



# **Craving and Aversion as Addiction and Denial:**

## **Buddha's Eightfold Path as a Step Program**

**by**

**Bradford Hatcher**

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Cover Photo: The Great Buddha (Daibutsu) of Kamakura

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## Abstract

Dhamma-Vinaya, or Doctrine-and-Discipline, was Buddhism's name for most of its long history. It has been called a religion and a spiritual discipline, even though it has no concept of a god or of spirit. More than anything else it is an array of ideas and exercises aimed at eradicating the internal causes of our suffering, our painful dissatisfactions. Three of the primary causes, the three Unwholesome Roots, are craving, aversion and delusion, each of which goes by many names. Recovery from addictive behavior in the West is concerned with patterns of addiction and denial. Addiction is simply a more entrenched and intractable form of craving, primarily due to the behavior's immediate effect on the evolved reward circuits in the brain. Denial represents a formidable combination of aversion and delusion that forms the armament and defense of addictive behavior. It is the assertion here that the ideas and exercises of Buddhism are perfectly applicable to recovery from our addictions and have been available as such for a very long time. No modification of the system is necessary, except that the specific applicability of some elements of the doctrine might be pointed out in this context, and augmented with some of the further knowledge we have gained in the last twenty-five centuries.

Despite the contributions of alternatives to 12-Step programs, there is still an insufficiency of recovery approaches which avoid religious or spiritual indoctrination, and the adoption of a victim or disease model of addiction. Most alternatives which do exist have borrowed heavily from Buddhism, with or without due acknowledgement. Yet Dhamma-Vinaya remains the most highly articulated and time-tested methodology. Many have tried to rephrase the twelve steps in more Buddhist-sounding terms, but this is a disservice to both. This book presents Buddhism strait up, but interpreted here as a path to recovery, from addiction and denial, as well as from our more garden-variety sufferings.

# Preface

## To the Reader

This book is not intended to be an easy read with mass-market appeal: that book is for somebody else to write. Neither is it written for a majority of the people who are trying to recover from addiction. It is presented for the non-theist or a-theist who is ready to claim personal responsibility for both addictive behavior and its correction. Sobriety, especially the kind that will put the problem behind and get on with life, is a lot of dedicated, hard work. This is written for someone either intelligent or patient enough to read it through, or else for their therapist's benefit. It's also written as a broad introduction to Buddhism, since the doctrine has not been altered to fit the subject at hand. There exist several attempts at developing a Buddhist Recovery program, one for those without a deity to fall back on, but most of these try to rework Buddhist doctrine to fit into the 12-Step model instead of regarding the Middle Path in and of itself as steps along an ancient path that leads to the elimination of suffering due to craving, aversion, and delusion.

Where I use the words drink or alcoholic here, this is meant to stand in for all forms of addictive behavior. Whether substance abuse or behavioral, all addiction is ultimately chemical addiction, a feeling-seeking behavior that has employed the organism's evolved chemistry, the endocrinological reward systems, in cementing and armoring itself into place. Addiction also implies that the behavior is a problem, and not something like basic needs for oxygen, water or coffee. Drink is also a reference to the Buddhist word *tanha*, one of its many words for craving: its primary meaning is thirst.

It is not the goal of this work to convert anybody to Buddhism, or even from alcoholism. As Buddha said, "Let him who is your teacher remain your teacher" (DN 25). While I personally feel affinity with the doctrine, I would not call myself a Buddhist unless the name was inserted into a much longer string of labels. There is nothing easy about being a real Buddhist. Eight steps instead of twelve is not an indication. It's even more than the work of not having an imaginary deity helping you, or the placebo effect that that entails. Salvation in Buddhism is a matter of lifelong diligence and heedfulness, and you don't even get an eternal or immortal soul for a reward. And what rewards there are you aren't even allowed to hang on to, although it's OK to enjoy them while present, even as they are slipping away. At least all of the work you get to do here will help keep your mind off the the thing that you used to think you needed.

Buddhism is a first-person investigation of whatever may prove to be true, a first-person science. The states of awareness that are needed to reprogram one's views and intentions and thereby transcend addiction, call them apotheosis, epiphany, gratitude, awe, forgiveness, compassion, patience, equanimity, etc., may be arrived at by any number of routes. This particular path, and the techniques for attaining these states, has undergone considerable testing over the centuries. But, with that said, yes, I am aware of a number of important popularizers of Buddhism in the West who had serious problems with alcohol addiction. The method here is not automatic: it still has to be applied specifically to the problems at hand. The practice of Buddhism is not a guarantee of sobriety, well-adjustedness or of mental health. The talk must be walked, and this is a fundamental part of the teaching.

I have written this from some experience. I had a 15-year drinking habit and a 25-year tobacco habit, both fairly heavy, now broken, 22 and 20 years ago respectively. Being an atheist with a background in science and an inclination to stay grounded, I had great philosophical difficulties with the 12-Step model as I was groping for a way out. I

know that I was not alone in this: I met many along the path with similar problems with god and his inscrutable plans. I tend to regard the 12-Step paradigm (and the DSM's as well) as a toxic model insofar as it promotes the victim and disease mentalities over the taking of full personal responsibility and the diligent practice of correcting our defects. If I did have a disease it was a disease of the values that I was holding. I could in fact help myself, but I needed to learn the keys for doing that effectively, and replace some toxic values with wholesome ones.

I intend to base this on the general structure of Buddhist doctrine, and adhere as closely as I can to the original teachings, which means using the Theravada school and its Pali-language terminology. There is a good chance that this approach will be a lot more critical and less squishy than the forms most Westerners are familiar with. It might even be that some hapless spiritual fellow who thought he was a Buddhist finds out he was really a Hindu. At any rate, I have also taken care to omit some of the more hyperbolic nonsense that all wisdom teachings are inclined to attract. Clearly, we have learned some useful things about our addictive behaviors in the 25 centuries since these teachings were first spoken. We have learned several from psychology, biology and recovery that the Buddha never articulated. Many will be introduced in the course of the discussion, even if they seem to be square pegs in round holes. Others will be offered in their appropriate appendices.

The Buddha as presented here, and generally in the Theravada school, was simply a man who woke up. In doing so he became humanity's first true psychologist, but one who had a particularly strict and challenging definition of mental health. The normal human state of mind is far from mentally healthy. It's important to note that this strict definition need not be fully realized in order to mark real progress along the path that leads to suffering's end. It might even be enough for now to simply stop killing ourselves for things that we don't need.

### **Disclaimer**

The reader is responsible for anything he or she does with any of the information contained in this book. Accepting personal responsibility for our own cognitive and affective states, accepting ownership of the consequences of our actions, the ownership of our own *kamma*, is a fundamental premise of Buddhism and of this book. If you cannot accept this, read no further: there are plenty of alternative approaches, and books that are written specifically for the victims of disease, circumstance and persuasive suggestion.

# Introduction

## Recover What?

How far you want to go with recovery might say something about whether you belong here. To simply recover from an addiction leaves you the same person who got into trouble in the first place, though somewhat further damaged and with some make-up work to be done. At a minimum, new behaviors need to be learned to avoid relapse indefinitely. This is recovery from, "the action or process of regaining possession or control of something stolen or lost" and a return to a normal state of health, mind, or strength. It is frequently claimed that Buddhism cannot be considered therapy because it starts with a psychology of the normal and proceeds towards more extraordinary states. It shares this with today's "Positive Psychology." While it is understandable, knowing humans as we do, that most people would regard the normative state of human experience to be the baseline for measuring mental health, or simply that normalcy defines mental health, there are other points of view. The Buddha took a harder line: normal is a long, long way from healthy, and it is a grievous error to state that a mental phenomenon cannot be a mental illness simply because a majority of people suffer from it. This recalls Jiddu Krishnamurti's quip: "It is no measure of health to be well-adjusted to a profoundly sick society." A Buddhist approach to addiction, once withdrawal is out of the way, is not simply a new habit of abstinence. Sights are set on becoming healthier than normal. Health is more than the absence of disease. And freedom is a lot more than freedom from unmanageable craving.

Suppose you were to see some hapless fellow fall ten meters from a third-floor roof. There are a large numbers of moves he could make on the way down. Suppose he made precisely the right moves at the right time, and striking the ground sent him into a horizontal roll from which he emerged like a circus gymnast. Instead of a ten-meter fall he has made a ten-meter flight, nailed his dismount, and made a nice "recovery." We want recovery in this sense. But one thing that this requires is something Castaneda called "using all the event," investigating and accepting all of the things that happened on the way down, as givens, as momentum, to serve the transformation of disaster into victory. This sort of acceptance is not the same thing as approval: it is simply the conquest of denial. All of the component factors are a part of the reality to be taken as a given. If there is a need, the dark times being salvaged and redeemed can be called something else. In my own case, this was time spent "integrating my shadow" and credit for "time served." It is a lesser-known principle of Buddhism that suffering itself, and not ignorance, is the first step in a second chain of conditioned arising, one which leads to freedom. We will be looking at this important insight shortly. Suffering then, given the appropriate wisdom or guidance, can be made into a growth experience.

We know that to move ourselves in new directions we need either a new obedience or a new motivation and discipline. Obedience comes from respect for, or at least acceptance of, an authority, while discipline comes from an inner valuation. We also know that addicts, as a class, are some of humankind's less obedient folk. Court-ordered sobriety doesn't work any better than broken kneecaps from the bookie's thugs. That leaves motivation, which in turn wants a new set of values, which in its turn wants a new world-view. Values are soluble in alcohol, so here's a head start: the old ones are less likely to stand in the way, having already proven themselves to be worthless. Old world-views can be a little more stubborn, but their failure too can help clear the mind of some rubbish. Salvation is salvage, recycling, the act of obtaining useable substances from what seemed unusable sources.

Redemption can mean being saved from sin, error, or evil, or the action of regaining or gaining possession of something in exchange for payment, or clearing a debt. You

know what the payment has been. In our case this is the discharge of a debt, the debt due to the accumulated consequences of our intentional actions, or *kamma* (the Pali version of the better known Sanskrit *karma*). This is not a retributive justice, but simply the harvest of things sown. Harvests can be hard but rewarding work. Salvation, to the Buddha, was a question of diligence and heedfulness. So there are lots of things that can be recovered here other than your normalcy: the original promise of youth, whatever remains of your years, and even a meaning to your lost years.

### **Which Buddhism?**

There are four major schools or divisions of Buddhism. Only one, Theravada, will be developed here at any length. The reason for this is a need for structure and consistency that is specific to the recovery process. Combining the four introduces too much internal contradiction. These four schools are often referred to as vehicles or rafts for crossing the Stream. It is most important that an awareness of their instrumentality be preserved, lest any one become an end in itself. The Buddha had this to say on the impermanent utility of the method used to wake up:

“Then the man, having gathered grass, twigs, branches, & leaves, having bound them together to make a raft, would cross over to safety on the far shore in dependence on the raft, making an effort with his hands & feet. Having crossed over to the far shore, he might think, ‘How useful this raft has been to me! For it was in dependence on this raft that, making an effort with my hands & feet, I have crossed over to safety on the far shore. Why don’t I, having hoisted it on my head or carrying on my back, go wherever I like?’ What do you think, monks? Would the man, in doing that, be doing what should be done with the raft?”

“No, lord.”

“And what should the man do in order to be doing what should be done with the raft? There is the case where the man, having crossed over to the far shore, would think, ‘How useful this raft has been to me! For it was in dependence on this raft that, making an effort with my hands & feet, I have crossed over to safety on the far shore. Why don’t I, having dragged it on dry land or sinking it in the water, go wherever I like?’ In doing this, he would be doing what should be done with the raft” (MN 22, tr. Thanissaro Bikkhu).

Buddha is reported to have lived eighty years, from 563 to 483 BCE. Several councils were convened in the centuries following his death to examine the state of the doctrine and counteract the natural tendency to schism. The 3rd Council was held in 247 BCE, during the reign of the Buddhist emperor Ashoka (304-232 BCE), by which time there were already a number of factions. One of a few Fourth Councils, held by the Theravada sect in the 1st century BCE, committed a Pali-language version of the formerly-oral doctrine into writing. It is claimed that this followed the teachings agreed upon in the 3rd Council. This was the massive Three Baskets or *Tipitaka*. Other versions of the doctrine would follow, most notably the canon of the Mahayana sect, beginning in the 2nd century CE. The term Buddhism is a late invention by the 19th century West. Until that time it was known by the Buddha's own label, Dhamma-Vinaya, Doctrine and Discipline. These two terms will be used interchangeably throughout this book.

The Theravada school is the last thriving version of Indian Buddhism, but this, too, generally migrated out of India, to take lasting root across Southeast Asia. Because of its antiquity and conservative approach to the doctrine, it is generally assumed to have the most faithful representation of the actual words of the Buddha. A lot can happen, however, in just a couple of centuries of oral tradition, even when transmitted religiously, or especially when transmitted religiously. The Buddha himself had a great

deal to say about what the inner proclivities of our needy minds and our insistent feelings could do to objective understanding. Most systems of thought and practice involving human followers make use of hyperbole, exaggeration, myth, embellishment, false attribution and glamor. Only a few, notably Zen, have described the glamor of spiritual accomplishment in terms of such mundane activities as chopping wood and carrying water. Even the Buddha made ample use of myth in his teaching. It is unlikely that this mythology is completely a later fabrication of his followers, but it is also possible that he still saw some kind of reality in them. Why do speakers of truths venture so far from truth? In Nietzsche's words: "At bottom, it has been an aesthetic taste that has hindered man the most: it believed in the picturesque effect of truth. It demanded of the man of knowledge that he should produce a powerful effect on the imagination" (WTP #469). The glamor of it all seems to hold great sway over human perspective. There may be in this some dim appreciation of the fact that learning that really comes home personally, that is felt with some depth and a perception of personal relevance, is somehow more complete than learning done only in theory, without any affect attached. The challenge, then, is having the depth of feeling without getting attached to the lies. At any rate, with regard to the transmission of Buddha's teaching, successive generations might easily have given additional color and structure to the doctrine for the sake of improved memorization, or altered the nuance of words and phrases to improve upon the teacher's dignity, impressiveness and impact. But, with that understanding, the doctrine presented here will generally follow the Theravada version.

I do have one real issue with the Theravadan approach, however. Like many Westerners, my introduction to Buddhism was through the folk art, particularly the seated and laughing Buddha statues, and the rice paper paintings of eccentric Buddhist and Daoist monks caught in mid-guffaw. Then came the friendly phrasings of Alan Watts and all the volumes of largely humorous teaching stories from Zen lore. But these led to college courses and then exposure to the utterly serious, stoic and seemingly pessimistic side of the story. Buddhism as a Downer was soon confirmed in my first encounters with real-life religious renunciates and cloistered Zen monks, who showed no inclination whatsoever to laughter, or even to those wise and twinkling eyes. I thought I had resolved the discrepancy in understanding the difference between religious believers and wise men, between the seekers and the finders, between the teachers and the lifelong learners. Surely the Buddha must have laughed: this was a necessary part of wisdom's perspective on life. Maybe he didn't go in for the mean stuff and the *schadenfreude*, maybe he grudgingly groaned at the occasional pun, but certainly he found a laugh when life's absurdities came together perfectly in a higher understanding. Then I read the Suttas of the Pali Canon, where there is only one mention of the Buddha even smiling, and this is noted by a disciple with surprise bordering on shock. Is it possible that, in the four centuries between the original teaching and the first permanent recording of the doctrine, all traces of laughter were edited out of the story, perhaps for the sake of dignity and sobriety? Or is this my own denial at work?

The Theravada doctrine is largely concerned with the development of the individual, or more precisely, what is experienced as the individual. Ultimately, the full scope of the Dhamma or Doctrine (Dharma in the better-known Sanskrit) was intended for "beings whose eyes are only a little covered with dust: the[se] will understand the truth" (MN 26). There is, if you will, a Buddhism Light, which consists of those portions of the doctrine and its precepts which can be practiced by the householder, the person who is not yet ready to renounce the everyday world to follow the path into the dark forest. Worthwhile attainments are still available to the householder, though, and

progress to within a few lifetimes of distance to a final liberation. This is not regarded as insignificant. But the extremely intricate and highly articulated psychology of the "Third Basket" of the scriptures, or *Abhidhamma Pitaka*, and the intricately developed code of monastic behavior of the First Basket, or *Vinaya Pitaka*, are essentially for the renunciate who is beset with fewer distractions. The focus of the Theravada program is ultimately on the liberation of the *arahants*, the worthies or the accomplished ones. Their program demands a lifetime of "striving with heedful diligence," Buddha's final words. Their instructions from the Teacher: "You should train thus: We shall be wise men, we shall be inquirers" (MN 114).

The teacher's ongoing challenge is to "speak to each in accord with his degree of understanding" (a directive first attributed to Mohammed). Any attempt to package up a monolithic teaching applicable to the whole of humankind will have to resist the forces pressing for schism, and it must eventually succumb. The dimmest of familiarity with the mindsets of the masses of mankind in any epoch will evidence a resistance to the notion that any "spiritual" salvation is a lot of hard work, and worse, that this is really only available to a select or more evolved elite. Thus, an egalitarian revolution was inevitable, in which all beings could partake in an easier salvation. The Mahayana school filled this much larger niche and soon it became Buddhism's most popular form, particularly from the 2nd century CE onward, when it spread northward into China with a growing set of newer scriptures that broadened the appeal of the teaching. Mahayana means Great Raft or Vehicle, alluding to its expanded accessibility, and it adopted the derogatory term Hinayana, meaning Small Raft or Vehicle, to refer to the rival and more elitist Theravada sect. The Mahayana sect is much closer to what we normally think of as a religion. It has a much broader lay appeal, a more pervasive use of ritual, and a stronger tone of reverential prayer and devotion. Mahayana does, however, maintain its own versions of most of the critical aspects of the Buddha's teaching, even some of those regarding the ultimate non-existence of an eternal spirit or soul.

In Mahayana teaching, salvation is open and available to all sentient beings, not merely to the more developed and diligent. Or at least this liberation is available with far less work and in a much shorter series of lifetimes. It is a Mahayana tenet that all beings possess Buddha Nature and so are ultimately destined for enlightenment. This is not a part of Theravada doctrine, which would therefore be less impeded in embracing evolution's idea that selection and extinction can help move the parade or stream of life forward. The Mahayana ideal, then, is the Bodhisattva, as contrasted with the Arahant: this is the practitioner who vows to embrace the whole of sentient life and not fully attain his own final liberation until the last blade of grass is enlightened. The Theravadin also has many uses for true selflessness, loving-kindness, empathy and compassion, and has plenty of reasons on his own path to help others along, but the crux of his help is to lead by deed and example. "You yourselves must strive. The Buddhas are only teachers" (Dhp 276). This is a Mahayana doctrine as well, from the Dhammapada, but you nevertheless see the Teacher cast in a role there that looks similar to that of Savior, at least until you read the words in the hymns.

The original Dhamma teaching is referred to as the First Turning of the Wheel of Dhamma. The development of the Mahayana school, with its additional scriptures, is called the Second Turning. The Third Turning was the development of the Vajrayana school, the Diamond Vehicle. It began to emerge with its texts out of India in the 4th century, eventually spreading to Tibet, Bhutan and Japan (as Shingon), and it developed gradually over the next eight or so centuries. Its scriptures are referred to as Tantras, hence the alternate term Tantric Buddhism, which can lead to some confusion with Tantric sexual yoga practice. This sect is best known for its ritual practice, called

*upaya*, meaning skillful means or method. These methods, which often involve mantra, mudra and mandala (chant, gesture and design) will generally take the place of the more abstract and communicable forms of meditation that were developed in Theravada and Mahayana. *Upaya* is a Mahayana term, where it is regarded as one of the *paramitas* or perfections, but it also carries the negative connotation of attachment or over-involvement, and this suggests caution, as *upaya* can tread a thin line between empty ritual and effective method. Over-reliance on the forms, clinging to rules and rituals (*silabatta upadana*), thinking that the rituals alone can "take you there" without making fundamental changes within, was regarded by the Buddha himself as one of the Ten Fetters (*samyojanas*), one of the four kinds of unwholesome clinging (*akusala upadana*) and one of the four types of bondage to the material world (*kayaganthas*). But we should probably make a distinction here between ritual and the sort of orderly behavior that lends consistency to meditative practice. Given the nature of these rituals, together with the language in which they are performed, Vajrayana is not regarded as a path to be walked or learned alone. It is esoteric and its methods are passed on by initiation through a line of transmission. This is one of several reasons that it will not be discussed here at length, even though some of the ritual methods that are used here have attracted the attention of neuroscientists researching neuroplasticity, the ability to reprogram the brain that is such a fundamental part of an effective recovery process.

The fourth major school of Buddhism, known as Chan in China and Zen in Japan, also developed out of the Mahayana teachings, this time in the 6th century CE. But something curious happened in its creation. The teachings collided and merged with the Chinese Daojia or Philosophical Daoism. In the process, a lot of the dogma, doctrine and ritual from both sides got knocked loose. Depending on your definition of silliness, it also lost or gained in silliness. What was left was left relatively speechless, relying more on direct experience. The word Chan is the Chinese for the Pali *Jhana* and the Sanskrit *Dhyana*, meaning absorption. The Theravadin Eightfold Path's *Samma Samadhi* or Right Concentration, develops eight forms of concentrative absorption. *Zazen*, the Chan or Zen form of meditation, is just one single form of straightforward alertness. It is not meditation upon anything but the arising and falling of it all, up out of and back into the stream. The optimal state of mind here is neither overly calm nor hyper-vigilant: maybe the word readiness best describes it. The objective (with the understanding that this misuses the term objective) is understanding that comes through a direct experience of the transient nature of all things, including the mind that seeks to grasp them. While Chan and Zen have their forms, rituals, lines of transmission, reliance on interaction with an accomplished teacher, and even a little bit of basic doctrine, they really don't provide the kind of structure or discipline that is useful for our purposes here. Simple *Zazen*, however, is worth doing a little research and finding some instruction, as it can be readily included as a ninth form of meditative practice in *Samma Samadhi*, the Eighth Step on the Eightfold Path.

### **Problematic Conflations**

In general, Buddhism and belief are not very compatible, a trait held in common with science. Our minds are not developed enough to lay such serious claims on truth. We are too emotionally scattered, insecure and impatient. We cannot turn our perceptions into perfect objective visions as long as our suffering and our neediness are so ready to twist what we see and hear to placate our various anxieties and neuroses. The highest priority on the Buddhist path is the correction of our minds, the cleaning of our lenses, the cleaning of our hearts, so that bad ideas and theories and emotional resentments no longer confuse our experience. This is what we put first. You must get your mental health before you get your answers. In the Buddha's own words:

"Malunkyaputta, if anyone were to say, 'I won't live the holy life under the Blessed One as long as he does not declare to me that "The cosmos is eternal,"... or that "After death a Tathagata neither exists nor does not exist,"' the man would die and those things would still remain undeclared by the Tathagata.

"It's just as if a man were wounded with an arrow thickly smeared with poison. His friends & companions, kinsmen & relatives would provide him with a surgeon, and the man would say, 'I won't have this arrow removed until I know whether the man who wounded me was a noble warrior, a brahman, a merchant, or a worker.' He would say, 'I won't have this arrow removed until I know the given name & clan name of the man who wounded me... until I know whether he was tall, medium, or short... until I know whether he was dark, ruddy-brown, or golden-colored... until I know his home village, town, or city... until I know whether the bow with which I was wounded was a long bow or a crossbow... until I know whether the bowstring with which I was wounded was fiber, bamboo threads, sinew, hemp, or bark... until I know whether the shaft with which I was wounded was wild or cultivated... until I know whether the feathers of the shaft with which I was wounded were those of a vulture, a stork, a hawk, a peacock, or another bird... until I know whether the shaft with which I was wounded was bound with the sinew of an ox, a water buffalo, a langur, or a monkey.' He would say, 'I won't have this arrow removed until I know whether the shaft with which I was wounded was that of a common arrow, a curved arrow, a barbed, a calf-toothed, or an oleander arrow.' The man would die and those things would still remain unknown to him....

"So, Malunkyaputta, remember what is undeclared by me as undeclared, and what is declared by me as declared. And what is undeclared by me? 'The cosmos is eternal,' is undeclared by me. 'The cosmos is not eternal,' is undeclared by me. 'The cosmos is finite'... 'The cosmos is infinite'... 'The soul & the body are the same'... 'The soul is one thing and the body another'... 'After death a Tathagata exists'... 'After death a Tathagata does not exist'... 'After death a Tathagata both exists & does not exist'... 'After death a Tathagata neither exists nor does not exist,' is undeclared by me. And why are they undeclared by me? Because they are not connected with the goal, are not fundamental to the holy life. They do not lead to disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, calming, direct knowledge, self-awakening, unbinding. That is why they are undeclared by me" (MN 63).

