

Would you believe it?

(A monk is questioned by a scientist who is also a young, rather nihilistic, Buddhist)

The young scientist: I don't believe in religion, I believe in science.

The Monk: Well I believe in nothing, nothing at all, not even in fizzy water (he said, carrying a crate of it).

Now you're being silly. What about through experience?

Even with experience you wouldn't catch me believing in it. I believe in nothing. Nothing is even nicer than fizzy water, don't you think? Even more bubbles, all bubbles almost.

You're making no sense. I think religious people are just weak, looking for some kind of consolation from the harsh realities of life and death.

If that is what people are looking for they will never find Nibbāna. The way to find Nibbāna is to see the suffering, to face it clearly and completely with a peaceful mind and let go. Like a bubble coolly rising to the surface, pop, nothing, nice nothing.

And how is that not just the end, annihilation?

Try it and see, if you dare.

If life is suffering and everything is impermanent, isn't death the solution? Wouldn't it be great if you just had to die and there was nothing left, curtains, wouldn't all your problems be solved, easy-peasy? Escape, extinction, annihilation.

Annihilation is no escape, annihilation is just annihilation. Even suffering is better than that, isn't it? And what if there is a chance of an existence without suffering?

Well, why would I just want to hang around in some super heavenly realm or somewhere, like Nibbāna, what's the point?

Is there any point in hanging around on earth, then? What about helping others worse off than yourself, isn't that worth doing? With all that science, maybe. That all fits with us. The teaching of the Buddha is wisdom and compassion.

And who said Nibbāna is anywhere else?

You are missing my point. How is it annihilation if there was really nothing there in the first place? Even you think that, don't you? You see our existence as just empty impermanent khandhas rolling on conditioning life after life? Surely if there is no self then there is nothing really there before or after.

Yes, yes, nothing was really there in the first place and will be there after, bright and blissful to rest the heart in. Oh, yes, nothing, beautiful nothing! Nibbāna, the far shore, the goal...

I offer this for your reflection.

Ajahn Kalyāno

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