

The Dighanakha Sutra

Excerpted from a Translation by Thich Nhat Hanh

“My teaching is not a doctrine or a philosophy. It is not the result of discursive thought or mental conjecture like various philosophies which contend that the fundamental essence of the universe is fire, water, earth, wind, or spirit, or that the universe is either finite or infinite, temporal, or eternal. Mental conjecture and discursive thought about truth are like ants crawling around the rim of a bowl - they never get anywhere. My teaching is not a philosophy. It is the result of direct experience. The things I say come from my own experience. You can confirm them all by your own experience. I teach that all things are impermanent and without a separate self. This I have learned from my own direct experience. You can too. I teach that all things arise, develop, and pass away. Nothing is created from a single original source. I have directly experienced this truth, and you can also. My goal is not to explain the universe, but to help guide others to have a direct experience of reality. Words cannot describe reality. Only direct experience enables us to see the true face of reality.”

“My teaching is not a dogma or a doctrine, but no doubt some people will take it as such. I must state clearly that my teaching is a method to experience reality and not reality itself, just as a finger pointing at the moon is not the moon itself. An intelligent person makes use of the finger to see the moon. A person who only looks at the finger and mistakes it for the moon will never see the real moon. My teaching is a means of practice, not something to hold onto or worship. My teaching is like a raft used to cross the river. Only a fool would carry the raft around after he had already reached the other shore, the shore of liberation.”

The Dighanakha Sutta, Pali Canon, Majjhima-nikaya 74

Translation excerpted from:

Hanh, Thich Nhat Old Path, White Clouds pp. 212-213. (1991) Parallax Press, Berkeley, CA.