Buddhism is impressively adaptable and protean with respect to the cultures it enters. This is in part because it doesn't carry the baggage of a metaphysics along with it. Even the occasional and relatively enlightened Christian monk has put its methodologies to good (if incomplete) use. As this has come to the West, it has been repackaged to suit more Western sensibilities. This frequently involves the deification of the individual or the self as it appears to extend into larger frames of interconnectedness, oneness or oceanic feeling, which the Freudians liked to call infantile self-grandiosity. This trend has been nowhere more apparent than in its introduction to the self-improvement movement. A real Buddhist, upon hearing "One day my soul just opened up!" might wonder how many hungry children got fed by way of that, or if anything useful got learned. As central elements at least, feelings of interconnectedness, wholeness and ecstatic loving are more of a projection of the West onto Buddhism. So is the anti-intellectual cast that Buddhism tends to be given in the West, even though Zen had already gone a long way towards repudiation of the rational or discursive intellect, and Mahayana represented a serious veering away from more rigorous thought towards the more pleasant or immeasurable states. Given this, it might be of some use here to distance Buddhism from some of the areas of study, philosophies and religions that it has recently been conflated with. The following paragraphs are fairly negative in tone

because some bubbles need to be popped. More positive associations to developments in Western psychology, philosophy and neuroscience are developed in the Appendices.

### **Hinduism**

While the Buddha himself emerged out of the Hindu, Vedantin and broader Indian traditions, he repudiated a number of the fundamental tenets. He never, for instance, asserted that reality was an illusion created by a consciousness that was fundamental to the structure of the universe. There exists a real world. Human beings are just particularly inept at perceiving it accurately. There is also a real self, but this resembles a verb more than a noun. Self is just a process that emerges out of numerous preconditions. When the necessary preconditions go away, so does the self. At death, the self goes to the same place your lap goes when you stand up, where your fist goes when you open your hand, where your consciousness goes when you sleep. It's perfectly permissible to perceive and work with the conventional self, as this is, in all the worlds, the "thing" that most needs improvement. However, this improvement is most authentically made without the hope that some divine spark at your inmost center is preparing to unite with a god like Brahman on its way to living forever in light and perfection. Yes, it is true that all things are so interconnected that even the notion of a conventional self is at best a convention, but this does not turn our dissolution into a divine ascension with a higher cosmic awareness. The great old gag about Buddha asking the hot dog vendor to "make me one with everything" is better applied to Vedantins and Yogis.

### **The Perennial Philosophy**

The point of view of Perennial Philosophy or Perennialism is that each of the world's religious traditions is a local cultural expression of a larger, single, universal, underlying religious truth. The apparent diversity and contradiction is thought to be relatively superficial. At bottom, the highest good is the union of the inmost core of the self with a supreme, divine being, that must, if everybody is to be correct, be both immanent and transcendent. The Buddha is dragged into this by virtue of his silence on the metaphysical questions (well, he doesn't deny it). The also-a-theistic Rujiao (Confucianism) is similarly volunteered. Although the term and idea is centuries old, it was popularized recently in the West by Aldous Huxley in *The Perennial Philosophy*, published in 1945. As much as I enjoy Huxley's writing, I have to call this idea a great disservice to human culture, analogous to a reduction in biodiversity in the biological sphere. Evolution has given us a great many points of view, but it doesn't move forward through time without selection being applied to that diversity, and thinning it out again for fitness. Without selection in the world of cognition we are left with a cluttered metaphysical and moral relativism that suggests everything and every point of view is equally valid and true. This is most emphatically not the case in Buddhism. The great bulk of what we experience in these religious realms is ultimately ignorance and delusion. The experiences that we associate with our notions of a soul are real enough, but they are not fundamental properties of an all-knowing entity: they are emergent properties conditioned by a recognizable pattern of causes and they do not exist in the absence of those causes. Neither are those causes to be considered divine, except in the context of our own capacities for reverence. In effect, the Buddha taught that psychology preceded philosophy: we fathom the world best when we first fathom our own motives for perceiving the world as we do, when we have examined how and why we would twist the truth to suit our desires and dislikes. This approach is not more "advanced" than religion. It does not go as far as religion. It doesn't even get off the ground. Buddhism just sticks to foundations.

## Theosophy

The word theosophy, uncapitalized, is an ancient term for any wisdom regarding the divine. It goes back to the early centuries of the current era. It developed throughout the middle ages and the enlightenment, accruing wisdom from a wide range of sources, religious, alchemical, theurgic, qabalistic and hermetic. In the late 19th century it began to incorporate material from the mysterious East, particularly from Hinduism, Vedanta and Buddhism. The Theosophical Society, formed by Helena Blavatsky, has codified much of the doctrine now referred to as capital-T Theosophy. Because the subject is rooted in Theos, or divinity, the word being cousin to Deus and Zeus, most of the focus of the philosophy is upon the divine, divine nature and humanity's divinely ordained place and purpose within this. Citing the Society's own *Encyclopedic Theosophical Dictionary*: "Theosophy [from Greek *theosophia* from *theos* god, divinity + *sophia* wisdom] Divine wisdom, the knowledge of things divine; often described as attainable by direct experience, by becoming conscious of the essential, divine part of our nature, self-identification with the inner god, leading to communion with other similar divine beings. Theosophy actually is the substratum and basis of all the world-religions and philosophies, taught and practiced by a few elect ever since man became a thinking being." Buddhism, and particularly Theravada Buddhism, does not fit this description even remotely. Buddhism's immense vocabulary is selectively raided for philosophical support, and some of its sects and schisms are exploited for their proximity to the Theosophical doctrine. Theosophy isn't a bad thing (and its *Theosophical Glossary* is a truly precious resource), but one still does not find much of the Buddha's unadulterated teaching there.

## New Age

The New Age, from an outsider's perspective, is a loose collection of world and self views which appears to be centered around the repudiation of critical thinking skills in favor of "positive feelings" and metaphysical relativism. This is deemed to be some sort of victory of the right brain over the left, or the heart over the head, according to an assumption that thinking people somehow feel less. It is averse to judgment, except in response to skeptics and its detractors, or generally to people who think. It is prone to narcissism, and a normally-sublimated auto-eroticism in which the higher meditative states are reified as metaphysical realities and then united with in ecstasy. Apparently, excessive economic well-being is also central to the core beliefs, both to the marketers and to their marks. While there are numerous texts, it appears to be largely platitude-driven, by such meretricious statements as "everything happens for a reason." It has adopted a goodly number of Buddhist ideas and ideals, several of them correctly, such as the importance of good karmic practice and the need to develop *karuna* or compassion. It has, however, misinterpreted the Buddhist notion of rebirth as meaning reincarnation, which is not the case. Another characteristic belief is that we are all somehow entitled to unconditional love, to self-esteem and self-acceptance, even if our actions would define us instead as inferior and unprincipled people. Buddhism, in contrast, is judgmental, discriminating and discerning. In order to save yourself from suffering you judge thoughts and feelings and behaviors to be unwholesome or wholesome. You get rid of the bad ones and develop the good ones. Self-esteem is conceit to begin with. The positive feelings associated with higher wisdom are not centered in a self. All of the sentient beings' truths are not equally valid, and most are better described as ignorance and delusion. A Buddhist can begin with low self-esteem as an honest appraisal of his present state and transform this into a true humility, which can in turn be transformed into reverence and growth. This cannot be done with unearned self-esteem.

## **Romanticism**

Romanticism, as a reaction to the industrial age, mechanization, and the materialistic reductionism of science, is an important reassertion of human intuition and emotion. In seeming contrast, emotional self-control, detachment and distancing hold a prominent place in the methodology of Buddhism, as do rational analysis and critical decision-making skills with regard to what is worth accepting and doing. However, it is a mistake to think that feelings are therefore not welcome in Buddhism. Feelings are not the problem. The craving of feelings, the clinging to feelings, the mourning of the absence of feelings, the pursuit of feelings, the denial of unwanted feelings: these are the problems. That feelings appropriately come and then appropriately go, spontaneously, without the excessive over-dramatization associated with self-obsession: this is where we want to be as sentient beings. What we don't want of feelings and emotions is unnecessary pain and self-destruction. Buddhism is a middle path. Mind, cognition and perception are complex compositions. Thoughts, feelings, sensations, memories, imaginations, motivations - all are components of mind, without which there is less mind and less mindfulness. Many of those who have sought to import Buddhism to the West have correctly seen past the interpretation of Buddhism as being pessimistic and overly rational, but have gone too far the other way and envisioned a Buddhism where we are all one loving heart, feeling the interconnectedness of all things, and the drama of this deeply-felt emotion is what carries us aloft to Nirvana. Buddhism isn't all that interested in the drama of the personal story and in how deeply and uniquely one feels, but neither is it cold. Feelings are important components of mind, but they are not the true and authentic inner self that they seem to claim to be. Personal experiences, the qualities of subjectivity, mental analogies and conceptual metaphors, are a lot more important to science than most of science knows or admits, and perhaps some reassertion of this is in order and long overdue, but let's suggest that this be done "within reason." There is a useful online essay on this subject by Thanissaro Bhikkhu entitled "The Roots of Buddhist Romanticism," [here](#).

## **Transpersonal Psychology**

Transcending the person, getting beyond the person, getting over the person, must be regarded as one of Buddhism's main goals. Transpersonal psychology is also concerned with expanding the sense of identity beyond the individual and embracing greater realities, the human family, the web of life, the cosmos evolving to study itself, and exploring our more distant horizons, from the depths of experienced time up to the higher orders of trans-human awareness. Perhaps the biggest difference between these two is that Buddhism is not "spiritual" in any strict sense of the word. Within these greater contexts, which may be real enough, our spirit is not at the center or heart of them. At best, what we think of or experience as our spirit is just some humble little node in the web, a place where some energy has gotten knotted up for a while, off in some nondescript corner of things, having come and soon to go. The Universe is not the story of me and you. The two disciplines aren't antithetical: as sentient beings evolving along our paths, it is a healthy thing to get beyond or outside of ourselves. It is even a good thing to occasionally feel ourselves at the very center of the larger realities, from one point of view among many. Expansion of the mind is good for the practice of mindfulness. Working diligently on personal growth, detailing the factors and experiences that have held us back, spending long stretches of time in self-study, all have important places in Buddhism. But the autoeroticism and narcissism of these self-centered alternative states are not dwelling places. They are experiences to acknowledge and then learn from in passing. Having the experience that proves to you

once and for all that "we are all one and interconnected" is not a spiritual attainment. It is merely a little piece of ground to stand on and another place to explore. It is a place to begin, and not the final goal of wisdom.

### **Buddhism and Religion**

Most religions come to us as packages. This is much like being given a lovely wooden box with a glass lid, and below the glass are arranged gold and platinum nuggets and beautiful gems for study and appreciation. But the box is always sealed and one is sternly advised against unprescribed methods of inquiry, such as opening the thing and examining the contents one item at a time, studying each piece from all sides, and weighing them. But, religions being by nature parochial, much of the gold is invariably fool's gold, and most of the jewels paste. It takes a special kind of seeker to crack the box open, assay the contents, pocket the good stuff and then abandon the rest, and travel lightly on, to raid some more boxes. Let's call this kind of seeker a finder.

If you can find a definition of religion that hasn't been deliberately contorted to include clearly non-theistic disciplines like Confucianism, Buddhism, and in some cases, Yoga, you get something like: "the belief in and worship of a superhuman controlling power, esp. a personal God or gods." Objections are made that such a definition fails to include the diversity of religious thought and experience, but this does nothing more than beg the question. Adding the word spiritual does nothing to reach out and embrace Buddhism, as the existence of the spirit is specifically denied in the doctrine of *anatta*. For our purposes here, Buddhism is simply Dhamma-Vinaya, Doctrine and Discipline. To call it a religion is an error attributable to *ditthi* or wrong views, born of ignorance and delusion. Neither morals nor the so-called religious or spiritual states of mind require a religion, or a deity, or even a conception of spirit.

An honest look around will show that, despite all of the laws, religion has very little to do with the development of truly ethical behavior, and only contributes ineffectively to morality. For our purposes here, we will use the term moral to refer to behavioral choices guided by social *mores*, or peer pressure, and the term ethical to refer to behavioral principles that have been investigated or examined, since ethics is properly understood as a branch of philosophy. Buddhism finds an ethic in its investigations, an appropriate way for human beings to treat fellow human beings and other sentient life. Both neuroscience and evolutionary psychology are now converging upon these findings as well, and with more objective evidence to substantiate them. Certain behaviors are known through investigation to be unwholesome, unprofitable, or unskillful, leading to suffering and unhappiness. But this is learned by inquiring into the nature of things, by watching *kamma* in action, at work according to natural law. It is not learned by examining divine decree or scripture. According to the 7th century Indian Buddhist philosopher Dharmakirti, the criterion of truth is causal efficacy. You do this, that happens. If you don't want that, don't do this. The concern for efficacy also suggests remaining open to situational ethics, which are not normally discussed in more generalized religious decrees. All of the permutations of situational ethics just won't fit on the tablets. There is even an ethic to be drawn from the existential fact of our finitude: "There are those who do not realize that one day we all must must come to an end. But those who do know this settle their quarrels at once" (Dhammapada).

In performing a number of the practices and exercises of Buddhism, numerous kinds of mental states are reached, momentary conditions of mind which are claimed to be fundamental to one or more of the world's religions: cosmic consciousness, awe, reverence, gratitude and grace, for example. The sense of self vanishes, or expands to fill the universe. States of mind may be entered into which might be described as "spiritual," and certainly altered or alternate. These experiences might have been given

special names, and mythical or metaphysical explanations, within the various religious traditions. But this does not make them the exclusive domain of religion. That some of the states attained in meditation are described in religious texts does not mean that a technology for attaining these states is a religion. That logic doesn't work. Nor can we say that it is religious behavior to seek the states of mind that happen to be found at the core of certain religious beliefs or narratives. It might only be a kind of first-person scientific inquiry. We are merely seeking to be wise men and inquirers. These experiences are known or generally assumed to be important portions of the inherited human repertoire, as evolved cognitive capabilities. We simply want to verify this. We have no real need to draw great and impressive conclusions from these experiences about the nature of the world. We are not wise enough for that yet.

Many myths and stories of deities and demons survived in the Pali Canon. It is difficult to guess how far and in what way these were taken seriously by the Buddha himself, or how many were embellishments or artifacts of the transmitters of the teaching. In these stories there are many kinds of beings, both above and below us in evolutionary terms, different in physical or immaterial composition, in longevity, in wisdom, in ethical sensibility, and so on. But even the wisest deity here is still unenlightened and still subject to *kamma*. It's hard to guess what Buddha might have said in private to someone he knew to be his equal, or how he might have discussed his own use of myth and fable. But like all myths, these will have angles of interpretation that are strictly allegorical and can be read completely free of literal interpretation, so the question can remain open.

It is as incorrect to describe Buddhism as materialist as it is to call it spiritual. Buddha, or at least his earlier interpreters, did happen to offer some general thoughts on the irreducible nature of reality, even though they weren't heavily stressed as doctrine. These generally resemble the *Panta Rhei* (everything flows) of Heraclitus and the atomic theory of Democritus and the Epicureans. There are also many similarities to the process philosophy of A. N. Whitehead. The substrate of existence is in perpetual motion, with nothing fixed and eternal, with nothing perfect or perfected. This is called a Stream, and the mind that attends it is also a mindstream, and the relatively evolved sentient beings who have begun to actualize this discovery in their lives are called stream-enterers. Some sects argue that *Nibbana* (Sanskrit: *Nirvana*) is an unconditioned state that is somehow unmoved and above all of this, but for our purposes here, *Nibbana* is a state of being that is simply unconditioned and unmoved by the sheer terror of this. Beyond that, let us not pretend to know what *Nibbana* is. Whitehead came close to this basic idea in describing this Stream as process, and all things within it as being in process, and while he departed from the Dhamma in calling this process God, at least he suggested that this God never stopped changing and never grew all the way up, that its evolution went on forever. Whitehead concurred with Buddha in rejecting the mind vs. body or spirit vs. matter dualism that characterizes most of Western religion. Obviously your own constituent factors are a part of everything, and this same everything just goes on and on and doesn't die like all things within it do. This is only a simple truism that you can make into a religion if you want to, but we are just not going to do that here.

The bottom line with regard to religion is this: We have got no business laying any sort of claim to metaphysical truth. As long as we are suffering we will only see what we want to see, as long as we are craving, detesting and suffering, our perceptions of a deity are going to be an untrustworthy mess of wish-fulfillment and revenge fantasies. We will be biased towards what is most comforting to believe, unless we are guilty masochists. And our suffering is a proof of our inability to see correctly. Social consensus means nothing: "Just like a file of blind men, clinging to each other, and the

first one sees nothing, the middle one sees nothing, and the last one sees nothing" (DN 13).

### **Buddhism and Psychology**

Poor psychology. It has struggled so hard for so many decades to win respect and esteem as a real science, without even knowing what sort of science it is destined to become some day. So far it has been like the blind men and the elephant, many limited points of view, each arguing that its own find is either the whole of it all or the very center. More than any discipline except education, psychology has made itself prey to fads and shortsighted arguments like nature vs. nurture. Too few can meet in the middle, or look to the synthesis of the disparate factions. Mind is a very complicated process, and mind looking at mind is more so. How far has the discipline come? It seems at least to have convinced courts of law that experts do in fact exist, but phrenology also did that at one time.

Originally, of course, psychology was the -ology of the psyche or soul, whatever that might mean. We should perhaps start with its own, most-consensual definition: "The scientific study of the human mind and its functions, especially those affecting behavior in a given context; of the mental characteristics or attitudes of a person or group; and of the mental and emotional factors governing a situation or activity."

First question: What is science? Is it some pure, detached objectivity, wherein all things are subject to measurement? But even physics isn't that: at least half of its concepts are analogs of subjective human sensory experiences called sensory or conceptual metaphors. And don't let's get started on measuring the quantum events. Psychology has resisted being lumped in with the other social sciences, with all their probabilities and deviations and fuzzy, indeterminate edges. Eventually, that's where it's headed, but the probabilities will at least work better, the deviations will at least be more standard, and the fuzz on the edges might have more of the fine detail of fractals. This clarity is not just around the corner. This science still has big pieces missing, with many to come along fairly soon out of neuroscience and evolutionary psychology, and who-knows how many other fields, some still uninvented. In the meantime, this science may need to get patient and work less ambitiously, perhaps concentrating on such scientific values as predictability and repeatability instead of the digital measurements. That the field's future cornerstones are not yet fully identified is not really psychology's fault. The current field is much more to blame for its presumptions and pretentiousness than for its ignorance and self-delusion.

Second question: What is study? Can this only study the measurable things? Should it concentrate on things that are billable to Blue Cross and Medicare or have pharmaceutical protocols? This is where the APA and its DSM are wholeheartedly headed, even in the face of much criticism. Can one study oneself in the first person? What things can be done with phenomenology, the study of the qualities or the qualia of first-person subjective experience? Maybe the single greatest embarrassment that psychology has been [sic] is during its behaviorist period, where it tried seriously to ignore the relevance of the emergent, subjective dimensions of life, even in the driving, control and adaptation of behavior. If you, the reader, are anything like me, the writer, you probably have, at least in the conventional sense, some psyche. You, like me, probably think that that's somehow relevant to the study of one. How is it that these fools could pretend it wasn't even there? Of course, to the Buddha, the conventional psyche was a process, not a thing, a verb instead of a noun, but that's still behavior, isn't it? Do mental phenomenon and qualia somehow become more legitimate when they can be causally tied to specific behaviors of the organism? The integration of those may be the route it will take. It is often assumed that everything about the mind

and mental processes must finally be explicable in terms of brain and other neural events, but this gives us a poor explanation for self-directed behavior, of agency, of the behavior we need to exercise in order to deliver ourselves successfully from addictive behavior. We need to jump to software metaphors for this, but this leaves us without the use of sensation and affect. To the Buddha, the mind and its will are determined but capable of being free. Freedom emerges out of conditions that we are able to alter and adjust, but the cognitive tools that it uses do not originate entirely or directly out of our biological processes. They are conditioned. Biology can learn them, but ultimately they are emergent properties of the mind.

Third question: Why study just the human mind? Why not incorporate sentience in general? Is it still because the animals don't have souls and won't go to heaven? Did all those monkeys and lab rats suffer and die in vain? Modern biology and Darwinian medicine are busily painting a much different story of mind, one that increasingly includes more of the organism and its zoological relations. The brain extends all the way out to the fingertips, to the wingtips and the flippers as well. We live one life, scientifically speaking. The jaguar on the hunt is consummately mindful. Therefore it might be a good idea to specify what is meant by mind here. Throughout we will use the word mind in the sense Buddha intended, which will tend to integrate cognition, affect, feeling, sense perception, apperception, memory, imagination, intention, attention and self-aware sentience. The mind is a whole team of generally identifiable processes, and neither consciousness nor a rational intellect is team captain. There is no team captain, and no one process remains in charge. In a way this mind is closer to the sense found in the question "do you mind?" It is certainly not the mind of the Cartesian mind-body dualism.

Fourth question: What of the second person in psychology's science? Phenomenology has ventured off into this, in part to corroborate its first-person research. Intersubjectivity is now being used to understand how humans understand. We build on our confirmations as well as go astray. Unlearning, relearning, personal transformation and the rewiring of our behavior can be dramatic in person-on-person encounters, even with a psychotherapist involved. A good part of the primate brain just seems to be built for the interpersonal encounter. Can't this be part of the science? Including the relationships between human beings has certainly played a role in the social sciences, which have had their own problems with objectivity and cultural differences. While neuroscience and evolutionary psychology are quickly rescuing us from the delusion of human as *tabula rasa* or blank slate, and beginning to articulate the dimensions of human nature that underpin our cultural differences, sociology is showing us that *verstehen*, the understanding and use of empathy, has a useful place in the social sciences. It is now permissible to try to relate to that unfortunate savage as a fellow human being with a similar neural architecture to the researcher's own. First there is our common human ground and then there are the cultural differences.

One of the things that psychology seems to have perennially failed to learn, whether it was studying behavior or the mental functions affecting behavior, is that psychology itself is a form of behavior, particularly a cognitive and linguistic behavior. Human behavior is driven by various motivating forces. A science of behavior that doesn't start by seeing itself as behavior, may fail to question its own motives and wind up seeing only what it wishes to see and taking too much for granted. A philosophy which never asks why it would want to see things in a certain way is subject to some quite vast and complicated unconscious influences. A true science that addressed this first would thereby aim more true, as your better archers will look first to their posture or stance. Psychology is still much in need of good rules for assigning words, both nouns and verbs, to functions and processes that are meaningful in both the subjective and

objective worlds, mental objects that are functionally related. Sweet, for example, will refer to a specific neuron that is structurally different from the one that tastes sour. Our personal experience is biological as well as phenomenological. How marvelous it will be to have a language connecting the two. My id may be out of control and bringing forth monsters, and my superego powerless to stop it, partly because I just don't have a good cognitive understanding of what's really going on down in there. The devil is working me overtime.

In all the above, Buddhism offers some too-long-ignored contributions to psyche's -ology. Of particular importance for our purposes here is its offering in the various arenas of self-efficacy and self-directed behavior, cognitive self-control, emotional self-control, behavioral self-control or self-modification, intentional neuroplasticity or cortical reprogramming, and widening our experiential repertoires, extending our horizons, to facilitate better choices. In a sense, the Buddha developed his psychology as an operating system for the mind. It was meant to be a psychological therapy, for the cure of normalness, but this required deep, subjective examination that would lead to altered cognition, altered affect, and altered behavior. It was *techne*, it wasn't just something recited in praise of a deity. With regard to Buddhism as a therapy, it is important to stipulate that its goal is not to help the individual to adapt, adjust or conform to society at large. The Buddhistly well-adjusted might easily find themselves at a still greater distance from normative human social acceptability than where they began.

The preoccupation of the Western world with individuality and self has given Buddhism-as-therapy a bit of a chasm to cross. Dhamma-Vinaya as originally presented doesn't spend much time fussing over whether my mother breastfed or hugged me enough, or whether my father berated or abandoned me. My specialness can be largely ignored unless somebody is helping me with a very particular problem. How much the method was meant to be personalized or customized to cultures and individuals is not really clear, but mindfulness is an exploration of our own minds, not of our neighbors', and maybe this brings in the balance we want. There are universals in human nature. Any competent neurosurgeon can identify the corresponding endocrine glands in each of us well enough. We have the same neurotransmitters. Where does our specialness, our self-esteem, our self-actualization, our individuation, belong in a Buddhist context? Well, maybe that's worth meditating on.

