whole reason for the Buddha's teachings to begin with: If there's no self to benefit from the practice, then why bother? Many books try to answer these questions, but if you look at the Pali Canon you won't find them addressed at all. In fact, the one place where the Buddha was asked point-blank whether or not there was a self, he refused to answer. When later asked why, he said that to answer either yes, there is a self, or no, there isn't, would be to fall into extreme forms of wrong view that make the path of Buddhist practice impossible. Thus the question should be put aside. To understand what his silence on this question says about the meaning of anatta, we first have to look at his teachings on how questions should be asked and answered, and how to interpret his answers.

The Buddha divided all questions into four classes: those that deserve a categorical (straight yes or no) answer; those that deserve an analytical answer, defining and qualifying the terms of the question; those that deserve a counter-question, putting the ball back in the questioner's court; and those that deserve to be put aside. The last class of question consists of those that don't lead to the end of suffering and stress. The first duty of a teacher, when asked a question, is to figure out which class the question belongs to, and then to respond in the appropriate way. You don't, for example, say yes or no to a question that should be put aside. If you are the person asking the question and you get an answer, you should then determine how far the answer should be interpreted. The Buddha said that there are two types of people who misrepresent him: those who draw inferences from statements that shouldn't have inferences drawn from them, and those who don't draw inferences from those that should.

These are the basic ground rules for interpreting the Buddha's teachings, but if we look at the way most writers treat the anatta doctrine, we find these ground rules ignored. Some writers try to qualify the no-self interpretation by saying that the Buddha denied the existence of an eternal self or a separate self, but this is to give an analytical answer to a question that the Buddha showed should be put aside. Others try to draw inferences from the few statements in the discourse that seem to imply that

there is no self, but it seems safe to assume that if one forces those statements to give an answer to a question that should be put aside, one is drawing inferences where they shouldn't be drawn.

So, instead of answering “no” to the question of whether or not there is a self--interconnected or separate, eternal or not--the Buddha felt that the question was misguided to begin with. Why? No matter how you define the line between “self” and “other,” the notion of self involves an element of self-identification and clinging, and thus suffering and stress. This holds as much for an interconnected self, which recognizes no “other,” as it does for a separate self; if one identifies with all of nature, one is pained by every felled tree. It also holds for an entirely “other” universe, in which the sense of alienation and futility would become so debilitating as to make the quest for happiness—one's own or that of others--impossible. For these reasons, the Buddha advised paying no attention to such questions as “Do I exist?” or “Don't I exist?” for however you answer them, they lead to suffering and stress.

To avoid the suffering implicit in questions of “self” and “other,” he offered an alternative way of dividing up experience: the four Noble Truths of stress, its cause, its cessation, and the path to its cessation. These truths aren't assertions; they're categories of experience. Rather than viewing these categories as pertaining to self or other, he said, we should recognize them simply for what they are, in and of themselves, as they are directly experienced, and then perform the duty appropriate to each. Stress should be comprehended, its cause abandoned, its cessation realized, and the path to its cessation developed. These duties form the context in which the anatta doctrine is best understood. If you develop the path of virtue, concentration, and discernment to a state of calm well-being and use that calm state to look at experience in terms of the Noble Truths, the questions that occur to the mind are not “Is there a self? What is my self?” but rather “Does holding onto this particular phenomenon cause stress and suffering? Is it really me, myself, or mine? If it's stressful but not really me or mine, why hold on?” These last questions merit straightforward answers, as they then help you comprehend stress and chip away at the attachment and clinging--the residual sense of self-identification--that cause stress, until ultimately all traces of self-identification are gone and all that's left is limitless freedom.

In this sense, the anatta teaching is not a doctrine of no-self, but a not-self strategy for shedding suffering by letting go of its cause, leading to the highest, undying happiness. At that point, questions of self, no-self, and not-self fall aside. Once there's the experience of such total freedom, where would there be any concern about what's experiencing it, or about whether or not it's a self?