### **Buddhism and Science**

Einstein is alleged to have said: "The religion of the future will be a cosmic religion. It should transcend personal god and avoid dogma and theology. Covering both the natural and the spiritual, it should be based on a religious sense arising from the experience of all things natural and spiritual as a meaningful unity. Buddhism answers this description. If there is any religion that could cope with modern scientific needs it would be Buddhism."

For a definition of science we can start with the New Oxford American Dictionary's: "the intellectual and practical activity encompassing the systematic study of the structure and behavior of the physical and natural world through observation and experiment" and add: resulting in testable explanations and repeatable predictions about the universe. Science isn't just knowing or learning facts and equations. *Scientes*, Latin for knowing and the word science's root, was know-how, reliable knowledge, reliably knowing. And reliability usually means predictability and repeatability. In the human mind, things only tend to work in certain ways, and are only generally predictable or repeatable. Sometimes science must look at fuzz that it cannot resolve into finer lines, or look at a range of things or a spectrum. But that's what the mind is: a

moving process, a spectrum and range. The mind is not entirely digital, and it's only half third-person.

In Theravada, the Buddha recognized that the world or world-stream was bigger than the mind or mindstream. Sentient beings are only a part of a greater whole. This observation is not always shared in other forms of Buddhism. While the various sentient beings are made up of their own components (called *khandas*), the world too had its constituent factors, such as the *dhatus* or elements, which constitute *rupa* or physical form. The Buddha lived in India, in a cultural climate full of wild and rampant metaphysical speculation, as between competing schools of eternalism and nihilism. He noted frequently that most of these raging debates went nowhere. The various beliefs did nothing to improve the lives of their champions, or their ethics either. He would view the great bulk of this as sophistry, and distraction from the higher work that we need to do to beat suffering. He noted how people were only seeing what they wanted to see. He also noted why they wanted to see things in these ways. We can ask, however, what he might have thought of knowledge gained by more reliable means, and tested, as science does. Clearly, science is not free of human and personal bias, but let's call it generally so. Buddha's big thing was teaching what was true, which he called the Dhamma (or Dharma). He would likely agree that the Dhamma was more closely tied to what was true than to the words of doctrine he spoke. So what about world that is independent of human mental processes?

The issue of the relevance to liberation and an end to the suffering of sentient beings would still hold fast. But pondering the size and wonder of the macro universe makes a great exercise in both mindfulness and concentration. The story of evolution is not at all inconsistent with the Buddha's account of the sentient beings undergoing millions and billions of years of rebirth into a world that is the result of their intentional actions or *kamma*. It is not necessary to think of *kamma* in terms of retributive justice. It is our intentional action, actions out of want, need, motive and drive. A few generations long ago decided they wanted that new kind of mate, without the tail and all that hair. That soon became the predominant mate, except for the real losers. Such want or intentional action drives evolution and conditions rebirth. It is likely that Theravada could more easily accept the benefits of natural selection than other forms, since it takes a harder line on unwholesomeness. Since Buddha's express aim was to get at any doctrine or truth by way of direct personal investigation, it is permitted to investigate any science that meets its criteria and adopt what meets its objectives.

If demonstrable truth is the criterion, then reality or nature would be the scripture, not dogma about the nature of reality. This was actually held as a tenet by Islam, during its golden age when it kept the fires of science alight. Sadly, it disintegrated. We will want to find and read this scripture of reality without twisting it all around with our biases and preconceptions. *Ergo*, any insight that is grounded in reality and provable is also Dhamma, with a capital-D, even if it is the product of subsequent centuries, and even if this happens to be the accidental discovery of a relatively unenlightened being. Further, if a particular teaching of the Buddha was shown to be untrue, that teaching would need to be replaced or amended. Buddhism also has much to offer science since, in Manly P. Hall's words, "it has found the weak point in most schools of Western philosophy: namely, the failure to analyze the analyzing power." It doesn't matter at all if a living being flinches or cringes when reading the truth. It isn't tailored to that being's comfort. Truth and adaptation to truth is the being's problem, not that of the universe. As Darwin noted: "We are not here concerned with hopes and fears, only with truth as far as our reason permits us to discover it."

Clearly, cognitive neuroscience, in addition to evolution, would be a Buddhist's first focus: they are the same inquiry, only from different but complementary perspectives.

Both, for example, have an interest in the physical, chemical, electronic and experiential dynamics of our emotional arousal or in the allocation of attention to a sense object. This is not to say that they cover the same ground in the same way. Buddhism is allowed to look for the first-person counterparts or experiences of the processes that neuroscience uncovers, and then adjust its models accordingly. Similarly, neuroscience is challenged to find *samadhi*, or *karuna*, or a higher state of mental health, or the structures of cognitive and emotional self-control. Both are interested in neuroplasticity, the ability of the brain and mind to change. Together they can define science away from 1st-3rd person debate. What is known? What is predictable? What is repeatable? What hurts? How can we stop hurting ourselves and each other?

# Suffering

What use is your braided hair, oh witless man? And your garment of antelope skin?  
Within you is ravenousness, but the outside you make to look clean. (*Dhammapada*)

The First Noble Truth is:

## **Dukkha Nanam, the Knowledge of Suffering**

*Dukkha* is called the most pressing fact of human existence. Although this is normally translated as suffering, it is a word richer in meanings, including unsatisfactoriness, imperfection, inability to satisfy, frustration, vulnerability, unease, stress, pain, hardship, deprivation, discomfort, what is hard to endure. It is being made aware that we don't occupy the very center of a universe created just for us. *Dukkha* is our constant whining about being given the gift of life. There is an irony to the verb suffering: since it's a verb it refers to something that you do. This comes with an implication that it is something you may not really need to do. Much of Buddhism is about how to not do this, how to stop doing it and then how to stay stopped. Much suffering has its beginnings deep in the darkness, long before we are aware of its emergence, so it isn't always easy to catch it before it gets going, but there are techniques taught here, preemptive strategies, even for this. Sometimes, too, it can seem that we suffer by choice, in part because we do this so consistently. Some of this is due to the unforeseen consequences of our choices. Sometimes we really have no choice that does not lead to suffering. Sometimes we suffer on purpose because we choose to feel guilty or because we want to feel alive, or feel at the center of things, or feel what we think of as deeply, or simply feel some dramatic effect in being moved about by our circumstances. And sometimes we suffer because bad things happen to good people for no reason whatsoever, not even from our personal karma. Although believers might want to disagree on this last point, we do live one life, scientifically speaking, and our own karma gets all tangled up with others. As usually understood, suffering is something that is done unto you, the helpless victim. It speaks of passivity, of not rising up and taking a stand. I once heard an anecdote in AA where someone who was asked how he was doing replied "OK, under the circumstances." "What are you doing under there?" was the reply. To be so passive is to be subject to circumstances, to be inanimate. To be a subject is the opposite of being a noble. It is to have no say in the matter. The Buddha further subdivided *Dukkha* into three parts that he called the *Tilakkhana*, the three marks or characteristics of our existence: *Anicca* or impermanence, *Dukkha* or hurt feelings, frustration and disapproval of reality, and *Anatta*, the nonexistence of the eternal and perfect spirit that would be the core of our being. These three words are used throughout the doctrine and are worth remembering.

## **Anicca, Impermanence**

Nothing holds still. Truth be told, one cannot step into the same river even once as long as our stepping takes any time at all. And eternity, for humankind, is the briefest flash of all. But boy do we love to pontificate on how much we know of eternity and perfection, and how superior that is to the inferior, ordinary reality that moves the ever-changing galaxies around. The concept of *anicca* is one of humankind's first philosophical statements of the second law of thermodynamics: that order is local and limited in time, and ultimately must give way to change. This is not a problem that the universe has. Impermanence doesn't even need to be a problem for us. The real problem that we have is in our obsession with permanence, our grabbiness towards it, and our resistance to the natural order of things.

After waiting for years to have a child, a Japanese feudal Lord was at last blessed with the birth of a son. A Zen master who was renowned for his exquisite calligraphy was commissioned by the Lord to create a fine work of art as a blessing for the birth. It was to be presented at a grand celebration. The Master arrived at the festivities three days later and unrolled a small scroll that read: "Grandfather dies, father dies, son dies." The Lord was enraged and had the Roshi seized and dragged before him, demanding either a satisfactory account or a severed head. The Master explained "Sir, the greatest blessing is to be in accord with the natural order of things, but I can write these in any other order you might prefer."

We have all known pleasure, but with the exception of any pleasure we are currently enjoying, all of these pleasures have now passed. We have all known pain as well, with the same result. The inevitable coming and going of pleasure and pain has got to be one of the most consistent and reliable experiences we have in life. What keeps us from accepting this? All it takes is some tiny external thing changing, something insignificant going right or wrong, and within a few seconds, we are suddenly either unreasonably ecstatic or unreasonably upset, and with the sense that that feeling could go on forever. Imagine if we listened to musical symphonies like that. All of a sudden we reach a perfect moment where the note of every instrument pleases us beyond reason. We would freeze the thing right there, with everybody holding that one particular note. How exciting would that be! The junkie chasing his dragon will continue his elusive pursuit of that first high that just will not stand still. I drank trying to snag that perfect bliss that lasted for two minutes halfway between drinks two and three, but I never could get it to stop running.

That your own mind is capable of change, and in fact, that change is fundamental to the very nature of mind, should come as welcome news, particularly if you have been suffering from one of these fixations. But first you need to come to grips with the nature of mind. The fundamental cause of all these problems is in the way mind reacts to change, so the fundamental solution is to adapt, to learn resilience, responsiveness and flexibility, to learn a healthier way to respond to changes. But here's the rub with recovery: if you want to put some problem behavior behind you, you will want to put it permanently behind you. Any true sobriety is a permanent solution. This makes people anxious and crazy. Most recovery groups try to soften this with advice to just stay sober one day at a time. Rational recovery, on the other hand, insists that this one-day-at-a-time thinking only allows you to entertain thoughts of some future relapse. But this problem is ultimately topographical or geographical. Saying "never again" assumes in a way that there is only forward and back, progress and backsliding. What it doesn't see is there is also moving on sideways and diagonally, never to pass through these parts again, not because of anxiety or fear, but because the world that has just opened up is just too damn big to waste time retracing your steps in either direction.

Ultimately it's not that you can change, but that you must. For someone who is suffering, thoughts of impermanence can offer hope instead of fear and anxiety. As much as beliefs like to stay put and hold fast, these are specifically the beliefs that need to go, the ones that hold you stuck here. We just need to look at them differently.

### **Dukkha, Painful Imperfection**

"Life in any world is unstable, it is swept away. It has no shelter and no protector. It has nothing of its own, but must leave all and pass on. It is incomplete, insatiate, the slave of craving" (MN 82).

The price of knowing what pleasure is is knowing when it is missing or unattainable. The price of knowing how precious a gift life is is knowing that it has to end in death. But this sort of knowing is done backwards, and this is why it seems like there is a

price. In fact, any chance to know pleasure in life is a gift. From a more noble perspective, the whining done over the pleasures of life coming up short of our prayers and expectations is really nothing more than an ignoble ingratitude. We seem to have the wrong default setting for our approvals and satisfactions: these should be set at the minimum levels that are needed for continued existence. Then everything else is a gift. We feel as though we are entitled to pleasure and happiness, to life and all of the good things it has to offer. Given this, we can only fall short of what this delusion seems to promise. It's as though we believe we were made by a god in his own image, with no reason to struggle to survive or do anything to merit the good things in life. It really isn't that surprising that we blunder so badly. There is nothing wrong with either pleasure or happiness. They are in fact superior states- and worth enjoying. The mistake is in pursuing them, particularly in pursuing them directly without the intermediate step of doing the work needed to merit them and bring them naturally about. This is especially true of our addictive behavior: we skip the part about deserving our happiness. The rest of the mistake is in trying to cling to them when the time comes for them or us to move on.

We have evolved the ability to shift our sense of identity around, to locate ourselves in a thought, a feeling, a sensation, a memory, or a plan. A feeling that we are having, as of deprivation, frustration, unhappiness or revulsion, seems able to hijack who we feel we really are. We don't seem to know why, but we tend to prefer identifying with passing and vulnerable states, while deluding ourselves into thinking that they will last. One of the most important techniques in Buddhist psychology takes charge of this assignment of identity. Whenever we get an unpleasant or unwholesome feeling, such as craving, or hatred, or disgust, this "wants" to fully occupy our sense of identity, and our personal feelings, almost by definition, feel intimate enough to convince us that this speaks for our inmost and most-authentic self. But these things are not our authentic selves, they are nothing more than feelings. When we are taken over by them everything is always always or never: you always think of yourself first, you never respect my feelings. They always come and go, and never last. The Buddha offered us a useful mantra for this, applicable to any thought, feeling or sensation that enters our awareness: "*N'etam mama, n'eso'ham asmi, na me so atta*. This is not mine, I am not this, this is not my spirit." This is not inauthentic since the identification in the first place is mind-made out of false or arbitrary ideas about how things are or how they should be.

I have always been amused by the Western theologians' opinion on the almighty with respect to change and imperfection, to *anicca* and *dukkha*. Their initial or *a priori* assumption was that divinity had to be perpetually and eternally perfect: "He" could not simply be moving in that direction. To them, this meant that if he was in one place he could not then move to another, because he must already have been in the perfect place. If he was in a particular state of being he could not change into another state. If he knew one thing he could not then learn another thing that was different. He was denied the ability to move, to change or to grow. The theologians apparently made him in their own image. What the Buddha tried to teach us to do is to begin with the assumption that changes and imperfections describe the natural order and proper state of things. If we want to be in a different place, we can begin by taking an honest and unflinching look at where we stand because this is the place where we begin to move our feet in order to travel to someplace else. We learn to accept reality as it is, not necessarily because we approve of it, but because we want to work with it in something other than our fantasies and delusions.

## **Anatta, We Imaginary Beings**

In the Indian context in which Buddhism arose there was (and remains) the widespread belief that the essential part of sentient beings was a spirit or soul called the *Atta* or *Atman*, each spirit a spark of an infinite divinity called Brahman that dreamed existence into being so that it might play hide and seek with itself. These spirits or souls would learn whatever they could learn, and find whatever they could find, over the course of their many lifetimes. At death they would transmigrate into new bodies, over and over again, until they learned or found out all the secrets and hiding places of the divine, at which point they would be liberated and reunited with Brahman, the game of hide and seek being over. Etymologically the word reincarnation means "going back into meat." It implies that there is some thing to do this going back. The Buddha rejected this idea with his doctrine of *Anatta*, meaning "no spirit (or soul)." What we sentient beings perceive, think of or feel as such an identity is a process that emerges out of the interplay of the component processes that condition or form us. These components provide the necessary conditions for this new spirit or soul-like process to emerge into our awareness, just as heat, oxygen and fuel provide the necessary conditions for flames to exist. At the same time, the Buddha elected to confuse everybody by talking about how we are reborn again and again, according to *kamma*, the laws of cause and effect, until we wake up and set ourselves free. We do not survive death and transmigrate as spirits, but somehow there is a continuity of process that is transmitted from lifetime to lifetime, and, significantly, this felt sense of continuity, and even a persistence of memories, is somehow able to cross this gap between a moment of death in one place and a moment of conception in another. The flame often provided a useful metaphor:

King Milinda questions: "Venerable Nagasena, does rebirth take place without anything transmigrating?"

"Yes, O King. Rebirth takes place without anything transmigrating."

"Give me an illustration, Venerable Sir."

"Suppose, O King, a man were to light a lamp from another lamp. Pray, would the one light have passed over to the other light?"

"No, indeed, Venerable Sir."

"In exactly the same way, O King, does rebirth take place without anything transmigrating."

"Give me another illustration."

"Do you remember, O King, having learnt, when you were a boy, some verse or other from your teacher of poetry?"

"Yes, Venerable Sir."

"Pray, O King, did the verse pass over to you from your teacher?"

"No, indeed, Venerable Sir."

"In exactly the same way, O King, does rebirth take place without anything transmigrating" (Tr. from the Milinda Panha, Burmese KN 47a).

Phrased a different way by Peter Santina in *The Tree of Enlightenment*: "Where is this from? - when we light one candle from another candle, no substance or soul travels from one to the other, even though the first is the cause of the second; when one billiard ball strikes another, there is a continuity - the energy and direction of the first ball is imparted to the second. The first ball is the cause of the second billiard ball moving in a particular direction and at a particular speed, but it is not the same ball."

So, if you were to take two candles, one lit and one not, light the unlit one and blow out the first, and ask whether the new flame was the same flame, the answer would have to be no, even though you could say that the flame was as if reborn. Further, "the extinguished flame cannot be described as having gone to any direction" (MN n723).

To the question "where does the soul go when the body dies?" Jacob Boehme answered, "There is no necessity for it to go anywhere." The new flame is the same process and uses the same kind of fuel, and oxygen from the same room, and heat from the old flame. There is still continuity there, in the actions of the transference, in the starting of the fire, and in the manufacture of the candles. This characterizes all intentional acts or *kamma*. The sense of continuity that we have, including the survival of memories, is never fully explained in complete and satisfying detail. In Theravada, the continuous part of the "rebirth" process is called the *patisandhi vinnana*, the relinking consciousness, or the linking-up-again consciousness. Today we might liken it to an upload and subsequent download of information from the web (of life). Other forms of Buddhism elaborate more on this web or "cloud" idea, retaining versions of the Hindu Akashic Record or a Storehouse Consciousness that supports the upload and the download during the transition. It may not be necessary to postulate this much before we are able to move on. Occam's Razor suggests that we look for the simplest solutions, perhaps a simple transmission or signal. It still might suggest some sort of living field or equivalent of the old luminiferous ether. This has no answer yet. As to the conditions which create a specific perception of a particular self, these can persist across lifetimes because *kamma* is rich in patterns that repeat with regularity across many lifetimes. At a minimum they persist in this both genetically and culturally.

Reincarnation is usually used (or abused) to rationalize the injustices of mortal life, why bad things happen to good people, or good things to bad, or why events in life appear random when somebody is trying to tell you instead that there are rules that ought to be followed. But the fact that all things ultimately have causes does not mean that all things happen for reasons, or are unfolding according to some law or plan. It is perhaps a lot more sane to admit that not everything happens to us by means of some moral law. Good or ethical behavior increases our odds of living a better life, this we can see, but, like Zhuangzi said, "perfect sincerity offers no guarantee." The little girl playing in her sandbox, who gets killed by a stray bullet from a gang fight happening two blocks way, is not playing a part in some larger divine plan. That thinking is pure, clinical paranoia, plain and simple. There is much in life over which we have no control, even by the circuitous route of becoming ethically perfect, but a truer or more authentic personal and ethical development will arm us against our own self-destructive reactions to life's little surprises and injustices. There are evils that we cannot control, but the appropriate response to them can often turn them around and press them into the service of the good. This requires accepting them first, instead of denying their existence. None of our rewards are guaranteed. We can only improve our odds. Obviously, those who are clinging to the law of *kamma* as retributive justice will take exception to this idea.

We seem to betray our illusions a little every time we say "my spirit" or "my soul." If this spirit or soul is who we really are, then why are we making our inmost being an extraneous possession like this? Shouldn't the first person be the spirit itself? Or are we admitting that we are living our lives at some distance from our real nature? If this were a mere trap of language, why have we not rebelled against this and created a popular grammatical form for the "real" me and you?

A great deal of the effort spent in a human life is an investment in the continuity and integrity of one's perception of a fundamental self. There are investments in finding it, in keeping it going, in keeping it the same, in keeping it protected from challenging information, in keeping it from not feeling wrong or ashamed, in maintaining its sense of sovereignty or independence. Now the Buddha suggests that it may not be desirable for us to protect this fundamental self from change and eventual dissolution, especially dissolution into wiser ways of seeing things. The fundamental self is little more than a

mental image produced by a stream of mental experiences upon attending a stream of physical experiences. It is one that costs a great deal of energy to maintain. If we were to recognize our sense of being a fundamental self as no more than a constructed mental image, perhaps given to us by millions of years of evolution to perform specific cognitive tasks, and admittedly useful in addressing many of our various physical and social needs, we could still make use of it in conventional ways to perform whatever functions it does best. Also, to recognize it as a construct would help set us free to do some useful re-construction. We could then free ourselves from being its slave or servant, and begin to adopt new notions of who we really are that lead us into less trouble. We could then begin to get over ourselves.

Self is not precisely an illusion in Buddhism, as it is in the *Maya* and *Samsara* concepts of Hinduism. It's a convention. It's not unreal, it just isn't what we'd like to think it is, and it certainly isn't going to last. It's a sense of something real, but it's distorted. This conventional self cannot exist without any of its components, particularly the body. Neither is the world an illusion. The world of *Samsara* is as real as *Nibbana*, and not a bad dream. *Nibbana* and *samsara* ultimately refer to the same world, the real world, just experienced differently. What is unreal is the world that we think, feel and perceive it to be. If you have tried to imagine a world that is stripped of our organic sensations like sight and touch, perhaps as a vast, moving field of full-spectrum energy, in varying densities, streaming through time, always changing, with countless nodes or pockets of self-organizing energy feeding on energy gradients, you likely have at least a closer picture of reality than the one our senses give us, even though the best you can do is still laden with sensory and cognitive metaphors.

We hold beliefs about what we are, and the nature of the world that we live in, that turn us into whining and ineffective participants, obsessing on this or that, throwing our lives away for things we are only told that we need. Yet we are also able to hold views that include a self that sits near the center of our world and is able to correct most of these difficulties. The Buddha referred to himself in the first person. He recognized that the sentient beings who came to him were people, who had boundaries. Self is formed from our experiences in the world. We are genetically evolved to make and use these constructs. They have uses, and these allowed our progenitors to survive and breed our ancestors. But the self does not come into the world to collect experiences. It is the experiences that give rise to the self. As Dogen put it, "To carry the self forward and realize the ten thousand *dharmas* is delusion. That the ten thousand *dharmas* advance and realize the self is enlightenment." (Little-d *dhamma* or *dharma* refers to any object that can be grasped by the mind, including beings). Buddha never said that the self did not exist. But he "found that, when the inner world is studied closely, all that can be found is a constantly changing flow and what is taken for an intrinsic self or soul is just the sum of certain factors of the mind that are all impermanent and in constant flux. He also found that attachment to any of these impermanent factors inevitably leads to suffering, so the way to internal freedom and happiness that the Buddha advocated was to learn to accept and live in the face of impermanence without clinging to anything." (Fredrik Falkenstrom, "A Buddhist Contribution to the Psychoanalytic Psychology of Self").

All individual phenomena, all *dhammas*, thoughts, feelings, sensations, memories, plans and ideas, can be contemplated, examined, re-envisioned and revised using these three points of view, in terms of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and not-self. *Sammasana-nana* is the exploration and contemplation of individual phenomena in terms of these three marks. The three Liberations, or *vimokkha*, are counter-meditations on the three marks, doorways out to a broader perspective. *Animitta* is a meditation on signlessness or formlessness, contemplating how all things must pass.

*Appanahita* is a meditation on desirelessness or dispassion, contemplating how all compounded beings are ultimately unable to attain any lasting satisfaction or happiness. Finally, *Sunnata* is a meditation on emptiness, contemplating how all compounded beings are without a substantial or substantive core, without any individuality that is independent of the conditions which led to their emergence. Deliberately inviting these three into our awareness might be seen as "just asking for it," standing up to and staring down the nearly suicidal existentialist's nausea, angst and sickness-unto-death. But Buddhism isn't for sissies, and it's better to get this over with sooner than later.

### **Khandas, The Five Aggregates**

The Five Aggregates (*Panca Khandas*) are the factors or constituent processes comprising the perceived individual identity of living beings. Collectively the five are also called the existing person (*sakkaya*), the current assemblage or identity, and alternately the five aggregates affected by clinging or grasping (*panca-upadana-khandha*). What appears to be an integral self is really a compounded thing, or more correctly, a complex, interwoven, multidimensional and ever-shifting process. It does have a conventional reality, but not a fundamental, substantive or lasting one. We are aggregate beings and can't separate who we are from the combination of our organism, behavior, sensations, emotions and narratives. Identity jumps around from part to part. Sometimes it's an action, sometimes it's a feeling, sometimes a sensation, an emotion, a motive, a behavioral script or a story. Identity grasps or clings first to one then another. We think we derive our identity from what we experience: it lights us up, gives us the sense of being this or owning that. But this always passes. Everything that we find in the mind is just a weave of physical reaction, affect, sensation, remembrance, motivation, cognition and awareness. But there is no pure and disembodied witness, no doer apart from things getting done, no feeler feeling, no thinker thinking. Self is something like a running poll or vote of these many components, and the locus of whichever component is currently drawing the most attention. Self is like a colony or a hive mind of lots of little identities and identifications. Self is the squeakiest wheel at the moment. You are the thought while the thought is attended, or as T. S. Eliot said, "you are the music while the music lasts." The quintet of constituent processes described by the Buddha were physical form (*rupa*), feeling (*vedana*), perception (*sanna*), volitional formations (*sankhara*) and consciousness (*vinnana*). These simple, one-word translations don't do the ideas justice. In a little more detail:

*Rupa* refers to the physical organism, the organization, the structured matter obedient to the laws of the elements, material qualities, form or shape, corporeality, what makes phenomena sensible, the basis for figure-ground perception, out to the boundaries where the qualities change. It is the sensible, including the physical structure of the senses themselves, the nervous system and the physical modules of the brain. *Rupa* is in turn constituted from the four elements (in Buddhist doctrine), and *kamma*, or consequences of intentional action. "This body is not yours, nor does it belong to others. It is old *kamma*, to be seen as generated (*abhisankhata*) and fashioned by volition (*cetayita*), as something to be felt (*vedaniya*)" (SN 12).

*Vedana* refers to feeling, sensation, receptiveness, the sensory and affective reactions to contact. This was largely understood in Buddha's time in the very simplistic terms of pleasantness (*sukha*), unpleasantness (*dukkha*), and neutrality (*adukkhamasukha*), neither-painful-nor-pleasant. This is the beginning of wanting more and wanting less, feeling whether to open up or close down, whether to approach or avoid. Today we would say that there is much more to this than just plus, minus and neutral. One common but still simplistic classification of feelings assumes that each affect has a

combination of pleasantness (pleasant or unpleasant) and activation (high or low). Excitement is a combination of pleasantness and high activation, while tranquility is a combination of pleasantness and low activation. Rage would be unpleasant with a high activation, while depression would be unpleasant with low activation. Ambivalence would be high-activation neutrality, apathy would be low. Further articulation of the dimensions of feelings could go on and on. We also bring our pre-existing and longer-term affective states, like moods, dispositions and temperaments, into our experiences. Hormones and neurotransmitters are at the heart of awareness of these affective tones, so their full articulation could be as complex as the permutations of our neurochemistry.

*Sanna* refers to perception, or more precisely, apperception, combining raw sensation with all of the things that the historical person and its brain does with sensation before it arises into awareness. *Sanna* is recognition, not merely sensation. The word *sanna* means to make intelligible. This is the process of comprehending the specific marks (*nimitta*) or qualia of phenomenal objects, such as blueness, sharpness, shrillness, spiciness, etc. It is called "distinguishing a thing by its marks" (SN 22.79). As sensations, thoughts and feelings arise in the mind they are compared with past experiences, matched up with memories and expectations, re-cognized, interpreted, discerned, bordered, associated, labeled, and re-filed. *Sanna* involves the whole nervous system, not merely the outer sense organs. Here the brain doesn't really end in the head but out at the farthest nerve endings and involves the most distant endocrine glands. These are discussed in six classes, the five most-often cited senses, and the mind. Here our awareness of the goings-on in our minds, such as memories and expectations, is treated in the same category as sensory experiences. This could be called cerebroception. These are processed by the mind in much the same way as new sensory input. These mental objects are called *dhamma*, with a small-d. A modern re-envisioning of this piece of the Buddha's doctrine would need to expand and reintegrate what we have more recently learned of the senses, which number a lot more than five. Given the importance of our cognitive metaphors to our understanding of how we think, in the important new idea of embodied mind, we would do well to include such processes as proprioception, the vestibular and otolithic senses of the inner ear, the kinesthetic senses in our muscles, tendons and bones, the organic senses, the sensations of pain (nocioption), and last but not least, the lively nerve endings of eros.

*Sankhara*, in the sense used here, might best be described as volitional formations. In modern terms, this is the behavioral conditioning that the behaviorists tried to regard as the whole of what we are. In scope it runs the gamut from our genetically and epigenetically conditioned behavioral traits, to the most artificial and modern of human cultural adaptations. Included in this are the thoughts, values and evaluative beliefs which guide our actions, as well as the motive forces, the emotions, which drive or power our actions. These too are discussed in six classes, by primary sense involvement, and including mental objects or mental formations. Like the word *dhamma*, *sankhara* is broad in its meanings. It generally refers to formations, fabrications, constructions, fashionings, methods, metaphors and models of any sort. It even refers to the five *khandas* themselves as formational factors. But here, as one of the *khandas*, it is narrowed to conditioning and reconditioning. Important to our purposes here, if it is built it can get rebuilt, if programed, reprogrammed.

The word *kamma* is understood as volitional or intentional action, and does not really include mindless or inorganic physical causation. It is our volitional formations that are responsible for bringing forth the future states of our existence. They predispose us to have certain categories of experience and prepare us to respond to those experiences in

narrowed ways. They draw or drive us with what-if simulations of future behavior, complete with estimates and projections of what our sensory experiences and emotional responses are likely to be. Evolution fashioned important parts of these driving processes deep in the old parts of the brain, where homeostasis is regulated, where powerful neurochemical reward and disincentive systems operate, adjacent to our deepest hopes and fears, the triggering of potent endocrine cocktails, and the mechanics of attention. This is important here because this is where our addictive patterns set up their base of operations.

*Vinnana* refers to the processes that we call consciousness, attention, sentience, awareness, or cognizance. We can leave any kind of conceptual cognition back in the previous categories. Consciousness is also discussed in six classes. Unlike in some religions, Buddhist consciousness is not some otherworldly or spiritual substrate of existence, nor is it that which creates existence. It's merely another process developing out of existence. It is an emergent property, conditioned by billions of years of biological evolution. It is always associated with an object, however nebulous or formless that object might be. In the Buddha's words, "*Annatra paccaya natthi vinnanassa sambhavo*: there is no arising of consciousness without reference to a condition" (MN 38). This is what neuroscientist Antonio Damasio calls our core consciousness, our here-and-now awareness, a transient entity, continuously recreated. It is dependent upon ancient brain structures shared with much of the animal kingdom. Consciousness only gets exalted above that of the beasts on those special occasions where it is attending to loftier things, like self-actualizing states, or flow, or how to quit suffering. It is often concentrated on internal verbal dialog, which gives the appearance of its being raised above the beasts.

Mind is never some airy thing devoid of content. It is always a minding or reminding of something. Importantly, consciousness is discontinuous. It doesn't exist in deep sleep or between lives. It doesn't make up the heart of the universe. When we get to *Samma Samadhi*, the eighth step of Right Concentration, there are advanced meditations on such subjects as the "Sphere of Infinite Consciousness." It's important to understand that this is not to be reified, or made into an understanding of how the universe is built, even when this has become part of your experience. It is merely an exercise, and an experience with the mental object that is presently being attended.

### **The Emergent Self**

The emergent is the opposite of the fundamental. It is something that arises out of prior conditions and something that didn't exist before. This something, however, is not necessarily a thing. It could just as easily be a process or a verb, or even be described solely by adjectives and adverbs. The emergent may be thought of as the difference between the whole and the sum of its parts, the consequence of the synergy of the fundamental conditions acting together. Weak emergence describes properties which might have been predicted from antecedent conditions, assuming a great deal of knowledge and understanding of these conditions. Chemistry is an example of weak emergence. For a long time following the big bang of the local universe there were no chemical reactions. There were only hydrogen and inert helium molecules. It wasn't until the first stars had lived and then exploded, creating the variety of atomic elements, that chemical reactions could even occur and show us patterns of activity that could then be described as the laws of chemistry.

Strong emergence, on the other hand, refers to unpredictable outcomes. Subjectivity, the subjective experiences of our sentience, and qualia, the personal experience of the qualities of a mental object or phenomenon, are the most cited examples. However much you might know about the electromagnetic spectrum and the 450-500 nanometer

wavelength, and however you combine this with what you know about the irritability and plasticity of human neurons, you will still never be able to forecast or deduce what the personal experience of the color blue will be. Blue is strongly emergent, as are our most subjective phenomena, including feelings, remembered experience, mind and consciousness. The hardened scientists and many skeptics aren't really happy with strong emergence theory for the very good reason that it doesn't really explain anything: it merely walks us away from a lot of silly metaphysical problems and speculations. It's good that they are annoyed by this, because they will keep digging for us and learn a bunch of new stuff that we can use. But the bottom line is: subjective experience has a reality of its own, and it will likely be seen to work according to its own set of discoverable laws.

It is important to understand from this discussion that a thing, process or property that is emergent is not for this reason less real or important than other, more fundamental properties of existence. That the mind or consciousness did not exist at the beginning of the local universe does not make mind or consciousness any less important. It merely suggests that the foundational conditions will need to be maintained in order for mind and consciousness to be sustained in the future. Like much of Buddhist philosophy, this resets the locus of responsibility for continued existence squarely back into human hands. All life must live with the consequences of our previous choices.

Evolution has given us an autobiographical self, an emergent construct. It is a simplified mental model made from our various identifications and values, memories, remembered sensations and feelings, summarizations of our more invariant characteristics, with an extra dose of us in our most shining and our most humiliating moments. It has two arms, two legs and senses too. We use this self-image to perform stunts in our imagination, exercises in vicarious trial and error. When this imaginary self gets hurt it only hurts a little. We can send it out to test our boldest plans and it only bleeds or dies in theory. Evolution and selection have kept the ability to make such models due to their utility in survival and adaptive fitness. We can make mistakes in the first and third person imagination, predict some evil outcomes in advance and not suffer any real-world consequences. It has been demonstrated in the lab that in practice its use will often activate the same brain events that real physical activity does and will lead to real changes in neuro- and blood chemistry. The self does not simply come into being from a narrative about the self involved in the act of knowing, nor is it simply from a need to provide a grammatical subject for our sentences. It's there in reality, it's just not what we thought it was. It is emergent and not fundamental to who we really are, except as it enables us to survive, adapt, breed and rear our young.

Our distant progenitors and ancestors developed and handed down this self-reflexive insight, this inner self or I, along with its inner eye and ear and innersense. It assisted them in making better choices, improved our intentional actions or *kamma*, and so it survived. It gave us a new form of perception, like new sense organs, even doubling up on use of parts of the brain otherwise occupied. The brain holds models of the mind-body and the self that can be manipulated at will, at least to the extent that one has even formed a will. The Buddha also spoke frequently of developing this model further into a "mind-made body," for traveling elsewhere during meditation. And shamans, of course, adopt these sorts of bodies as totems and dream states. Through this image we can feel things that are not real, that have not happened, that never will happen. We enable flights of fancy and utter self-delusion. We can also send it off to explore the routes out of our suffering.

At bottom, this emergent sense, model and narrative of self is all that we have for a self, at least beyond the physical organism. What then becomes of our quest to discover "our authentic selves"? This is a good question for Buddhists to ask. The best

and most authentic self that we have, the purest and most original self that we have, is a still construct. This does not, however, pull the ground entirely from beneath us. After our ridiculous foray into believing self to be a *tabula rasa*, a blank slate on which superior culture and good parenting can write most anything it pleases, we are now coming to understand that there is after all a human nature, developed over many millions of years of evolution, developing behavioral traits, perceptual archetypes, social protocols and even ethics. For the Buddhist this is the best of all worlds. There are techniques of inquiry that can help us explore what this original nature is and there are techniques of self-modification and self-control that can help us to correct the parts of these models that serve us poorly. It is not necessary to accept yourself as you currently appear to be and refer to this as your authentic self. The fact that you are having a self-destructive feeling does not make it "your" feeling simply because it feels close to you. Any constructed self is subject to reconstruction and the sense of authenticity can be redirected to relate to higher purposes. We can decide, even choose, even invent, who we truly and authentically are without having to compromise our authenticity.

## Suffering's Causes

Nevertheless, flowers fall with our attachment, and weeds spring up with our aversion.  
Dogen

The Second Noble Truth states that suffering has identifiable causes.

### **Tanha, Craving and Thirst**

Suffering arises, emerges or originates (*samudaya*) out of a network of causes. When these causes develop as a sequence this is called the Chain of Conditioned Arising (*paticca samuppada*) or Dependent Origination. There are twelve links that are named in this chain. *Tanha*, the selfish motivation of the misunderstood self, its craving, desire or thirst, is the eighth link and the standard representative for the twelve in speaking of the Second Truth. Used more broadly, it encompasses both craving and aversion, wanting what-is-not to be, and wanting what-is to not be. These lead us on to endless becoming, which may be best understood here as endless complications or ramifications. Literally, the word is journeying (*samsara*). Where two representatives from the chain are used, they are usually *avijja* (ignorance or blindness) and *tanha*.

**Kama tanha** is the craving for pleasure, particularly craving sensory pleasure, craving the enjoyment of sense objects. A modern interpretation would presumably include references to the associated neurochemistry. As we will see later, there are many kinds of noble and elevated pleasures that were encouraged by the Buddha. Further, we are not warned quite as sternly about enjoying our pleasure or happiness as it is passing us by, so much as we are cautioned against pursuing, going out of our way to get, to have or possess pleasure or happiness. In this inferior sense we are looking more at lust, at desire that has an element of cravenness, loss of perspective, loss of self-control and loss of dignity. This is Eros in its darker and more desperate aspect, not as life that is freely or exuberantly expressed, but something which takes more than it gives.

**Bhava tanha** is the craving for more being, craving more than simply to continue our own existence. We want to be increasingly important, powerful, popular, or known, to be too big to fail, to be secure, to never slip back onto obscurity or nothingness. This is Ontos, being the thing, and has some aspects of Nietzsche's Will to Power as a characteristic of all of life, especially in its carelessness or wantonness, and even disregard for its own self-preservation, and some of Sartre's Being-for-Others in its inauthentic self-objectification.

**Vibhava tanha** is the craving not to be, to be nothing, or be on the way to nothing by becoming less and less. It is fugue, denial, and aversion to life and aliveness. It is thirst for the waters of the Lethe, for forgetting, for numbness, oblivion or extinction. It is wanting to be separated from all pain and unpleasantness, even if this means separating from life itself. It's the death wish that the Freudians called Thanatos, even though this is not always a wish for a speedy or timely death. Most, in fact, seem to only have courage enough to move in this direction one day at a time.

The Buddha used the word Chanda, desire or zeal, specifically a desire to act or wish to do, when he wanted to put a positive spin on wanting things to be something other than what they presently are, for reasons that are skillful and wholesome, desiring, for instance, to put an end to suffering.

### **Akusala Mulas, the Three Unwholesome Roots**

Much of our suffering is conditioned by our inclinations to overreact to situations in three general ways: craving, aversion and delusion. These are also called the Three

Poisons (*tivisa*) and sometimes the makers of measurement (*pamanakarana*) perhaps because they divide the world into pieces for apportionment. Wise attention (*yoniso manasikara*) is required to cut off these roots. Wise attention allows us to intervene in this process of overreaction. Because these states arise from deep within the mind, often if not usually in pre-conscious processes, they can be well on their way to expression before our attention can attend to them. In the fifth step of the Eightfold Path, *Samma Vayama*, Right Effort, we study ways to intervene, interrupt or short-circuit these eruptions. Because they arise from deep within they are often regarded as being one with our inmost selves and therefore righteously insisting upon expression. Psychologists may speak of the need for catharsis and the dangers of repression, as though these were some sort of hydraulic fluids that have a need to go somewhere. The Buddha took the approach that they didn't need to be created in the first place, and they certainly don't need to be maintained.

**Lobha** is a broad term for craving and attachment, covetousness, thirst, passion, lust, greed, unskillful desire, self-centered grasping for more. It is sometimes called *raga*, which is closer to simple passion (one that complicates things). It is also a synonym of *tanha*. We can see the origins of *lobha* in the appetites we are born with. If we don't want to die young we need to satisfy many of these. If we want to be clear-minded and wise inquirers we will do a skillful job of satisfying them, taking care of first things first. Maslow's hierarchy of needs gives us a fairly useful guide to addressing these in a fairly optimal order. It's usually when our needs are repeatedly thwarted that we start to develop unwholesome approaches to needs fulfillment. Advertising doesn't help much at all with its ability to create artificial needs, particularly those that can never be satisfied. We encounter additional problems with appetites in our evolved biology that drive us to attain to things that were once much harder to find in nature: sugar, fat, safety, and having children who would live past their first year. Without self-control we come predisposed to overdo all of these now. It is now a learned skill set to first want what you have and then to choose what to want according to how this will best serve you. As part of this skill set, pleasure and happiness aren't for seeking: they are for informing.

**Dosa** is a general term for aversion and hatred, anger, aggression, fear of getting what we don't want, or of not getting what we want, avoidance, rejection, a will to be separate, often coming from unwise contemplation of repulsive objects. This word covers a wide range of hostile feelings. Buddhist scriptures often substitute the synonyms *vyapada* or *patigha*. Whether it's wanting something you don't have or having something you don't want, you want what is not and don't approve of existence. *Dosa*, too, has ancient evolutionary roots. The displeasure that we feel at being unable to accomplish a task gives us some incentive to try again. The displeasure that we feel at being in a bad situation motivates us to either change it or go elsewhere. Perhaps more importantly, the displeasure we feel towards others when we are cheated, bullied or otherwise betrayed, motivates us to provide some form of negative feedback to the bad actor in the troop. It served important functions of social regulation. But this was something that served a lesser and temporary function, to provide information that led to the resolution of an untenable situation. Pain and unpleasantness contain valuable information. It was not intended for the one who felt it to carry it around and harbor in the form of resentment. The Buddha claimed that holding a grudge is like drinking poison and waiting for the other person to die. Acceptance is the right skill for this problem, but this is not to be confused with approval. When we accept that things are what they are, this gives us a reality to work with, and either change or move away from, instead of a fantasy over which we have only imaginary control.

**Moha** is a general term for delusion and stupidity, mental dullness or darkness, infatuation, bewilderment, confusion, ignorance, sentimentality, or folly. Sometimes the synonym *avijja*, blindness or ignorance, is used, especially when the three unwholesome roots are being called the three Defilements (*kilesas*). Set minds, prejudices, hasty assumptions and false views have their roots in the evolution of the human brain. Our more primitive cognitive skills allowed us to develop rules of thumb for getting by, and for making snap decisions in a simpler but often more dangerous world. An evolutionary compromise was reached that allowed us to skip the effort of examining the world carefully and thinking things through. Unfortunately, we also have a tendency to consider these rules of thumb, beliefs, presuppositions, prejudices, profilings and oversimplifications as essential to our view of the world, and frequently in need of defending. When these concern our sense of self we protect them with a formidable array of defense mechanisms, which are now charted in great detail by psychologists. When it is only our sensations, thoughts and feelings that are so threatened we have a similar array of cognitive biases, also well enumerated by psychologists and sociologists. When stress threatens we can adopt coping strategies which often include self-deception. And when these beliefs have built themselves into full theories, we protect ourselves from new and often superior information with the aid of logical fallacies, which are now well-enumerated by logicians. More will be said later of *moha*, when we discuss human self-deception, cognitive biases, defense mechanisms, coping strategies and logical fallacies at Right Mindfulness.

It might be that Buddhism and science represent our two best efforts to get and stay free of the tyranny of our own thought processes. In theory at least, a Buddhist doesn't own his own views: "this is not mine, I am not this, this is not my self." In theory at least, a true scientist doesn't believe in a theory like evolution: to him it is simply the best current explanation for the available data. Still, scientists are human and cling to their favorite ideas, leading us to Max Planck being paraphrased as saying: "Science progresses one funeral at a time." Buddhists, too, often have notions that they grip with white knuckles.

### **Paticca-Samuppada, the Chain of Conditioned Arising**

Patient: "It hurts when I do this, doc."

Doctor: "Then stop doing that."

One thing leads to another as suffering is conditioned or created out of a chain of twelve causes (*nidanās*). The twelve links of the chain begin with blindness or ignorance. In a modern context, now informed by our developing neuroscience, it may more useful to view this chain as an example of how things might unfold causally, rather than dogmatically as a rigid, invariable and universal sequence. The important thing is that, by attending the stream as an experience unfolds, you see a chain of causes working, and our wise attention can lead to useful inferences about the development of states of mind even before they become conscious. A lot of our reasons and explanations, as for why we think and feel in certain ways, are after-the-fact assumptions, rationalizations or justifications that might have little to do with the actual process. The human mind is more concerned with the making of meanings that it can hold onto than it is about the accuracy of those meanings, so we often come up short of the optimum explanations for our mental states. Look at how dreams work: neurons put on standby, but unfired during the day, start firing off as they gradually return to a rest state. They were on standby for being at least approximately relevant to the prior day's experience. As the brain relaxes, a stream of sub- and semiconscious experience, a soup of mental objects, confronts the half-aware mind with a general disorder containing strong hints of relevance. The mind abhors such a thing and

produces a narrative to make sense of it. It does this by a cognitive process called pareidolia, the same vision that sees familiar objects in clouds. The narrative then entrains the mental images into a semi-lifelike experience. The dream is a synthetic and synergetic process that evolved out of numerous prior and unconscious conditions. Dreams are already an interpretation of more basic neurological events. In this sense, the suffering self arises like a dream out of less-than-conscious conditions.

Most of us have a sense of agency, even of free will, but if we examine closely how the thoughts and emotions that guide and drive us are formed in chains of cause and effect, we see that any agency or will that we have is conditioned and dependent. This is not to say that we cannot be free, but we first want to learn enough about these causes to be able to move them around, to replace unwholesome triggers with wholesome choices, or to break our chains at their weakest links. The state of mind that might be troubling you now is only a phenomenon, a link in a chain of events that can be entered and broken. Sometimes the chain needs to be traced all the way back, where it's often begun in craving, ill will, ignorance, etc. In the broadest of its senses, the chain of conditioned arising is a long one. Over millions of years of acting according to our wants, desires and intentions we have constructed our inherited nature. Along one axis, the chain tracks the effects of evolution and natural selection in a Darwinian sense. Here, evolutionary psychology can look at the evolution of certain emotional states in terms of what services they provided, what survival value they might have had, including the emotions that tend to eat us alive. This chain of conditioned arising thus refers both to the progress of life itself and to the progress of each sentient being.

1. *Avijja*, blindness or ignorance, is the first condition. The beings are driven blindly forward, making choices that only rarely are conscious, subject to being made into this and that, unaware of what brought them here, unaware of where they are headed, deluded about the factors and constituents of the present and misunderstanding the point of it all. But such is life: living is all about learning. Life is a self-organizing process out of which new things emerge. Wisdom, such as it is, is a fairly recent arrival. *Avijja* will only become a derogatory or pejorative term when humans support it. But for billions of years of evolution, life could not be blamed for not being more evolved. You can't fault the old cyanobacteria for not having evolved eyeballs. Life stumbled forward, slowly picking up skills, ways to interpret the environment and respond in ways that statistically favored survival. Nowadays, of course, we have people who are blind and ignorant by choice. Much of the stupidity humans exhibit doesn't come from a low or average IQ: you can still do a lot with one of those, and still be a decent person too. But to spend a lifetime resisting learning at every turn, and then to torment those who try to go beyond the ordinary, to fight against any kind of knowledge that one hasn't already been taught, to prefer being enslaved by consensus and peer pressure, to dumb down for the sake of social acceptance: these are almost certain to bring about suffering. *Avijja* is corrected with *panna*, or discriminating wisdom, developed by practicing the Eightfold Path with a sustained and dedicated mindfulness.

2. *Sankhara*, the volitional formations already discussed above as one of the *khandas*, is the learning that we have done in our stumbling blindly forward, the results of our self-organizing. Once again, this includes both the evolved structures of the species, family, phylum and kingdom, as well as the learned behavioral patterns of each sentient being. These are the structures we use to move through the world, built according to what worked in the past, built according to the consequences of our intentional acts or *kamma*. Some of these formations are pretty good: they allowed every single one of our many millions of direct ancestors to survive long enough to breed successfully. They are certainly a lot more developed than was thought in mid-

20th century, when the human mind, unlike the animals, was thought to be a blank slate, nearly free of baser instincts, a thing for culture to write freely upon. In theory, everyone could be saved. Our *sankharas* include what we have of our instincts and natural drives, which even incorporates a broad-brush primate version of morality and appropriate social functioning. As said before, included in this are the thoughts, values and evaluative beliefs which guide our actions, as well as the motive force, the emotions, which drive or power our actions. And it includes the multitude of structures picked up throughout our childhood development. It includes whatever the horrors of adolescence did to us. It includes the structural consequences of our social activities. It includes the belief systems of the home culture or the ones we adopted in getting free of the home culture. Much of what the Buddha had to address is relatively new to the human species, problems that evolved recently with civilization over the last ten millennia, the complexities of life that humans haven't had time to adapt to or be genetically prepared for. Across the spectrum from life itself to the individual, most of these formations are pre-conscious. Some of our most troublesome traits, our emotional and behavioral triggers, and our self-deceptions begin here, the spawn of our monsters from the *id*.

3. *Vinnana*, consciousness, arises out of the volitional or intentional formations. However dimly perceived they may be, the *sankharas* are intentions, agendas, scripts and even plans to behave in certain ways, in response to certain stimuli, to obtain certain results. "Bhikkhus, what one intends, and what one plans, and whatever one has a tendency towards: this becomes a basis for the maintenance of consciousness. When there is a basis there is a support for the establishing of consciousness. When consciousness is established and has come to growth, there is the production of future renewed existence" (SN 12:38). Consciousness then evolves to light the way to the execution of these intentions and plans, the expression of our volitional formations. One needs to read the situations, watch one's progress into them, process feedback that tells of being on course or going astray, be alerted by irritants and inconsistencies, and tell us when at last we need go no further. Consciousness, like mind and its other functions, evolves in service to the more basic and pre-conscious processes of life. It is not born where these darker things are born and normally it will have no access to their workings. It is not regarded as a fundamental property of existence even if it is central to our experience. Importantly, it is difficult for consciousness to be conscious of its origins, just as it is difficult to see our own eyeballs. We need to look to effects instead, such as looking to the harm that we do, or to the good. As with psychological therapy, we try to examine our actions, our thoughts and our words, and make our best inferences from these.

4. *Nama-rupa*, mind-and-body, or literally, name and form, refers to the cognitive-plus-physical sides of individual existence, to these phenomena as experienced and reified, or made to seem real, by consciousness. This is not the spirit vs. matter dualism that is found in Hinduism: *nama* and *rupa* here are interdependent. *Nama* and *rupa* together represent the five *khandas*, the organism, feeling, apperception, volitional formations and consciousness. It is *vinnana*, the consciousness *khanda*, that will seek to untangle their interdependence and make them into separate realities.

5. *Salayatana*, the sixfold base of the senses, follows the arising of mind-and-body. Here again, beyond the five conventionally recognized senses, the sixth sense is the mind that is sensing itself and its own mental objects, including states, memories, perceptions and anticipations. These stand ready to create a private version of an exterior world, personalized in ways which presumably serve *nama-rupa*, but also make a narcissistic, limited and distorted portrayal of the ever-changing world-stream that is *yathabhuta*, or reality-as-it-is. All sense perception beyond the rawest sensation

is apperception. Mind and body are both involved in adapting what is sensed to the body of what has already been experienced. Thus the senses are conditioned by what is formed before, while the sensations themselves become mental objects and conceptual metaphors for later mental operations. Most of our vaunted mental concepts ultimately refer back to sensorimotor domains. The feeling of pushing an object forward informs our more abstract idea of force. Our separate sense memories of what particles are and what waves are help to keep us from envisioning something which might behave as both. Out of this process we develop a vocabulary of conceptual metaphors, and the result is called embodied cognition.

6. *Phassa*, contact, follows the awakening of the six senses. This refers to the first contact between a sensed or mental object and awareness. As the word implies, this is what reaches us, impinges on us, or gets to us, but it is not yet being touched, moved, gotten to, or impressed. There is no affect yet. We are simply connecting at this point, tuning in, starting to attend, but this is prior to any reaction to this. It is noticing, or being put on notice. If what is being sensed is a mental object it may have been developing unconsciously for some time prior to this first contact. If a sensed object, it is a matter of attention being drawn there, by novelty, an increase in intensity beyond a threshold, or some other change in the stream. Often something like an emotion will be halfway grown before it draws any attention at all. This is also true of a lot of our conditioned behavior patterns. It is at this point that we first "find" ourselves in certain states. If breaking a particular chain of conditioned arising is the object, contact is the first logical link for intervention, obviously by preventing or avoiding contact, other than going back to the beginning and replacing ignorance with wisdom. The action in this case is no more complicated than cutting off contact, not letting something touch or get to you. This may require some mindfulness training to catch the earliest signs of something like a trigger. But intervention here is somewhat limited. You can avoid being in a place where an undesired stimulus is known to exist. But we don't want to confuse this with denial, or with certain neurotic defense mechanisms like dissociation or regression. It is simply a choice not to attend or feed something known to be unwholesome.

7. *Vedana*, feeling, follows upon contact, in reaction to contact. It is another of the five *khandas* and regarded as a universal mental function, one that is present in all mental states. The raw experience is assessed in terms of positive, negative and neutral values, but not yet as articulated and meaningful. This is the first impression, the sense of being moved to approach or avoid, or to simply attend. This is sometimes called "hedonic tone." It is the beginning of wanting more and wanting less, the beginning of acceptance or rejection as far as the conscious mind is concerned. But mental states are often well on their way to expression before they are even noticed. To break the chain at this point, before it leads to some of the more troublesome links, requires either cutting off the stimulus, or denying the experience any form of personal relevance, or imposing a more neutral valuation somewhere along the spectrum from apathy to ambivalence to equanimity, equanimity being the preferred response.

8. *Tanha*, desire, craving or thirst, arises out of feeling. Here it includes both ends of the spectrum, wanting an experience to grow more intense and desiring to be separated from any noxious stimuli. This is the actual wanting more and wanting less that was only suggested in *vedana*. *Tanha* does not necessarily follow from *vedana*, particularly given an intention to intervene in the development or progress of unwholesome states. This is potentially the weakest link in the chain. Cultures abound with folk techniques for this intervention, perhaps most notably, taking a few deep breaths or counting to ten. Some of our many defense mechanisms, both wholesome and unwholesome, may also be called into play when there is a suggestion of danger in having a particular

response. In Buddhist terms, the more mindful we are in attending these feelings and sensations, the less they demand a particular response. We have a measure of control over what we require before we can call ourselves satisfied. We can even be satisfied with having no part of something. We can train ourselves to dissociate sensations of pain from emotional involvement in pain.

We have a couple of inherited traits working against us at this point, however. Consider this analogy: when we are moving, say in a car or in an elevator, we don't really feel the motion unless we are accelerating or decelerating (acceleration also refers to turns and sideways bumps). Our affections of pleasure and happiness can be problematically similar to our sense of acceleration: we will tend to forget them when we remain in a balanced state and attend them best when things are changing. We are wired to keep seeking improvement, not homeostasis. This bodes ill for maintaining pleasure and happiness in steady and more sustainable states. This phenomenon is also called "hedonic adaptation": we get used to the pleasant things, and until we can learn to control our subjective states we are left with having to combat this by adding endless variations to our experiences. Further, we are somewhat more sensitive to a loss than to a gain: when our precious thing gets lost or stolen we usually have stronger negative feelings than we had positive feelings when we acquired the precious thing in the first place. This means the game is rigged in favor of dissatisfaction as expectations adapt primarily upward. This is sometimes called the hedonic treadmill. We have a similar problem in economics. Rational people understand rationally that sustained growth in a finite system is unsustainable, yet a decline in the positive rate of growth is called a recession or even a depression. The best models we know for true sustainability are natural climax ecosystems, which maintain a dynamic equilibrium where the quantity of living equals the quantity of dying. Anything short of this must by definition collapse. It requires reason to embrace our feelings and emotions with this understanding. It seems that we need to consciously cultivate our senses of appreciation, satisfaction and gratitude in order to successfully manage a steady-state, equilibrated, sustainable life and livelihood.

9. *Upadana*, clinging, grasping or attachment arises from craving. This word is often associated with Buddhism. It also means intake or uptake, as of fuel, like oil for a lamp, or nutriment, for good or ill. In this aspect it speaks of our dependence on conditions, as a flame needs a log, and dies out when separated from its source. This in turn suggests that *upadana* is clinging that is related to security issues and a fear that states either will or will not last. To stretch the conceptual metaphor a bit, clinging to something will add your own personal weight or gravitas to it, making it harder for either of you to come and go. It is at this point that the one who grasps becomes personally identified with that which is clung to, losing the dividing space between them that is necessary for wise attention. If we have learned anything here in life it's that good and bad, pleasant and unpleasant, will come and go. To the extent that we fight this inexorable fact of existence (*anicca*) we will be bound to our suffering. When we attempt to fix something against change, our fixations become either stagnant or small obstructions in an irresistible stream. Clinging may be to sensual pleasures, to incorrect ideas or views, to rites and rituals in the belief that these will take you to the goal, and to ideas about who and what you are. Commonly, the breaking of this link is called detachment, for which there are a number of words and nuances. Detachment reaches its highest expression in *upekkha* or equanimity, a virtue that will be much-discussed later.

As a practice, the key to detachment is in taking control of our power to assign value to experiences, and in this particular case, a neutral or null value. A thing can be assessed to be of little worth for any number of reasons: personal irrelevance,

excessive effort, unintended consequences, validity only from a myopic view of things, or long-term harmfulness or unwholesomeness. The suffering saved can easily justify the application of reason and logic to one's cherished feelings. It is a myth that people who retain this sort of emotional control are somehow less capable of feeling, just as it's a myth that an artist sees more beauty in a flower than a scientist, or that smart people somehow feel less. The application of logic in detachment, and in equanimity in particular, does not lead to numbness or coldness, but rather clears the way for a higher and more wholesome pleasantness, even if this too must be allowed to come and go. The mistake we make is not in having feelings and emotions, nor even in enjoying them. It's in wanting them to get stronger, get weaker, to hurry up, or to go away. It's in taking them as an end in themselves, or in taking a property of cognitive states as some sort of property to be owned. The states will come and go: this is the nature of cognition. Something that comes and goes cannot be of the same lasting value as the stream it comes and goes within.

One of the problematic consequences of attachment is confusion about the chain of causation. First will come the promising feeling, then the craving, then the clinging, then perhaps the pleasant experience. Once these become fused together we are inclined to "think" subconsciously that craving is the cause of the pleasure, that if we crave or want more we will have more pleasure and happiness. We then want to cement this into our repertoire of conditioned behavioral skills so that we can call up more pleasure at will. The pleasure is no longer the consequence of doing the right thing or performing acts that merit pleasure: instead it becomes the consequence of trying to take shortcuts straight to the pleasure centers of the brain. It isn't really all that surprising that this approach so often leads to suffering. A child who does this is called spoiled. And *kamma* does the spanking.

10. *Bhava*, becoming or being, arises out of attachment. We identify who we are with the things we cherish and cling to, things we own, things we've accomplished, or with the nobler feelings we've once entertained. The more attachments that we have the "greater" we are. Etymologically, the word existence comes from a verb meaning to stand out or stand forth. Existence that always wants more must believe in growth for its own sake. So we keep putting on existential weight. The heaviness of our feelings, the dramas that weigh us down, even the pain and suffering we undergo, give us a sense of substance and identity. We incline to the gross instead of the net. We incline to dismiss only the worst embarrassments to our social and self-esteem. It is not necessarily harmful trying to keep one experience and avoid another in order to maintain a consistent identity. The harm comes from doing this badly, from starting forth with a deluded sense of identity and worsening that with every new delusion we cling to. Mindfulness, trained on who we really are, can still work with a healthy sense of self.

Of the four forms of clinging mentioned above, *bhava* arises most exuberantly out of clinging to our ideas about who and what we are (*attavadupadana*). This is the ego, and conceit, and it takes a tremendous amount of energy to maintain and defend. Maintenance and defense require belief, and such belief in turn requires the adoption of views that must be blind to anything that challenges them. The ego thus becomes a fortress that its occupants are soon not permitted to leave at all because it's under continuous siege by the reality it needs to deny. It is ironic indeed that this self-inflation and self-aggrandizement leads to becoming so small and temporary. Where is the vaunted, enlightened self-interest? Or even the instinct to self-preservation? Paradoxically, true greatness comes from the development of humility, from the knowledge of our true size and importance in the grander scheme. It is this that allows to open up into the greater things and higher purposes that we can be part of.

11. *Jati*, future birth or rebirth, the arising of new living entities, arises out of the old living entities, the beings and becomings that have been and gone. Though past, they condition the present. Birth, whether from "eggs, wombs, moisture or transformations," is the continuing onward of the consequences of past intentions. The present is fully determined and there is no "could have been." The present is the only possible consequence of the past. The present, however, can be altered, conditioning a future that is different than the one determined without alteration. If unpleasant and distasteful things are occurring at present, there is no point or power in denying that these exist. Power is in knowing how they are conditioned and then altering those conditions in the present. To the extent that self-belief is based on illusion, delusion and ignorance, it will blunder through life, making many errors. These errors have consequences, repercussions, backlashes and echoes. These move on, incarnate in new forms. Family fixations, such as patterns of abuse, get handed down the line along with the family fortune. Cultural errors persist, are replicated, are reborn again and again. The people who pick up on these errors anew will renew and perpetuate them until they are corrected by someone who is paying better attention. Take a closer look at the ancient practice of ancestor worship. Superficially it looks like a primitive superstition, but there is a deeper, hidden sense to it all: there is a subtle implication that we ourselves could one day merit such reverence if we tried to become better ancestors. This is how we can look at a fully conditioned present without despair: here and now are the place and time to recondition the future and all of the things to be reborn there. This is also the only place and time to fail to do that, and thus vote to continue to propagate suffering.

12. *Jaramarana*, old age and death, are the consequences of rebirth, along with decay, illness, mental suffering, lamentation, pain, grief and despair. Without enlightenment we can expect these to come and stay and kill us. With enlightenment we can expect these to come and go and take us with them. Enlightenment lets us lower our expectations about some perfect kind of future and pay closer attention to what can be done in the present to help condition better wisdom in the beings being propagated by today's errors and insights. A more awakened world will not be perfect either. Perfect wisdom and insight will not even guarantee any error-free living in an awakened being. We've got some time on our hands though, and doing good work within wholesome states just beats the snot out of suffering on and on. Buddhism does not offer a cure for illness, aging and death, although certainly wisdom can help us to cure illness and delay aging and dying a little. There is only a cure here for hastening these things towards us, and strategies for waking up to appreciate a world that we don't need to have cravings to get to, the world that we cannot be deprived of.

### **Addiction and Denial**

There is some sort of line that gets crossed when we pass from simple craving and aversion into what we can call clinical addiction and denial. Is substance dependence qualitatively different from simple craving, or just a matter of degrees? Is there a point at which it becomes morbidly pathological or malignant? I'm aware that the DSM has dropped the term addiction altogether in favor of dependence and abuse, but something is lost in losing this term. The original Latin verb *addicare* meant to assign or sign into slavery, to award some person's sovereignty to the highest bidder. To do this to yourself is to turn yourself over to a master, or a shepherd, or frequently even to something inanimate. Choice is involved in the development of patterns of addiction, and the gradual surrender of responsibility, and choice is also a *sine qua non* of recovery. There is at least some truth to the disease model, at least in the form of individual differences in inherited susceptibility, whether genetic or epigenetic, and

sometimes susceptibility is even statistically ethnic or racial. But this is a dangerous thought to isolate and attach to, and is often the only excuse that is needed for a complete abdication of responsibility and surrender of all self-control. The most we can say if we are being honest is that an inherent susceptibility will make addiction a step or two more likely, and recovery a step or two more difficult.

Evolution has given us a large array of endocrinological processes that provide positive and negative feedback both to ourselves and to those around us in response to certain behaviors and experiences. These are experienced as emotions, and these tend to move us into certain general courses of action. They begin as hormones, like cortisol and epinephrine; and peptides like B-endorphin and oxytocin; and neurotransmitters like monoamines, norepinephrine, serotonin and dopamine. Dopamine, for example, "plays a major role in the brain system that is responsible for reward-driven learning. Every type of reward that has been studied increases the level of dopamine transmission in the brain" ([see](#)). These substances will occur naturally in ordinary activities, during exercise, excitement, competition, pain, eating spicy food, vicarious experience, affection, grooming, nursing and orgasm. They can act as analgesics, opiates, mood elevators, stimulants, depressants and even hallucinogens. While the milder forms of pleasure and displeasure might modify this endo-chemical soup of ours somewhat, the activities of chemical and behavioral addiction stimulate production of these substances as though they were drugs in themselves, in potent doses. In this sense all addiction is chemical. Steven Pinker describes emotions as "adaptations, software modules. Each human emotion mobilizes the mind and body to meet one of the challenges of living and reproduction in the cognitive niche. The function of happiness would be to mobilize the mind to seek the keys to Darwinian fitness." Emotions are ultimately about movement or behavior. They didn't survive genetically to be ends in themselves: the chemistry would serve its motivational function and then be gone or reabsorbed.

Experientially, addiction feels like a conditioned behavioral pattern that has become inextricably entrenched, wired up to hypersensitive triggers that are largely subliminal, and then armored against intervention with cognitive tricks. The first line of an addiction's defense seems to be an ability to dissociate the progress of the behavior from any of the negative feedback that the due consequences of the activity have to offer. These are taken out of the equation, set aside in some other room, or denied. Take that awful hangover, for example. When you think about it, all of the discomfort of withdrawal from an alcohol addiction (the more serious DT's excepted) doesn't really amount to the unpleasantness of one or at most two decent hangovers. And yet the unpleasantness of the hangover doesn't really factor into the "decision" to drink again the next day, and in fact, often becomes just an excuse to take "a hair of the dog that bit you" immediately upon awakening (here we will use the word awakening somewhat differently than in Buddhism). The negative feedback alone seems to stand no chance at all against our own neurochemistry. These ill-gotten or unearned pleasures exact a price, often a heavy one, from broken kneecaps, courtesy of your frustrated bookie, to AIDS and Hep C, to imprisonment, to homelessness, to the death of your young daughter riding in the car that you were driving while drunk. The armoring can hide nearly all of the real costs. Any effective recovery program has to develop a sharp enough edge and enough brute force to cut this armor away. This requires both cognitive skill and emotional force potent enough to rival both the "stinking thinking" and the intensity of the neurochemical high. And one of these is not likely to work without the other. Simply thinking correctly, or reading a book, or correcting cognitive errors, or talking it out with a counselor are just not enough. There needs to be a powerful affective component. But the word powerful here needs

clarification: in physics, the word power measures a rate of transformation, not a quantity of force. The power of a feeling or emotion expresses itself as behavioral change, not as noise, as work done, not as resistance felt. While anger can at times be powerful, such gentle states as gratitude and forgiveness can often be even more powerful if they lead to real change. When a behavior is as entrenched as an addiction or a dependence you sometimes need to dig a new trench.

The ability that we have to disconnect ourselves from the consequences of our choices and actions is only apparent and temporary, and it does us no service at all. We will readily accept the idea that it's the craving that causes our pleasure, but quickly shift the blame for the subsequent pain to other causes entirely. The whole point of having the freedom to choose lies in learning what our successes and failures have to teach us. The great point in exercising our liberties lies in finding where those end, in a respect for the rights of others, in the limits imposed by our finitude, and in our sense of duty. The consequences that teach us best need to be felt without buffering, without insulation and without any unnecessary delay. Interference with this valuable information is known as enabling. The due consequences need to be associated with their appropriate causes. As Herbert Spencer said, "The ultimate result of shielding men from the effects of folly is to fill the world with fools." Yet we insist on creating the buffers, the insulation and the delays. To this end we can call up our impressive array of defense mechanisms and cognitive biases, our coping mechanisms and logical fallacies. Repression, for example, is a defense mechanism that pushes from the mind any experience that it deems unacceptable, but according to unacceptable criteria when this only leads to suffering. Rationalization is a favorite among addicts. Some recovery programs work to strip these protections away, perhaps most obviously Tough Love. This is central and fundamental to a Buddhist approach, as the whole chain of conditioned arising emerges from ignorance and our getting the appropriate feedback is central to its eradication by applying discriminating wisdom. Denial, whether of responsibility, of causes, of preconditions, or of consequences, may be the first major factor defining the pathology of addiction. Denial can be thought of as a combination of the Unwholesome Roots of aversion and delusion, of *dosa* and *moha*.

The second factor, or second line of the pathology's armor or defense, is usually some version of the spiral of guilt, self-loathing or shame. This, more than a little perversely, will take what you are still able to feel of negative feedback and turn it into a stimulus, a condition which begs for further medication or, behaviorally, neurochemical *endomedication*, to coin a new term. This will keep the vicious cycle going. Pain, insecurity, suspicion, mistrust and fear are all played like trump cards. The addict's eroded self-image, self-confidence and self-respect leave him with no firm place to make a stand. All the while his brain's reward systems are insisting that he is doing something the way that things should be done, or otherwise he would not be feeling such pleasure. Maybe he is just not craving enough to cause enough pleasure and avoid enough pain.

Addiction, then, may be viewed as an interconnected cluster of learned cognitive and behavioral subroutines that have now become a "second nature" by way of extensive reinforcement, the persistent heavy use of consciousness-altering behaviors, and the denial or the perverse use of negative reinforcement. These will subjectively mimic the basic drives, having co-opted their neurochemical responses. The problems here are formidable. But it wasn't an infection or a bad gene that created this. It was a series of poor choices made according to evaluative beliefs and gradually disintegrating values. Meanwhile, a great thing about the brain is that neuroplasticity is a real process: both learning and unlearning are still possible, even for adults. Conditions can be reconditioned, structures can be reconstructed, and our models can be remodeled. And

the bottom line, regardless of any disease theory, is that if you quit drinking and never drink again, it's behind you. Further, no matter how special you are, you would not be the first special person to succeed at this.

## Suffering's Cessation

I say of this kind of pleasure that it should be followed, that it should be developed, that it should be cultivated, and that it should not be feared (MN 139).

### The Chain's Weakest Links

The Third Noble Truth states that suffering can be brought to an end. This cessation or eradication is called *nirodha*. We do not achieve this by craving liberation or by abhorring bondage, but by breaking the chains of causation that lead to unwholesome states. We cease to perform those acts by which we create our suffering. This cessation is a choice or decision, based upon things we have learned from our experience. Eradication is a good gloss for *nirodha* since this carries the old word for root, radix: one extinguishes suffering here by pulling out causes by the root, or cutting them off at their source. This freedom, in its highest form, is known as *nibbana*, the Sanskrit *nirvana*, extinguishing, extinction or unbinding. The dissolution (*bhanga*) of the false will not take the seeker to some better elsewhere or a heaven but to reality-as-it-is, to *yathabhuta*, the correct, or the here-and-now, suchness, or *tathata*. It's a long journey and a lot of work to arrive here at the place that was right before our eyes and under our noses the whole time. The knowledge and vision of things as they really are is *yathabhuta nanadassana*.

Conditionality is specific (*idappaccayata*). It follows rules. Wherever there is a chain of causes, "when this exists, that comes to be; with the arising of this, that arises. When this does not exist, that does not come to be; with the cessation of this, that ceases" (MN115). Both our ego and our suffering are conditioned and emergent phenomena. Phenomena remain only as long as their causes or conditions remain. Consequently, problem phenomena may be undone by breaking the chain and undoing the causes. We don't feed the things we don't want, we tax the things we want less of, we cease to provide them with nourishment, and they die out. In the last section we looked at some of the weak points on the chain of Conditioned Arising. Living to learn, living to outgrow ignorance, was an effective way to intervene in the ignorance at the very start of it all. Some of our preconscious links, particularly our conditioned behavior and emotional responses, require more roundabout methods for conscious correction, since these are often not even noticed until they are already in play. Here we often have to look to the behavioral or verbal expression of a sub-conscious problem to root out these constructions. Consciousness often needs to use tricks or trick mirrors to see what's beneath it.

Avoiding contact is sometimes a useful solution, unless this involves self-deception. Feelings that are felt in response to contact can be quickly reassessed in more neutral or value-free terms. Craving and aversion can be interrupted in many ways, from counting to ten, to controlling our requirements for satisfaction, to driving a wedge between pain and the taking of pain personally. Clinging and attachment are best broken by using our power to assign and withdraw value and perceived relevance. Becoming and self-identification can best be broken by humility and authenticity. Any item along any causal chain may be comprehended in terms of the simple formula: "This is, because that is. This is not, because that is not. This ceases to be, because that ceases to be." I can stop having this consequence if I can stop supporting its cause.

### Restraint and Renunciation

Many if not most of the conditioned reactions we have on the way to suffering are immediate in the sense that they happen without mediation, as if automatically, but they can often be interrupted simply by inserting a little bit of time, space or

metaphorical distance between cause and effect. Done skillfully, we get the right or optimum amount of distance from the stimulus and a little breathing room in which to choose a response. This is not escape or fugue. It is not running away from our problems but finding better ways to solve them. And it isn't an inauthentic denial of our true self's sacred feelings because what is trying to pass for our authentic, true self is the process that is getting us into trouble. Einstein once said, "The significant problems that we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them." Often the right intervention is no more complicated than stepping just one level up, or getting a little bit more leverage or perspective on the problem. Much of the big human dilemma may be likened to crawling through a complicated maze on our hands and knees, lost, bewildered, indulging in the drama and tragedy of it all, and unaware that the walls of the maze are only one meter high. A lot of our solutions simply require walking erect and looking around us.

Patience is one of our most vital lessons in the noble life, since here we take the side of time itself, and side with impermanence or *anicca*. The Spanish have a plucky challenge: "Time and I, against any two." One of that team will always survive. Our haste, our jumping to conclusions, our selling ourselves short, our shortsighted and precipitous actions, our lack of impulse control, our intolerance for even the most momentary of our frustrations, our tendency to discount the future, or to value it less when choosing immediate if inferior paths: these traits and tendencies are our undoing, and in fact are posing real threats to the survival of our species on earth. As Dame Rebecca West once noted: "If the whole human race lay in one grave, the epitaph on its headstone might well be: It seemed a good idea at the time." Often all that we need for impulse control is just an eight or ten-count or a few deep breaths.

Dissociation, as a defense mechanism named in psychology, covers a wide range of experiences, from simply turning aside or away to attend to something better, to having psychotic breaks with reality as consensually understood. Sometimes it is just a simple coping mechanism to avoid, minimize or tolerate stress, or to avoid entering into anxiety-producing situations. Sometimes it is just an assertion of our personal integrity and boundaries in the face of unreasonable social demands. Etymologically, to dissociate is to un-belong or separate from others of formerly common purpose. In the sense of un-belonging, it's to cut ties and bonds and assert liberation. Non-attachment is not the same as denial or avoidance. In fact, it may be closer to acceptance, of reality as it is, closer to not clinging to any one outcome over another. Detachment permits resilience, becoming unstuck. Any real freedom will require acceptance of what is presently determined and predetermined, because then we make our new creative determinations with the actual situations and forces in play, and not with our wishes for what we think should be the case. The fact that our will is determined by antecedent causes does not mean that our will is not free. In fact the only real free will we have is in the honest recognition and use of its determining factors. Feelings and emotions come and go, but there are ways to not have some of them in the first place, and there are ways to change them into something else more wholesome and useful. But these are choices that cannot be made without making a little separation from their immediate causes and a taking little time to examine the options. Detachment isn't necessarily the denial of feelings and emotions. These are not the enemy of reason and clarity, but neither should they be the masters. Feelings and emotions are not the authentic and fundamental self that the romantics might have us believe.

Renunciation can be accomplished with both reason and emotion. Even considering renunciation can be a big step. With most of the inertia of our lives, we seem to reckon most of the energy we have spent until now as an investment in our present self, in our momentum and in our direction. Our cognitive biases and defense mechanisms are all

in place to defend our past choices. It can take a lot to admit to ourselves that we've taken wrong turns, thought wrong thoughts, helped to spread lies or befriended inferior people. Don't quit, don't give up, is the mantra, even when the behavior is known to be self-destructive. Nietzsche's Zarathustra wanted looking aside to be his sole negation, not in anger or disgust, but with a view to all that will otherwise be missed. It isn't necessary to renounce prior conditions with excessive affective or emotive force, and this is important for those resolving or making resolutions to quit an addiction. In simplest terms it is simply a matter of redefining ourselves, calmly and realistically, and letting go of the identifications that have failed to serve us, while not becoming blind to those parts of ourselves that need to be removed instead of simply ignored. Renunciation is only part of a broader process of self-redefinition. To take a greater degree of responsibility and control over what you regard as constituting your person is also to gain a greater control over what you need to take personally.

The word resolution itself contains an educational mystery. On the one hand it represents the resolve of a purposeful being to pursue a particular path, and this takes some sort of energy or motive force (this subject will be discussed in more depth under *Samma Vayama* or Right Effort). On the other hand, resolution is a term used in optics to denote clarity of view or vision, as with the resolving power of a telescope or a camera lens. The resolution that we want to use in the renouncing of some precondition of a present unacceptable state is a combination of these two, a combining of force with light. While we are probably rarely in danger of getting an excess of clarity, an excess of emotional force will likely lead to setbacks. We want to use the clarity to find where the force is best applied and save the rest of our energy for the long road ahead.

### **Upanisa, the Twelve Proximate Conditions of Liberation**

In one part of the doctrine, the Chain of Conditioned Arising continues beyond suffering to condition liberation (*vimutti*). Just as suffering is brought about by a chain of causes, described above in the Second Noble Truth, so too does liberation have its own causal sequences by which it emerges. There are twelve Supporting Conditions or Proximate Causes (*upanisa*). This has also been termed Transcendental Dependent Arising (*lokuttara-paticcasamuppada*) in the *Nettipakarana*, a later Pali text. This is an extension of the first chain of twelve, charting steps upward from suffering to emancipation, a further conditional structure (see SN 12:23 / S II 29 *Upanisa Sutta*. See also MN 74). This *sutta* has not received the attention it deserves, particularly with respect to the progress of recovery from the states of our suffering. Bhikkhu Bodhi has written a must-read translation and exposition of this [here](#). There is one notable difference, though, between the two chains. In the chain of Conditioned Arising we see suffering and its preconditions as emergent properties. In the chain of Transcendental Arising, the end state is an abiding in reality-as-it-is, that which does not still have to come to be. "What is new under the sun" here, the emergent quality, is the gradual awakening to reality, which is marked here by the gradual disappearance of the emergent phenomena that stood in the way of this, including the misguided sense of the self, conceit and its cravings.

1. *Dukkha*. The foundation of the path to liberation is nothing less than the existence of suffering itself. Earlier we saw that the term ignorance isn't always pejorative, that life is about learning, which in turn is gleaned from moving forward and making our errors, such as turning down the one-way, dead-end street of perpetual drunkenness. In order for this to be a supporting condition for recovery, we can refuse to take our suffering personally. When we realize "this is not me or this is not mine," then suffering becomes information, often about having taken a wrong turn somewhere, about having failed to avoid what should have been avoided, or having been led by

false views into a compromising situation. If this information can be taken in without anger, shame and self-loathing then detachment will permit suffering to become useful.

### **Samvega**

Bhikkhu Bodhi, in *The Noble Eightfold Path: The Way to the End of Suffering*, Ch 1, offers: "For suffering to give birth to a genuine spiritual search, it must amount to more than something passively received from without. It has to trigger an inner realization, a perception which pierces through the facile complacency of our usual encounter with the world to glimpse the insecurity perpetually gaping underfoot. When this insight dawns, even if only momentarily, it can precipitate a profound personal crisis. It overturns accustomed goals and values, mocks our routine preoccupations, leaves old enjoyments stubbornly unsatisfying."

The state of mind that Bodhi is speaking of here has a name: *Samvega*. This is quite likely the most important experience that we can have in the process of recovery. While this concept might be discussed often enough throughout Buddhist scriptures, I believe it was a mistake to have omitted it here in the context of the *Upanisa Sutta*. Manly P. Hall, in *Buddhism and Psychotherapy*, suggests that "suffering, by its own painfulness must lead to the end of suffering" and one "must therefore determine how much suffering he is willing to endure, how long he is content to be unhappy and insecure as the result of his own ignorance or lack of courage" (pp. 292 & 303).

*Samvega* was what the young Prince Siddhartha experienced on his first exposure to aging, illness, death and importantly, renunciation. It's what drove the young prince out of his palace. In Buddhism, *samvega* is also a positive state, worth cultivating, one that can help with Right Effort as well as Right Intention. Thanissaro Bikkhu, in "Affirming the Truths of the Heart" ([see](#)), asserts that *samvega* is "a hard word to translate because it covers such a complex range, at least three clusters of feelings at once: the oppressive sense of shock, dismay, and alienation that comes with realizing the futility and meaninglessness of life as it's normally lived; a chastening sense of our own complacency and foolishness in having let ourselves live so blindly; and an anxious sense of urgency in trying to find a way out of the meaningless cycle." But there also is a fourth cluster of affect here: a certainty, and sometimes a remembering, that there is a much better way to live. It is often a heart attack of the mind that winds up saving someone's life. While it may be as serious as a heart attack, it is not altogether unkind.

The experience of *samvega* has something in common with what in recovery is called "hitting bottom," or at least with a particularly cogent sense of "having had enough." But in this context it's important to note that the location of one's "bottom" is variable, and ultimately a function of our values, or what remains of them. We don't need to go all the way to jail or intensive care. We can raise our bottom, the point below which we cannot go, by finding what is left of our dignity. It is in fact viewing the path we have been traveling with horror and revulsion, and understanding that this path leads to even greater suffering, usually followed by death. But there is something further here that distinguishes this from the more familiar negative emotions that set off the guilt and shame spirals that any addict should be familiar with. There is a positive vision to it as well, a glimpse or even a memory of an alternative way of being, something of life outside of the pit, and this comes with a sense of urgency that now is the time to make this choice. While the feeling combines both horror and urgency, it draws the mind and attention to the problem for diagnosis, treatment and healing.

*Samvega* is an affective state, and a potent one. It is not something you simply read about and think a good idea. In fact it is probably most reliably attained under the influence of the powerful class of drugs called mind-expanding or psychedelic. This is

likely the reason that these substances have such a remarkable track record in treating addictive disorders, with the propaganda, ignorance and denial on the part of our governments notwithstanding. *Samvega* is getting outside of or beyond yourself, into something larger, greater, more important, more significant, more loving, longer lasting, more sustainable, something beyond the addict's life of desperation. It is in fact an altered state, a breaking open of the head. The experience of religious or spiritual conversion that is often cited as an effective cure for addiction might be *samvega* misnamed or misidentified, particularly when atheists and agnostics also manage to wriggle free. While it is not widely broadcast, it is also no secret that Bill Wilson, the co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous, became enamored with LSD in the 1950's as a potential treatment for addiction, and he even proposed for a time that special AA meetings be conducted where the drug was administered under proper supervision as a key part of a spiritual program for recovery. Unfortunately, the drug was also helping to turn a generation of young people against war and the government's war-machine propaganda and that could not be allowed to continue.

*Samvega* can be reached by a number of paths, particularly including Buddhist Vipassana meditation. I personally found my own *samvega* with the help of Ayahuasca, an entheogen from the Brazilian rainforest. But I would at this point like to call the reader's attention to the disclaimer found at the end of the Preface. Your decisions are your own.

### **Upanisa, Continued**

2. *Saddha*. The second step, conditioned by *dukkha* or suffering, is *saddha*, usually translated as faith, conviction or confidence. It should be obvious by now that something quite different is meant than the blind faith of the theistic scriptural traditions. Clearly, we cannot be "wise men and inquirers" while we are simultaneously blinded by our faith and beliefs. Rather, this shade of conviction is simply in knowing that there is a way out, one that has been traveled many times before, by at least some people who were even more special than we are. It is the knowledge that there is a place of refuge, or in this Buddhist context, three places of refuge, one in the example set by the Buddha, a mortal human being who was able to awaken and get free, one in the Dhamma, the teaching embodied in the Doctrine and Discipline prescribed by the Buddha, and one in the Sangha, the community, fellowship and assistance of others sharing the path to liberation from suffering. The faith placed in these is not to be uncritical. It is unrelated to both belief and disbelief, and in fact both of these must be suspended. There is a degree to which the doctrinal tenets will probably need to be provisionally accepted. It is quite probable that a number of these tenets will be beyond one's present capacity for verification. Some of the propositions offered by the Buddha fly in the face of just about everything some cultures have to teach us about the meaning of life. This provisional acceptance is done in precisely the same spirit that scientists provisionally accept hypotheses in order to test their validity: Suppose x were true. It would then follow that y would happen ... . Does it? In Buddhism this is "repeatedly arising or tentative faith" (*aparaparam uppajjana-saddha*), something that is to be confirmed by firsthand experience. Importantly, we should understand the difference between examining something to verify that it is true and examining something to see whether or not it is true. Only the latter can be a truly authentic inquiry. It is important that we can also be prepared to say no, I cannot or cannot yet agree with this, if experience says so.

Several purported paths to liberation already exist. In the next section we will explore more of what paths can mean as conceptual metaphors. For now, let it simply mean that you are not alone and breaking trail in the wilderness, even if it feels like this.

Others have been here before. There are already grounds for trusting a little in this, even though some of the methods have led others astray into religious belief and delusion. It is not really necessary to make all of the possible mistakes in the first person. Others have already thought up the wheel, and fire, and figured out how to make suffering optional. We are able, as the Spanish say, "*aprender en cabeza ajena*," to learn in another's head.

3. *Pamojja*. The knowledge that there is most likely some way out, and that this way out is truly attainable for someone in a volitionally degraded condition, conditions *pamojja*, variously translated relief, joy or gladness. There is something new worth trying, perhaps a reality that doesn't need to be created. The one-way-ness of pessimism and despair ends. We may begin to see our suffering as at least somewhat optional and unnecessary. According to the Buddha, this creates a readiness to hear the doctrine and undertake the discipline, beginning with the basic rules of ethical training. *Pamojja* might be likened to hearing, after a particularly long wait, that the medics have arrived.

4. *Piti*. The path, now being tried, begins to provide positive feedback. The renunciate has begun to realize the effects of *samatha* and *vipassana* (serenity and insight) meditative practice. The first of the effects presents itself as *piti*, variously translated as rapture, elation, enthusiasm, delight, zest, refreshment, exhilaration, bliss. The scriptures enumerate five stages or levels of this bliss (see Outline, Pleasant States), but these are usually inflated with some hyperbolic verbiage praising the extraordinariness of such states. Buddhist teachers are not always above using bait in the form of fancy descriptions of exalted states in order to attract seekers down the path, even though this is the wrong kind of motivation. As elsewhere in world religions, too much attention is paid to the glamor of the final states and not enough to the work to be done to get there. Truthfully, this is the beginning of moving into and taking part in higher altered states, using nothing more than internally available resources, but the hyperbole is unnecessary to a true inquirer and even a little embarrassing. And yet the lowest level of *piti* as rapture is indeed accompanied by goosebumps, and the higher levels do feel as though you are being showered with grace, or transported. Once again, some sort of religious conversion experience may be unnecessarily named or credited here. You may have felt this first "goosebumps" level before, perhaps at the moment you learned you've been offered the dream job you have wanted for years, or have just won something big in a contest. Most of the high, higher and highest feelings and emotions occur naturally in the human organism, conditioned by millions of years of want-driven action or *kamma*. What is specific to the methods of Buddhism is the cultivation of the wholesome ones in ways that lead to more frequent occurrence but do not lead to clinging to these states.

For those in early recovery, *piti* can signal the discovery that sobriety itself is a superior and less costly high. In recovery groups this stage of development is often referred to as the Pink Cloud, a temporary sensation of well-being and euphoria, and this should be taken as a serious warning. This stage does not last, it will not last, it cannot last, because any reality is characterized by *anicca* or impermanence. It can, however, be a most-pleasant "welcome back," provided that more realistic expectations can be developed and remembered. You're out of the gutter now, and standing high atop the curb.

5. *Passadhi*. *Piti* or rapture, with a little bit of extra or applied work, conditions *passadhi*, usually translated as tranquility or serenity. *Piti* cannot last. Neither will recovery's Pink Cloud experience. In the last chapter I suggested that we are wired to keep seeking improvement rather than mere homeostasis. We much prefer states that get continually better, while a continuous state of happiness will soon tend to feel

stagnant or boring. We have now "been there and done that." Our baseline for what we recognize as satisfactory states keeps getting elevated by a steadier supply of happier places. This does not serve us well at all. It requires reason to embrace our feelings and emotions with this understanding. It seems that we need to consciously cultivate our senses of appreciation, satisfaction and gratitude in order to successfully manage a steady-state, equilibrated, sustainable life and livelihood. We need to train ourselves to settle in, to cultivate our appreciation for what we already have and our "acceptance of the things we cannot change," such as the nature of the reality that tugs the galaxies around. It doesn't hurt us here to remember that we have now found our way to the "right track," and in fact this sort of faith or *saddha*, is sometimes given as a gloss for *passadhi*. Clarity and serene confidence are also mentioned.

Probably the worst thing to do at this stage is to conflate serenity with smugness, as is often seen with those who have found their lord, prophet or savior. Serenity can indeed be a less assailable place, something of a refuge from some of the vagaries of fortune, but this is not the same thing as being wrapped up in a delusion of unassailability guarded by ignorance and denial. *Passadhi* must face the challenges as they come, and accept the things that won't be changed. It learns to accept that both moods and the tides of fortune will continue to rise and fall, and be satisfied that, on average, things will tend to improve to the extent that we can stick with the program.

6. *Sukha. Passadhi*, serenity, conditions *sukha*, happiness, well-being, pleasantness, satisfaction, blessedness or ease. But this is not quite the same happiness that comes to most people's minds when they think of the word. This is a little like wanting what you already have, but including the trials and challenges, and not caring to chase the impossible or the unnecessary. Happiness, and even taking pleasure in happiness, is a fine thing in Buddhism. What is not OK is the pursuit of happiness, or the clinging to happiness when the time has come for this to change or move on. *Sukha* is the knowledge that we either have or will soon have all that we truly need. *Sukha* is merely a sign that we are on the right track. And instead of taking endless photos of ourselves standing next to that sign, as proof that we have been there, what we want to do is simply stay on the right track. *Sukha* is information that helps us with guidance, but it isn't proof of our merit any more than distress is proof of our demerit. It is a byproduct of our behavior. *Sukha* embodies an understanding that it is we ourselves who create our own states, and that we have a degree of mental control that is independent of circumstances and objective phenomena. *Sukha* is a happiness that occurs without any illusions that we can exempt ourselves from *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anatta*. It does not signal the end of our challenges.

7. *Samadhi. Sukha*, as a truer happiness, conditions *samadhi*, mental concentration or concentrative absorption. Here we begin to enter a more rarified climate where few people are found spending much of their time. *Samadhi* is a difficult state to attain amidst endless fretting, handwringing and emotional drama. The whole world, within the mind and without, is endlessly distracting, even when it is being pleasantly entertaining. What Buddha called the five Hindrances or Nivaranana, begin to remain set aside when we put them aside (see Glossary at V., Akusala). The five hindrances are particularly troublesome in developing the Eightfold Path steps of Right Effort and Right Mindfulness. These five are identified as sensual craving, ill-will, sloth-and-torpor, restlessness-and-regret and cynical doubt. There are, of course, other hindrances to concentration. To be without distraction, to be focussed or concentrated is not the same as shutting out the rest of the world. The word "concentrate" means to be with or in the center. The circles spreading outward from the place the pebble landed in the pond are concentric circles. They cover the pond. The circus performer up on the high wire with his long pole is about as focussed as humans can get on his

very narrow path ahead, but he is also acutely aware of the far right-hand and left-hand ends of his pole. The bottom line is remaining in the middle, without distraction. The middle may be thought of as the place or track that is nearest to the widest array of options or solutions to problems. It is not limited to the center but is balanced there.

8. *Yathabhuta Nanadassana. Samadhi*, or concentration, conditions the Knowledge and Vision of Reality-As-It-Is, or of things as they truly are. This is also known as *Vipassana Bhavana* or the Development of Insight. Concentration is not an end in itself but a means to understand things as they really are. Most of our knowledge and vision is self-centered and self-serving, and concerns what the world can do for us. After all, the mechanisms by which we know and see evolved out of our intentions to survive as individuals and breed more of the same. It might even be said that the very ideas of knowledge and vision are meaningless without assuming at least one self-ish point of view or perspective. If this is the case, and given that the range of possible points of view or perspectives on any one objective is practically infinite, then *yathabhuta nanadassana* is only something we can approach by gaining additional points of view or perspectives and removing distortion and error from those we already have. This, in other words, this is an ongoing process and not a single epiphany. *Panna* (Sanskrit *prajna*) is the discriminating wisdom that puts each of the elements of our knowledge and vision into its proper place, allowing and correcting for our self-serving vantage points and views. It should be noted that the self's ability to distort reality is also a part of the greater reality. But it is one that we can do something about. The *asavas*, taints or defilements, are the mental processes that contribute the most to this distortion. These begin to disappear here, or rather, these denote the work to be done here by developing our insight. There are the taints of addiction to sensation and pleasure (*kamasava*), taints of ego and its compulsion to growth (*bhavasava*), taints of speculative mentality and false views (*ditthisava*) and taints of delusion and ignorance (*avijjasava*).

9. *Nibbida*, disenchantment or disillusionment, is conditioned by the knowledge and vision of things as they really are. This word points to some serious flaws in the way human beings like to see things. It is as though we would rather have our enchantments and illusions, no matter how much they contribute to our suffering. To some, the experience of awe is a humbling encounter with sacredness of it all, yet in common use we use the word awful for what scares or fails to please us. People sing "Amazing Grace" as a song of high praise without understanding that amazement is the disorientation and bewilderment of being lost. Glamor is highly praised in human culture, but fundamentally it refers to the distortion of vision and interpretation by spells of the dark arts. *Nibbida* is the withdrawal from illusion, nearsightedness and shortsightedness. It is rising above appearances.

*Nibbida* is a lot more serene and dignified than disgust, revulsion or aversion, although the word is sometimes translated this way. It is more of a choice to move out of involvement with things that have shown themselves to be not worth the time and effort. The inferior things are discharged, or they have their emotional charges released. They are not permanent, they don't lead to happiness and they aren't even real to begin with. We simply know better now and are on to nobler endeavors.

10. *Viraga* is conditioned by *nibbida*. *Viraga* is dispassion, the fading of passions, the cessation of affectively toned action and reaction. It is to be without rage. Just as *nibbida* can be mistaken for disgust or revulsion, *viragaca*n be mistaken for numbness, anhedonia or some other version of affective neutering. It is, rather, a higher order of serenity and equanimity. It does represent a transition into realms where sensations, feelings and ideas may not be particularly relevant. To call it a step into a more supra-mundane universe misunderstands the ultimate locus of *yathabhuta*: this ultimate

world is the same world as the one we live in. We are simply encountering the more unconditioned aspects of the stream. The taints or defilements fall away.

11. *Vimutti* (or *vimokkha*) is conditioned by *viraga*. *Vimutti* is freedom, liberation, emancipation or release. Relative to the 3 marks of existence, liberation is threefold. *Animitta* or formlessness is the comprehension that all forms are impermanent and all things are transitory, or better still, that all forms and all things are merely temporarily perceptible eddies in a greater process or stream. It is the final transcending of *anicca*. *Apanihita* or passionlessness is the comprehension that all formations are unable to attain or provide any lasting equilibrium or happiness. This is the final transcending of *dukkha*. *Sunnata* or emptiness is the comprehension that all formations are without self or soul, that all conditioned or emergent beings are ephemeral. This is the final transcending of *anatta*.

12. *Asavakkhaya-nana* is conditioned by *vimutti*. This is the knowledge of the ending or destruction of the taints or defilements, and represents a sort of final review of the path and a valediction. The mind is not gone, the taints are not forgotten. The yogin is now in a position to retire as an *arahant* or return to the world to teach as a *bodhisattva*. There is no judgment attached to either choice. "Destroyed is birth, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is nothing further here."

# The Eightfold Path

## That a Path Exists

The Fourth Noble Truth is the knowledge that there is a path that leads to suffering's cessation (*dukkha nirodha-gamini-patipadaya nanam*). This path is known as the Noble Eightfold Path (*Ariya Atthangika Magga*) and is also called the Middle Way (*Majjhima Patipada*) because it is said to lie between the extremes of self-mortification and sensual gratification or, along another axis, between nihilism and eternalism.

The simple metaphor of a path or way seems to be universal in human culture. As a prescribed series or sequence of steps to be taken, it has an obvious place in certain recovery programs. In Christianity it takes on the toxic meaning of the one and only permissible way to salvation. The term is central to the philosophy of Daoism, as the word Dao simply means Way or Path, but the word carried the symbolic meaning of functionally correct behavior long before this, and soon evolved meanings of ethically correct behavior as well. As the course of a journey, it also took on the meaning of the narrative of the journey or the unfolding of the story. I explore the use of the path metaphor at some length in my essay "The Other Original Dao: The Path, before Kongzi and Laozi Paved It," found [here](#). What follows is an exploration of the Path symbol as a conceptual metaphor taken from that essay. All of this can be related in some way to the Buddha's use of the term as well:

## The Path as a Conceptual Metaphor

"Trails and paths, and waterways too, have been an important part of the human experience ever since we climbed down out of the trees four million years ago and began to either follow or avoid specific trails, and to follow the streams up and down. The work that we do with these is bred in the bone by now. The archetype is so taken for granted that paths and roads are omitted from most of our symbol dictionaries. We can ask the question: what do all humans everywhere know about ways, roads, paths, routes, courses, channels and waterways? . . . .

"Ways can be either level or steep, narrow or broad, rough or smooth, safe or dangerous. They can be discontinuous, as when a bridge washes out, and our detours can be long and arduous. Beyond the edge of the traveled way are mysteries and risks, ambushes and opportunities, the potential for getting lost, or an opportune digression that you might have missed if you hadn't risked getting lost. It is possible to get off track or off of the path, or to be misguided or misdirected. We can lose our way. Sometimes one wants to step off the path only briefly, in order to relieve oneself, because it's just rude to do that in the middle. Sometimes that's a metaphor for deviating from our primary way to satisfy other needs.

"Ways have varying degrees of historical use, from the single set of hoof tracks left by the prey we are tracking, to the major highways connecting large cities. Thus we have the lonely trails (John Muir's is no longer lonely) and the roads less traveled, and we have ways that whole mobs and large armies can march dozens abreast upon.

"Roads are not motive or causal forces. They do not take us anywhere: we have to do that, under our own power. But they do offer a way, a way out, or our way back home. They offer guidance and direction. The obstacles to our journey are pre-avoided by design, barring climate events and the bandits. Roads can offer tremendous magical powers that can radically alter whole landscapes: We can improve the weather by travel- ing a thousand miles to the south. We can get ourselves a better king by moving a thousand miles east. And sometimes we return by the same road we went forth on, although we now have older eyes and newer perspectives.

"If you are presently on a road or a path, then you are not being a pioneer or explorer: you are being a tourist. Others have come before you. Others have figured things out about this journey that you will not need to trouble yourself with. In this way, roads are like culture. This extends even to the notion of right of way: roads and paths are shared solutions to cultural problems. The benefits are shared as well. And thanks to culture, there is usually a way to know where you are going, if you can stop and ask for directions.

"A given leg of a journey, section of road, or reach of a river, goes from Point A to Point B. Because the journey takes time and effort, Points A and B also represent a journey through time, a sequence of events and experiences. Extended journeys may be represented as a series of connected legs. Ultimately this can be extended to cover the entire course or journey of a lifetime, from zygote to death.

"We can study a way or a path, get familiar with it, get to know it by heart, learn the ins and outs, ups and downs. Moving back and forth along such a way can become like a second nature. We can show or teach this way to others. In this way a path is like an art or a craft, a method, the way that certain things are done.

"If we do not know a road or path, we describe it by its characteristics. When we do know a road or path, we describe it by its actual route. The word refers to the general idea. The route or the name of the route refers to the real thing. Similarly, the unknown river is defined by its substance, water between and over the earth, while the known river is defined by its course. The way refers to the real river, not to the imaginary, generic or hypothetical one. . . .

"To study the nature of something is to study its ways, the roads and paths it takes or prefers, the choices it tends to make, and this implies a degree of predictability proportionate to one's knowledge. One can reason from its antecedents to possible conclusions. This is only possible if a thing has a nature or a second nature.

"Roads have crossroads and forks, just as life has decisions and choices. A journey can be a string of decisions and choices, and where these are made in large numbers, the possible journeys are practically endless. But once the journey is made there is no "could have been." Reality does not exist in potential, but in the path that is traveled in fact. When the branching or dendritic structure gets very complex it starts to look like a field. In fact, in physics, some of the tracks made through time are made by tensor fields. But there are still places these do not go: the totality of the real does not include the unreal.

"Roads do not go everywhere. They do not cover the field but merely trace lines across it. With the most effective systems of roads, the greatest area or territory is accessed by the least length of line. The way is not a field comprised of all the possibilities. It is the sum of all of the paths that are traveled in fact, which must of course also account for any emergent properties of the sum or the whole, such as the effect of the Silk Road on human culture or the old Road to Damascus on the future of human intelligence. *Quo imus?*

"A journey moves us through a changing landscape, and a good journey changes us in the process. A difficult journey does that as well. A journey is a personal history. It is a story. It can be journaled. It can be narrated, described, related, recounted, retold as a sequence of events. Directions and guidance can be provided to others in the telling of the tale.

"Roads will take us just about anywhere. There's an old gag that says "you can't get there from here," wherein the comic jolt comes from the knowledge that the larger way, road, path or course ultimately leads everywhere. Roads and waterways both branch, exhibiting dendritic structure. Laozi's hundred valleys pay tribute to their sovereign, the lowliest waters. These branching structures can be mapped, the

directions can be shared. Seen from above, they share properties with the organization of plants above ground, plants below ground, and circulatory systems in both plant and animals. Dendritic or branching structure is one of nature's go-to processes for accessing material, energy and territory. The Road, as in "life on the road" is a complex network that encircles each continent. "The road goes ever on and on" is sung by Hobbits on leaving the Shire.

"One level of abstraction up, the extended journey of a single lifetime can be regarded a branch of a family tree, which continues to reach back through time, through race, through the origin of the species, genera, family, order, class, phylum, kingdom, to the very first, simple, one-celled organisms. You get the picture without needing to see the fuller account of what happens when primordial stars explode and make carbon. Whatever living being might be nearest to you, be it a cricket or a fern, for instance, it has a similar unbroken line that goes all the way back to the beginning of time, a line which for much of that way was also your own line of descent. This makes all of life family... .

"Roads can often optimize a transition from A to B by taking a route that is not a straight line, but rather, a line that is analogous to the path of least resistance. They do not just plunge through mountains except where tunnels are absolutely necessary. Fords are similarly limited. They can only achieve this optimization by being specific to the terrain. There may be a general set of standards or principles for laying out a road, but there is no general road, not even in Heaven or the World of Ideas.

"The physical location of a road or path can be seen as a function of certain principles and variables working together. For instance, there may be design parameters concerning gradient, cross-slope and curvature. The terrain presents a set of variables, big rocks and cliffs, canyons, marshes and rivers. The final location will represent an entrainment to, or a convergence around optimum solutions as compromises between the parameters and the variables. We should be reluctant to call this compromise a function of an ideal. The process of optimization is similar in effect to the principle of fitness in evolution - it's a force that pushes things towards convergence. If you know the rules by which the road was laid out, you may or may not approximate the result in an independent design. Sometimes the terrain is so demanding that solutions must converge. And sometimes the hope of a solution needs to be abandoned."

By way of a summary, a path does not represent a field of possibilities. It is a narrowing of the possibilities, according to constraints from within in the limitations of the typical traveler and constraints from without in the features of the terrain that do not contribute to our well-being or effectively moving us towards a goal. A path has the same relationship to a field as order does to entropy or natural law does to chaos.

### **The Steps of the Path**

The path set by the Buddha is a series of behavioral recommendations, not a list of commandments, based upon what might today be called his understanding of the natural laws affecting the well-being of sentient creatures. The eight steps are often organized into three categories.

Steps one and two are called *Panna Sampada*, the wisdom attainments. While this only covers the first two practices, in some places these are considered to be the final culmination of the steps. Presumably this is the difference between laying the groundwork for understanding and the final realization of understanding. *Panna* as wisdom is more than intellectual understanding. And it is not an all-encompassing, unconditional wisdom that validates all ideas and points of view. It discriminates and judges, especially on the basis of wholesomeness and well-being. It is a wisdom with cutting edges, a wisdom that is able to say "no, that is incorrect," or "no, that is a toxic

idea, even if your entire culture approves of it." To exercise *panna* is to take charge of the contents of our minds. A friend named Daniel Tucker once asked a group he was teaching what they might think if they arose one morning and went downstairs for that first cup of coffee, only to find some complete stranger on the couch, watching television, burping, farting, smoking and drinking beer. What would they do? Would they not make a serious inquiry regarding how that person got there, what was he doing and whether he proposed to leave before the authorities arrived? While this is just not acceptable behavior in life, most people seem to allow their own minds to fill up with such uninvited strangers and don't even question their presence. Unquestioned ideas from who-knows-where soon dominate their thoughts. *Panna* means cognitive self-control and develops the critical thinking skills that distinguish between the wholesome and unwholesome. *Panna Sampada* incorporates:

Step One: *Samma Ditthi*, Right View or Understanding, and

Step Two, *Samma Sankappa*, Right Intention or Thought

The next triad of steps is called *Sila Sampada*, the ethical or virtuous attainments. *Sila* refers to how we conduct ourselves in the world, the behavior by which we propagate our *kamma* and thus its consequences, which include our future selves. *Sila* has the connotation of habitual or regular practice. This is in the sense of self-directed discipline rather than obedience to a moral law. It is purely pragmatic. Sentient beings are not what they think they are; they do not conform to some Platonic ideal. You are what you do. Human is as human does. There is no hypocrisy with this view: the hypocrite is merely deluded or a liar. The lofty ideals by which human beings try to define, understand and measure themselves are illusions. *Sila* requires a more honest look. And the bottom line is: if you are suffering, the first place to look for the roots of this is in your own behavior. This is not to say that bad things don't happen to good people, although it is likely that even a majority of Buddhist followers might object and claim the law of *kamma* to be more absolute. Here we will simply assert that improved behavior tends to contribute to well-being, to better the odds of being well. *Sila Sampada* incorporates:

Step Three: *Samma Vaca*, Right Speech

Step Four: *Samma Kammanta*, Right Action

Step Five: *Samma Ajiva*, Right Livelihood

The final triad of steps is called *Citta Sampada*, the meditative or mental attainments. These may be thought of as the training of the mind in changing the mind, or mental self control, where the word mental also includes attention and our feelings as well as thoughts. That the mind is a made, conditioned and emergent "entity," dependent on the processes that produce it, does not mean that the mind cannot be free and creative. This training helps us to move from state to state at will, and particularly from unwholesome to wholesome states. This is the exercising and training of mental freedom. *Citta Sampada* incorporates:

Step Six: *Samma Vayama*, Right Effort

Step Seven: *Samma Sati*, Right Mindfulness

Step Eight: *Samma Samadhi*, Right Concentration

These Eight Steps form the "program" that Buddha prescribed for the alleviation of suffering. In the next eight chapters we will examine them individually, with some added references for their use in recovery from addiction and denial, which are taken here to be a special subset of the broader class of suffering's causes. These are causes which have armored themselves against change. This armor is broken down methodically by the practice of these steps.

There are some interesting parallels here in the field of psychology. For example, in a Psych textbook called *Psychology Applied to Modern Life: Adjustment in the 21st*

Century, Wayne Weiten suggests three general types of "coping strategies": "Appraisal-focused strategies occur when the person modifies the way they think [adaptive cognitive] ... . People using problem-focused strategies try to deal with the cause of their problem [adaptive behavioral] ... . [and] Emotion-focused strategies involve releasing pent-up emotions, distracting oneself, managing hostile feelings, meditating or using systematic relaxation procedures." These three are none other than *Panna, Sila* and *Citta Sampada*, in sequence.

### **A Different Kind of Faith**

There is a question of trust in starting down such a path. Upon seeing a physical path, there is an automatic kind of faith that leaves you fairly certain that it will lead you somewhere, and that others have been here before and that this has led them somewhere. There are different degrees and categories of doubt. The Buddha never dismissed the value of critical thinking skills. He did have some negative things to say about *vicikiccha*, a word frequently translated as "skeptical doubt" but which is better understood as cynicism in the more modern sense of the word. This is dismissing a thing before giving it a chance, or even a lack of trust or conviction that anything might be properly called true. Any authentic investigation asks for an ability to suspend disbelief as well as belief, to understand an object of inquiry from inside and out. The sort of faith needed in Buddhism is more like wanting to know that the plane you are about to board has sober pilots and licensed mechanics. Values want a positive core, not necessarily something or someone to believe in, but at least something that looks like it might pass a test of trustworthiness. Pre-existing disbeliefs do not make for an adequate core. In the Buddha's own words:

"Don't go by reports, by legends, by traditions, by scripture, by logical conjecture, by inference, by analogies, by agreement through pondering views, by probability, or by the thought, 'This contemplative is our teacher.' When you know for yourselves that, 'These qualities are unskillful; these qualities are blameworthy; these qualities are criticized by the wise; these qualities, when adopted & carried out, lead to harm & to suffering' — then you should abandon them." And "When you know for yourselves that, 'These qualities are skillful; these qualities are blameless; these qualities are praised by the wise; these qualities, when adopted & carried out, lead to welfare & to happiness' — then you should enter & remain in them." (Kalama Sutta, AN 3.65).

And, on becoming prematurely attached to a discovery: "If a person has faith he preserves faith when he says "my faith is thus," but he does not yet come to the definite conclusion "only this is true, anything else is wrong." ... In this way he preserves truth ... but as yet there is no discovery of truth" (MN 95).

Self-efficacy, the ability to act as your own agent in life and exert some decision-making authority that will translate into real change, is only distantly related to fierce independence. Much of success really lies in the ability to learn from others, from both successes and failures. No matter how special we are, there is usually someone around we can learn from. Even a person who is in the 99.9th percentile in intelligence, a one-in-a-thousand intellect, still has a major global metropolis of seven million people on earth who can solve puzzles faster still. Culture carries these solutions to problems across the centuries, so our teachers don't even need to be alive anymore. Fire and the wheel don't need reinventing. It's no embarrassment to learn from culture. To replace old patterns of behavior with ones that we find preferable, we must first develop our preferences. But if first-hand experience is the only way we can locate new, potential preferences, the choice is usually poor, and often limited to extrapolations and recombinations of the same behaviors that we are trying to get free from. The challenge is in deciding what to "believe in." Here we want to believe in what works.

The trap is to believe in the words instead of the actions. Nietzsche said: "But what convinces us isn't necessarily true: it is merely convincing. A note for asses." Human is as human does. That's all there need be to faith.

# The Noble Eightfold Path, Ariya Atthangika Magga

## Right View, Cognitive Self-control

I am not under the sway of what I know. DN 24

There are eight behavioral values presented in the Eightfold Path, each preceded by the word *Samma*, usually translated "Right ..." *Samma* also glosses as: complete, coherent, perfect, ideal, skillful, optimal, good and wholesome.

*Samma Ditthi* might be best translated as Right View, although *ditthi* also means point of view, perspective, outlook, opinion, understanding and belief. But understanding, when right, might be a little too broad and admit more relativity than critical and discriminating intelligence would allow. Right View means we are attempting to keep the big picture and all relevant and correct frames of reference in mind, beyond the small little dramas that occupy us to our detriment. Right View is understanding the Four Noble Truths and the ephemeral, unsatisfactory and illusory nature of the self (*anicca, dukkha, anatta*). This is to see things as they are, not as they appear, not to accept or deny, not to cling or refuse. This is to get your thinking straight and not twist what you see into what you want to see. The default value of the word *ditthi* in Buddhism is negative, i.e. often problematic and limiting views. The word *ditthigata* refers to fixed, biased or pre-established views. Right View is coming to terms with the basic facts of life, as Buddha understood them of course. Right View is also seeing the things that are worth seeing, by eliminating what keeps us blind or asleep. Without Right View we are like drunks passed out under the northern lights.

### The Ownership of Kamma

We do not know what we want and yet we are responsible for what we are - that is the fact. Jean-Paul Sartre

The first axiom of Right View is that all beings are responsible for their own *kamma*. This is expressed as *sabbe satta kamma-saka*, "all beings own their *kamma*." This is also called the right view of the ownership of action (*kammasakata sammaditthi*). Simply put, you own what you have done and you own what you do. Further, you are responsible for what you will become. "Beings are the owners of their actions, the heirs of their actions; they originate from their actions, are bound to their actions, have their actions for refuge. It is action that distinguishes beings as inferior and superior" (MN 135). As mentioned earlier, the word action refers to intentional actions, to the choices we make, to behavior with some sort of purposeful or goal-directed vector. This acceptance of responsibility is the first step to freedom. Guidelines for good behavior are developed further in the subsequent steps on the Path, particularly *Samma Vaca*, *Samma Kammanata* and *Samma Ajiva*. We learn to recognize good, skillful or wholesome (*kusala*) *kamma* as it develops the mind and benefits others, and bad, unskillful or unwholesome (*akusala*) *kamma* as it defiles the mind and harms others.

We can get into some pretty questionable logic when we start to look at *kamma* as some kind of moral law, and some especially specious logic when we look for retributive justice in the "law of *kamma*." Regardless of how well-behaved we may be, unfortunate things are almost certain to happen to us. Bad things will happen to good people, and half of human religion is fabricated to account for this. The feeble-minded will make misfortune out to be a test given to them by their deity, or as a blessing in

disguise. Others will invoke multiple lifetimes. None of this is necessary. Being good or behaving well happens to improve our odds, and draws less retribution in social contexts, and fewer negative consequences in physical contexts. Understanding the limits to the so-called "laws" of *kamma* and merit are a part of Right View. The fact that we own or are responsible for our *kamma* does not mean there is a precise one-to-one correspondence between our behavior and our fortunes. It merely means that we have significantly affected our fortunes by the decisions we have made, and if these fortunes are not as we would like them to be, the first place to look is to our own actions. Our situations can be improved by setting better intentions, but it's foolish to expect that better consequences are guaranteed by a simple combination of moral behavior and natural law. Simply put: intentional actions have consequences, consequences can be altered by changing acts and acts changed by changing intentions. Finally, intentions can be changed by changing our views, and corrected by correcting our views. We can change our minds and this is usually the key to changing our fortunes.

There can be a larger-scale understanding of *kamma* as well, played out across evolutionary time scales. The choices our ancestors made, going all the way back to our first progenitors with neurons, have left us with a human nature, a set of cognitive, emotive and behavioral skills and a set of ways to oversimplify our perceptions, to take shortcuts and make hasty decisions. In addition to this inheritance, which by itself almost suggests a sort of determinism, we have also inherited certain emergent faculties, such as an ability to form various ideas of a self and various cognitive tricks that give us some control over our intentions or some agency to our actions. This means that our intentions are potentially our servants. Much the same can be said of the human culture and civilization that we have inherited, but here, beyond a certain point in a person's development and for those who are capable of learning, the freedom to pick and choose allows us to develop a far more liberated second nature. The bottom line: you are what you do, and what you have done, and human is as human does. The human being is not some philosopher's or poet's flattering ideal. We are the result of the choices we've made over millions of years. We and our heirs will be the result of the choices we make today.

### **The Four Noble Truths**

Next on the list for Right View is knowledge and insight into the Four Noble Truths, to recap: 1) *Dukkhe nanam*, penetrative insight into the truth of suffering, 2) *Dukkha samudaye nanam*, penetrative insight into the truth of the origination of suffering, 3) *Dukkha nirodhe nanam*, penetrative insight into the truth of the cessation of suffering, and finally 4) *Dukkha nirodhagaminipatipaddya nanam*, penetrative insight into the truth of the path leading to the cessation of suffering. A working knowledge of all eight steps of the path falls within the first step. There is more material on the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path than is presented here. See "An Outline of the Buddha's Teachings And Glossary of Buddhism's Basic Concepts" [here](#).

### **The Voice of Another and Wise Attention**

In MN 43, the Buddha names two further conditions for the arising of Right View: the voice of another (*parato ghosa*) and wise attention (*yoniso-manasikara*). And he names five more assisting factors "when [this] has deliverance of mind for its fruit": virtue, learning, discussion, serenity and insight. The "voice of another" is said to mean listening to conducive or advantageous *Dhamma*. But it's more than this. It points to the need to see what we are learning from both inside and out, to use others as a sounding board, to test ideas in the open air instead of hearing them only in our minds.

Consensus isn't as necessary as seeing *dhammas* from multiple angles. This is meant to work in conjunction with wise attention. We are examining and questioning these views the whole time we are entertaining them, because for all of the value that the voice of another may have, the potential for error never goes away. We need the second opinions and other perspectives if we want the broader truths, but we need just as much to vet them, to subject them to verification. The wise in wise attention has other translations: deep, to the root, systematic, thoroughgoing and careful. The human mind pays its best attention when a subject is still less than fully understood and filed away as known. "Been there, done that" is death to our ongoing understanding. Premature conclusions put the mind to sleep and leave us with unwise attention (*ayoniso manisikara*), shallow and unsystematic reflection that allows us to adopt wrong views.

### **Higher Purpose and Reframing**

To most human beings the three marks of existence, *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anatta*, or the impermanence, imperfection and conditionality of self, are things to hide from or defend our beliefs from. Our elaborate heavens are stubborn negations of all three, where we go on forever without aging, happy all the time and free at last of the prison of the body. Order and perfection live high above the coarse and dirty realities of the world. In contrast, what the Buddha asks us to give up is seeing these three marks as bad features of reality and to see their acceptance as a relief from the lifelong, tedious effort of defending our precious ignorance and delusions. To do this will require us to completely reconstruct our understanding of what a self is, and thus to understand it first as a construction and not a fundamental property of the universe. Neither was the universe put here to serve the needs of sentient beings. The best of us can emerge from this understanding with the feeling that we are lucky to be here at all, and knowing that it's in our own best interests to quit whining about life.

Our schemas or self-representations of who we are are normally too limited to let us see the bright side of these three "horrible" truths. We need to learn to take the perspective of something greater than our own personal limitations. For me it was helpful to disregard the notion of "my higher power" and instead look to serving "a higher purpose," redirecting my activities into something bigger than me and more likely to outlive me than my self. A higher purpose is not any sort of plan that the universe has for us, although it can have some things in common with something like destiny. A higher purpose has no good will or love for us. If it were all about us it would not be higher purpose. We may not get thanked or even encouraged. This can be a cause, like driving the British out of India or curing smallpox. It can be helping science take the next step, or turning a vacant lot into a community park or garden. It might be an effort to try and be worth something to the world, or to leave the place a better place than we found it, or simply to pay our rent here in this ecosystem. We get outside our own borders and boundaries. For the Buddha: "It is because I see two benefits that I still resort to remote jungle-thicket resting places in the forest: I see a pleasant abiding for myself here and now, and I have compassion for future generations" (MN 4). Future generations is one of the best, especially if future generations of all sentient beings are included here and not just humankind. This is taken up again at Right Livelihood.

From within our own boundaries the whole parade of existence is all about us, how it can serve us and what it can do to us. It is little wonder that our stories are about narcissism, greed and insecurity. We form our identities out of what we attend to and we can grow more expansive identities by attending more expansively. We can shift our identities from things to processes to make change easier to comprehend and work

with. We can cease to identify with our hungers and appetites to better attend to a range of alternatives. We can give ourselves ever-larger playpens to play in: a planet instead of a nation, a species instead of a race, life itself instead of a species. We can expand our time horizons and refer all of our self-important little cultural fads and fashions to a greater criterion for meaning and value. Being able to tune our own sense of the passing of time is exceedingly helpful in developing our patience and deferring our gratifications. Losing self-importance we can develop gratitude to take its place, lower our expectations and set ourselves a more attainable baseline for happiness. This is not the same as giving up our loftier goals, such as waking up and ending our suffering. All of these open up alternatives to limited view and the suffering that comes from seeing no way out. Seeing ourselves as humble and small, subject to change, to imperfection and dying, with no sky god's loving arms to embrace and comfort us, can be as liberating to some of us as it is terrifying to others. But a life built on the I-me-mine, with its endless fussing and fretting, is inconsistent with liberation.

When we identify with our wants and desires, or when we locate our identities within these, we will then become only partial people whenever these wants and desires "fail" to get met. We doom ourselves to being less than what we believe we are. Shifting our perceptions of our contexts and paradigms, gaining some measure of authority over these, reframing our problems and moving between levels of scale and abstraction, helps us to develop cognitive self-control. When we have a broader array of optional states of mind and attitudes in our repertoire, we find it is much easier to substitute one thought for another, to weed the mind and to plant better crops. In Dhamma-Vinaya this substitution is called *tadanga* or thought replacement. William James claimed: "The greatest weapon against stress is our ability to choose one thought over another." It begins with work on our views, but comes to a fuller expression in *Samma Sankappa*, Right Intention.

## Unlearning

In psychology, a self-schema is a construction made up of perceptions, beliefs, memories, ideas and values that we hold about ourselves. It helps us to organize and integrate the information we process about ourselves, or about experience in general that is relevant to ourselves. This also incorporates biases in what people allow themselves to pay attention to, or remember, or consider relevant, or regard as plausible. It is a bricolage, a creation made over a span of time using whatever experiential materials were available at the time, some of it from parental sources, and some from cultural sources. Usually the earliest layers are adopted unexamined and unvetted into place, and much of this may be erroneous, leading to further cumulative errors. And we don't always get better at examining and vetting the newer stuff either. Beliefs develop over extended periods. They are over-learned or ingrained. This schematic structure is usually felt to be the investment of a life's worth of living, and such investments are usually perceived as worth defending, often at any cost. To defend them we have an impressive array or arsenal of cognitive biases, defense mechanisms, coping strategies and logical fallacies. Our self-schemas get encrusted with this defensive armor, protecting both the wisdom and the foolishness therein. Defenses are not merely an intellectually structured edifice of concepts either: otherwise it would be an easier matter just to name the things that are wrong and delete them. Instead they are "wired" to our emotions and feelings, often our fears and anxieties, and this gives our beliefs an affective value. We use the beliefs to value our experience relative to the maintenance or enhancement of our self-schemas.

After trying to defend a belief and, in spite of this, having to face the realization that the belief is in error or has failed us, we need to use both clear thinking and sufficient

affect to replace it with something more useful to us. Replacement or overwriting is considerably more effective than just leaving an old idea alone, much as weeding a garden is more lasting if there are wanted plants in place. We want to either reassign the older idea to a more negative affective value or the newer idea to a more positive one, or do a combination of these two, all while not burdening ourselves with negative affect or inferior feelings. In Dhamma-Vinaya, disillusionment and disenchantment (*nibbida*) are regarded as useful tools for this task. Illusions and enchantments that have failed us are not worth keeping. Knowledge is a dynamic process, not a static library or cache of information. As a "fact" is remembered, or re-minded, the brain scans for the personal history of experiences that this fact is associated with, using some, ignoring others, but each time this happens new associations from the present are wired in to the memory as well. We can add a new sense of serenity, understanding, or forgiveness to an old experience of anxiety, hurt or resentment. We do this whenever we reexamine and question our thoughts. That is, we do this when we practice mindfulness. It is at this point that we can add new connections that correct the problem beliefs in our self-schemas, when we are not replacing the old beliefs altogether.

A self-schema is a function of the autobiographical self, of one's sense of continuity and personal history. And obviously when we are trying to free ourselves from outdated patterns and evaluative beliefs, personal history can be an anchor or a drag, offering only inertial resistance to change. But memory, like history, is dynamic, and like history it is often rewritten by the victor. What is past becomes prologue. We can learn from the lessons of our personal history too, and so not be doomed to repeat it. This is a liberation from insanity, as it's aphoristically defined as doing the same thing over and over while expecting different results. To the extent that a self-schema can incorporate a model of dynamic evolution, the beliefs that once had to defend themselves, in place and as they were, can loosen up a little bit and submit themselves to growth. An evolutionary model is not a position or a stance, and so has no reason to stay still. Until we can make this transition from static to dynamic we are simply "living our life out of some basic assumptions that we made up about life. And all we've been interested in doing is gathering evidence that attests to the rightness of our assumptions" (*Sarpashana*, p. 124).

We cannot see the real thing from a static point of view, but only fixed ideas, scripts and narratives that keep replaying themselves. We live from the positions that we take and hold, and not with the moving stream. The stream is forever leaving the fixed position behind. The ability to make self-schemas is an evolved trait and self-schemas address real needs in life, even on the path to enlightenment. But they do not have to be nouns, things isolated from dynamic change. The self, like the mind, is much better understood and developed as a process, as a verb. In Buddhism the three conceits (*mana*) of I-making, mine-making and personality views (*mamakara*, *ahankara* and *sakkayadiithi*) will arrest the self and hold it against personal evolution into maturity. This is mine. I am this. This is what my spirit is. These are the false views that cognitive biases, defense mechanisms, coping strategies and logical fallacies are called upon to defend, and this only adds to our ignorance and delusion. The dynamic view welcomes contradiction: "Hmm. That was not mine. I'm not that any more. Is this really who I am?" Fixed ideas are exposed to the experience that has the potential to correct them. Some will pass the test, others will fail. If the failures are not really who we are, isn't it better to be rid of them? As was mentioned earlier, the Buddha gave us a useful mantra for this: "You should train thus: We shall be wise men, we shall be inquirers" (MN 114). It is permissible to not be here entirely in the present. To be only

here now is just another platitude-driven way of getting stuck. We can look ahead to the kind of beings we are capable of becoming.

### **Discerning Wholesome and Unwholesome, Skilled and Unskilled**

It is common these days, especially in new age circles, to hear the phrase "don't be so judgmental." It usually goes along with several other vacuous platitudes. Aside from the hypocrisy of this in itself being a judgment, the irony is that this bit of so-called wisdom encourages a life misguided by bad judgment. *Panna*, the ideal of wisdom in Dhamma-Vinaya, is not an all-embracing, all-accepting, all-tolerant, unconditional loving wisdom. It is a discriminating wisdom. It isn't just a pretty jewel to be admired: it's a cutting tool.

The proper use of acceptance will be similarly misunderstood by the platitude-driven, just as people who make an effort to take charge of their lives are termed "control freaks." But ask: how is that working out for them? Just like wizards and sorcerers do, we first identify and name the things that bedevil us in order to control or master them. This is the point of wrapping our heads around mental objects. Ultimately, we do want to be kind to ourselves. We want to feel like we are listening to that "small, still voice" and acting genuinely, spontaneously, according to the intrinsic goodness within us. But the point of acceptance is not to allow ourselves to stay the same: it's to learn what we really are and what we've become, in order to not have a distorted view. Being in control is not a character defect: it allows us to "change the things we can," to make some genuine changes to the things we have adopted that are doing us a disservice. It's OK to be mean and unkind to these things if they don't belong in a better, healthier us. Self is a construct and we are the builders. And ultimately, we only cheat ourselves by using inferior materials. If we leave these alone they will just continue giving us trouble. "The point is that given who you are and what your basic considerations are, without recognizing your basic assumptions about reality, you may pluck out the alcoholism, but you will only generate it again like a starfish generating lost arms" (*Sarpashana* p. 125).

A large part of what human beings think, do, believe in and even feel, is unwholesome, wrong, unskillful, harmful, toxic, flawed, ineffective, productive of unhappy results, all covered by the Pali word *akusala*. It doesn't matter that the majority of people accept these as normal: these are the reasons that suffering is normal. We need to find ways to put the stink-eye on these things. We need to step outside of them, objectify them, dis-identify with them, find reasons to want to come to believe that "this is not mine, this is not me, this is not who I am." One of the best favors that anybody ever did for me while I was drinking was to take a couple of photos of me, one passed out in an armchair with a half-finished pint of vodka in hand, and another on the floor, halfway under the table. That was rude, and unspeakably kind. It got it all right out there in the open, where I couldn't deny it from inside. It might be a useful tool for others to ask friends to gather similar objective evidence. It's also good to know that it's OK to be ruthless in this, that if these behaviors are not the real you, then why not put them out of your misery?

Good judgment requires good values and standards, goals, objectives, criteria related to benefit. It assumes an executive function, the emergent property of self called agency, self-efficacy or will. In the modern cultural and economic climate, just about all of the words associated with value have been perversely twisted around: the value of a thing is not based on how you value it: this is set by others, or by a mindless market. The same holds with appreciation and interest. These are your job, not the market's. Economy used to mean thrift. Treasure is now something that you kill yourself for instead of something you do. But we have the ability to take all of this

back, to redeem and reclaim the vocabulary. We have the power to set our own values and then revise them as needed. But to do this, Right View must become dynamic, and our self-schema must become a process instead of a thing.

## Right Intention, Emotional Self-control

I am one finished with hell, finished with the animal realm, finished with the domain of ghosts, finished with the plane of misery, the bad destinations and the nether world. [I am] fixed in destiny, with enlightenment as my destination. (SN II 12)

*Samma Sankappa* is Right Intention. *Sankappa* may also be translated as thought, aim, commitment, purpose, aspiration, mindset, plan, motive or resolve. It is a blend of thought and feeling, or an affectively charged thought, a thought that is moving us somewhere and not merely floating around in our minds. It is mental intent, will or volition, or *cetana*, a word that is sometimes translated as the "wish to do," that propels the mind forward into wholesome (*kusala*) or unwholesome (*akusala*) states. It is the intention in action that is the stuff of *kamma*. It is the want that drives our own and our species' evolution. Right Intention is a commitment to ethical and mental self-improvement. While it doesn't necessarily mean assuming a higher purpose, it will at least be a higher personal sense of purpose. We looked earlier at the word resolution as a species of janus word that referred to both a force of determination and a clarity of vision, and this combination expresses the idea of combining drive with vision in Right Intention.

Anybody with their mind or eyes open knows there is no way in hell that we can honestly call man a rational animal. This vision is perpetuated by a very small, only somewhat rational minority, and most of them are pretty deluded about the affective side of cognition. Yet even as this myth persists, the rational control of our emotions is somehow perceived as inauthentic, or a betrayal of our heart or of our inmost nature, and part of us feels sorry for Star Trek's Mr. Spock because he misses out on so much of our illogical human confusion. But the goal of *Samma Sankappa* isn't some sort of smart numbness, or cold rationality, or rationally constrained feeling. It is simply a focus on being emotionally equilibrated and calmly self-directed, while both the emotion and the calm are rich and enjoyable states.

### Substitution

In Dhamma-Vinaya, a process called "thought substitution" (*tadanga*) is used to replace the unwholesome intentions with the wholesome. These positive intentions are not the same good intentions that the road to hell is paved with. At this point in our evolution the aim is still self-correction, or a more wholesome self-organization. There is still a place for fixing what's wrong with the world, but this comes a little later in the priorities. The unwholesome intentions (such as compulsive craving, getting even, doing harm, etc) are subjected to techniques for unlearning, extinction, de-conditioning, deprogramming, or desensitization. These methods tend to work best with an overwriting of the behavioral programs rather than simple erasure. The overwriting, in turn, requires some sort of rewarding experience to support the alternative: if behavioral substitutes are simply good ideas they just won't "sink in," they won't carve much of a groove or niche for themselves. The replacements need to get wired into the brain, to form an expanded set of associations that integrate with the memories and ideas that formerly acted as triggers for the unwholesome behavior. Reprogramming requires rewards, but in Dhamma-Vinaya we can learn how to "switch on" the positive states as rewards, like method actors, and sometimes this can be done simply by remembering these states and how pleasant they can be. It takes practice, particularly with the mindfulness and concentration exercises of the Seventh and Eighth steps, but we can indeed learn to tell ourselves: "feel this instead."

Rewriting our mental programs takes a kind of applied energy or work: it's not just a

theoretical, cognitive adjustment. Changing our minds is a skill. There needs to be affective involvement and applying this is a skill. In theory this is pretty basic stuff even in psychology where it has long been known as operant conditioning. Pleasantness and unpleasantness drive learning. In recovery, maintaining a rewarding experience is best done with something that is difficult to enjoy without being sober and preferably with an object or experience that we can identify as having deep personal significance or value. In this way our efforts to get through withdrawal and early abstinence are more than simple distractions. We can use the time spent in early abstinence to build new memories and patterns, to explore new reward systems, and put these new habits and skills into place.

We are required to revisit, rather than escape, the negative emotional states that hound us with repeated appearances, the re-sentiments. There is a utility in examining these states in detail at the same time that they are trying to occur. We look for roots and triggers in childhood issues and traumas, in existential problems, in memory-specific fears and anxieties. There is an educational experience in having these feelings at least one more time following our stepping onto the Path. In part this is to better understand them, but the effect has more to do with our dynamic memory. When we can conjure up more wholesome states while we are doing this revisiting, these higher states will become associated with the revisited memory, contributing a better set of optional associations and reactions. We can associate a new memory of forgiveness or compassion with an old memory of an insult or injury. We can add a new attitude or response to the cumulative memory and refile it in modified form, freshly attached to resolution, closure, forgiveness, etc.

In many cases we find that the negative states we are trying to eradicate have no basis in reality, as though they simply generate themselves out of nothing, or are just produced on the fly, to then become self-sustaining. Sometimes they arise out of our suspicions, or delusions, or free-floating anxieties. These in turn will give us the ability to create "things" and boogymen that aren't really there. Sometimes we give states substance when substance is simply the wrong model. What might be called the hydraulic theory of emotions sees our affective states as akin to liquids under varying degrees of pressure, not compressible, not expandable, not dismissible. If we repress them they will force their way out somewhere else. In this view they cannot be stuffed. They need to be processed in a way that "re-channels" them into a more wholesome outlet. The volume or quantity of this emotional stuff is conserved, like matter and energy. We only have so much love to give, so if one person wants it all, too bad for all of the others. We cannot simply evaporate our resentments: they need to be given their full weight to process them properly, or sometimes even exaggerated and expressed with a more explosive force in a process called catharsis. In many cases this is simply delusional and self-fulfilling perception. Many of these states never needed to be created in the first place, and the ones that truly are created from nothing might be replaced with nothing more complicated than a simple bit of wisdom. In these cases suffering is purely optional, and not simply conditionally optional.

### **Latent Tendencies and the Evolutionary Functions of Affect**

It is helpful to look at Why our various feelings and emotions were preserved as such a big portion of our evolutionary mental inheritance. This is not the same as asking why they were created. They are adaptive responses, and they include the more lasting or durable states that we refer to as temperaments and dispositions. Why we have them is not as valid a question as why we Still have them. Naturally, most of them have to do either with physical survival or reproduction, and particularly in mammals, this calls for getting along socially, finding mates and rearing young. A lot of our most

useful data here has been trying to present itself in various fields within zoology, primatology in particular, but has been most thoroughly obscured by our deluded and arrogant anthropocentrism. Just how much we have to learn here in fields ranging from economics to ethics is only now becoming widely shared, and is still meeting resistance from those who hold that only humans are sentient, ensouled and eligible for admittance to Heaven. This evolutionary study, particularly in the new field of evolutionary psychology, will be a separate-but-useful adjunct to Buddhism, especially in helping us to understand that our feelings and emotions do not represent any sort of fundamental core of our being. In fact they are often better understood as tricks that life has learned to play on us to get certain tasks accomplished.

Take anger, for example. This arises in us when we receive some sort of insult, or a betrayal of our trust, or a trespass across our boundaries, or a disrespectful gesture, etc. It doesn't really do us any good to feel anger, and there is certainly not much value or health benefit in hanging onto it. The Buddha left us his well-known comment that holding on to anger is like taking poison and hoping the other person will die from it. Anger is with us because it serves a social function: it leads us to perform specific behaviors that let the offending person know that his or her behavior was unacceptable and not to be tolerated. It is the first step in a chain that produces negative feedback that helps to order the social group. Anger solves a problem on occasion, or rather, initiates some behavior that does. Anger evolved before words, as a form of communication. It conveyed the meaning that what somebody did was socially unacceptable. If there are more rational ways to accomplish this task, such as publishing some sort of negative review, or simply setting forth your grievance to the offending party, then other parts of the brain can take over and the anger can be dispensed with altogether. The social emotions, of mammals and especially those of primates, are our original moral compass, while our misapprehending them is our greatest moral detriment, often leading to outcomes like murder or war.

An objective look at insecurity is particularly helpful when it brings us to an understanding of all of the economic and political forces that have reasons to cultivate insecurities within us. Affect such as dissatisfaction, or greed in its more pronounced form, are there to help us acquire what we need to better our living conditions. Some level of greed may also assist us in acquiring things to bestow as favors in exchange for power. To the extent that we can recognize this, the forebrain can take over and more calmly and rationally make other choices that accomplish the same thing, or else determine that bettering our condition in this manner isn't worth the anticipated costs.

The so-called infant emotions are the easiest to understand, those like anger, fear, distress, disgust, sadness, interest, contentment and happiness (to exceed the usual list). With these we make it known that we need help, or else that experiencing more-of-the-same would be just fine with us. Later in life they urge us on to either approach or withdraw, continue or discontinue. When we want or don't want something our vision of the world changes. The world then speaks to us in terms of our wants, our fears and our identity issues. When we learn to relax this want-and-don't-want and practice equanimity (*upekkha*) or serenity (*passaddhi*) the world can return to speaking to us in its own terms. The Buddha only had a few things to say that were specific to our latent tendencies, which he called the *anusayas*. The seven that he names are lust, ill will, false views, conceit, egotism and ignorance (*kamaraga*, *patigha*, *ditthi*, *mana*, *bhavaraga* and *avijja*). These are problems that crop up in other lists as well, like the fetters (*samyojanas*). There are of course more. All are best understood as inherited characteristics that persist with varying explanations, that likely had some useful function at some point deep in our history, and that today demand a second look due to their maladaptive characteristics.

Evolutionary psychology looks at our "human nature," at our typical behaviors, the styles of living and levels of social interaction that we have had millennia to adapt to genetically, or millions of years as primates. The early results of this research have helped to clarify a large number of our human problems centered in evolved traits that have become maladaptive in our urban, agricultural, overpopulated, industrial and overspecialized modern environment. We see a lot more than simple beginnings in our closest relatives in the Hominidae family. We may have some things that apes lack, but in converse, if the apes have it, it's also fairly certain to be in us, and there really isn't a lot in the basic human emotional makeup that the apes lack. They have reciprocal altruism. They feel hurt, betrayal and rejection. They know grief, fear, embarrassment, jealousy, cowardice, discouragement, pride, depression, guilt, and free-floating anxiety. They use anger and contempt to avoid or punish cheaters, sympathy and trust to proactively extend the first favor, gratitude and loyalty to repay favors, guilt and shame to deter them from hurting others or not repaying favors, and indignation to guard both physical and psychological boundaries. There are game theories that can predict hominidae behavior with some statistical regularity, even though there are as many individual differences on their limbs of the family tree as on ours. And they are subject to the many of the same mood disorders.

Now that we have our high culture and civilization and a wide range of unnatural conditions ranging from severe overcrowding to superabundant resources, we are finding that a lot of the traits that helped us to adapt to a simpler, more natural world have become maladaptive in the new and improved environment. The classic physiological example is our now- untempered response to dietary sugars and fats, evolved in an era where these were scarce, but now inclining us to obesity in our modern fields of plenty. Another is excessive social stress from our living in much larger groups than we adapted to in ancient times. Robin Dunbar suggests that our optimum adapted population size is under 150. Since Dunbar himself suspected that this number was a little high, and since this is a function of geometrical complexity, I would place the maximum closer to 128. This is only a village, not even a small town. Communities larger than this tend to develop schisms and split off in processes analogous to mitosis. City life, as we have built it, requires an all-new second nature. Buddha came along midway through this transition, and much of what he had to offer dealt with problems that were new to us, emerging from our culture and civilization. But a lot of his solutions are on cognitive levels that are also capable of reaching down into our deeper brains, sensing, examining, instructing and overriding our apey minds too. Culture and civilization reshape our emotional expression, particularly in terms of what is socially welcome or permissible, and in attaching affective loads to both physical objects and private behavior that either weren't there before or that were differently loaded. Sex is of course the most screwed up example, but we also never had as many possessions to covet, or possessions for which we have no real need.

We can probably best distinguish between feelings and emotions by identifying the latter with motion, as a response that implies movement or at least agitation. Feeling is less outward. The set of positive feelings that we have is an evolved reward system, and the associated neurochemistry is gradually becoming better understood. The system provides a fair first indication that our behavior might be on the right track, across a spectrum ranging from physical diet to self-actualization. Usually these positive feelings mean we are doing something that millions of years of evolution supports. And yet there is no quicker way to get off the right path than to start chasing them as rewards instead of letting them come to us in direct consequence of our staying on track, which will often require patience, priorities, vision and deferred gratification. Given this, the inalienable, god-given right to pursue happiness is a really bad idea.

Obviously, this willingness to skip the work and take shortcuts directly to positive states is central to the problem of addiction. Here the only behavior you have performed in getting to the reward is the addictive behavior itself, and so it is this activity that gets powerful and, initially, cheap reinforcement.

### **Emotional Intelligence**

Emotional intelligence is a recent term that is not without its detractors and ambiguities. Here we will use it to refer to our abilities to perceive, identify, apply, understand, regulate, modify, manage and substitute affective states. A lack of such intelligence would then mean being at the mercy of affective states, and perhaps mistaking them for the authentic or fundamental self. When we are skillful with this intelligence we can cultivate those feelings that allow us to remember where we want to go, and stop having those that distract us. We can learn how to want the right things and renounce the wrong ones. We learn to start, move, motivate and drive ourselves. We even learn how to turn negative emotions around, using them to initiate appropriate behavioral responses without having to hang on to the more painful feelings themselves as though this were the important part of having them. We then no longer need to take everything so personally and dramatically just to feel alive, or to blow things out of proportion just to add drama, import or self-importance to our lives.

Impulse control may be the most important skill to learn with respect to addictive behavior. The triggers and other stimuli present themselves as urgencies and fire up the specific emotional urge, while it takes a little more time for the forebrain to catch up or even notice what is going on. Emotions just cannot be trusted to incorporate a reasonable sense of time. If you listen to two people in the midst of a heated argument, you will hear lots of "you Always do this" and "you Never do that." It's a sure sign that somebody has been carried away by their emotions. Sometimes and seldom just seem to lack the desired heat or dramatic force. Always and never can be pretty scary, too: I will always be on a diet, and I can never drink again.

The ability to play around constructively with our sense of time, to bend, stretch, warp or compress time, is a talent we develop with the meditation exercises of Dhamma-Vinaya. There is also nothing like a half hour of Zazen for experiencing three very long hours worth of time. Sometimes all it takes is a few seconds of counting to ten to stop, calm or forget an urge. Or time for a few deep breaths. Across longer scales of time we have a less-than-beneficial habit of using hyperbolic discounting, wherein we value rewards that are near at hand far out of proportion to those only slightly more distant, such as preferring to take five tokens now over ten tokens an hour from now. It's even worse with our cookies and pies. It doesn't improve very much with adulthood either, at least not without intervention. Deferring or even forgoing gratification does not seem to be something that comes naturally to humans. We seem from infancy to have an innate intolerance of frustration and discomfort. When children don't learn this tolerance in childhood, we called them spoiled, but we cannot seem to see this in the adults who are deforesting this planet and laying waste to the world's petroleum reserves. Patience and pacing ourselves seem to require longer time horizons and bigger pictures than our evolved affective responses are able to provide. We need to add culture, thought and reason to make this work. The meditation exercises of Dhamma-Vinaya are particularly useful in expanding or stretching our time horizons. It is interesting, and not really just a sidebar, that Buddha, who came from the Indian or Vedanta tradition, often spoke in terms of millions and billions of years, in very close to identical time scales that today's evolutionary biology and astrophysics are using. In those religions that don't really stop to ponder and meditate, the world is only 6000 years old and their adherents' behavior is almost infinitely shortsighted. You can even

wait until the very last minute of your whole, wicked and sinful life to request and obtain immediate salvation for all of eternity. Sometimes it's just really fucking embarrassing to be a human being.

We can also exhibit an innate intolerance for boredom and restlessness. We have primary drives to seek stimulation, to explore our environment, and to manipulate things just to see what happens. But we also have a learnable ability to regulate the importance of what we experience. We can spend long hours looking through a microscope, just contemplating the leg hairs on an insect. National television news can set aside ten full minutes to discuss some fool celebrity's new hairstyle and then less than a minute to discuss the brutal slaughter of thousands somewhere across the ocean. This ability to regulate import or importance is our ability to assign and revise the value that we give to our experiences. Even though this isn't exercised often by the population at large, it is one of the most important tools we have for emotional self-control. When perseverance fails us, revaluation enables resilience, when firmness fails us it enables flexibility. It also has useful analgesic properties: we can use it to put pain in its proper place. We can fill empty time by valuing empty time. We can take the simplest pleasures and turn them into treasures. We can make an activity interesting, relevant and satisfying just by deeming it so. This is the key to intrinsic motivation, which in turn is the key to self-directed behavior. Appreciation, interest and value are adjustable. Because of this, the "bottom" that addicts need to hit is also adjustable and *samvega* can be fine-tuned by adjusting our own standards. That this may be a learned behavior does not make it inauthentic. There is no rule that says we need to take things at their socially assigned values, or our motivations from extrinsic sources, particularly within a culture as out of balance with our evolved nature as this one. Self-control is no more inauthentic than doing things incorrectly just because that's the way the rest of the species does things.

How many of our constants and standards of reference are adjustable? The revaluation of values was central to Nietzsche's thought: "From the Sun did I learn this, when it goeth down, the exuberant one: gold doth it then pour into the sea, out of inexhaustible riches, so that even the poorest fisherman roweth even with golden oars! For this did I once see, and did not tire of weeping in beholding it" (TSZ, 56-3). A field of fresh snow under a full moon is almost nothing but diamonds. Letting go of avarice doesn't mean repudiation. It might mean simply dialing down the value of something and looking aside. To wake up is to see wealth everywhere, so much so that it's silly to try to collect and possess it all. We can own a mountain simply by climbing it. This is a higher enrichment. Our sense of poverty, once our basic needs have been met, or the poor quality of our moments, is a disease of proportion, importance, or of value. Enrichment does not require hyperbole, exaggeration, self-importance or other forms of drunkenness. For the most part, beyond some simple necessities, we need only wake up and start minding and wanting what already we have. "Valuing is creating: hear it, ye creating ones! Valuation itself is the treasure and jewel of the valued things" (Nietzsche, WTP 260). And this is also how we manufacture most of our pain, by investing the wrong things with the wrong sort of value.

### **Brahmaviharas, the Immeasurable Healing States**

The Pali Canon enumerates four states of mind called the Abodes of Brahma (*Brahmaviharas*), or sometimes the Immeasurable or Boundless States (*Appamanna*). These represent the proper approach, attitude and conduct towards the world and other living beings and serve us in Right Intention as antidotes, used in the Substitution process, to counter the three greatest problems of affect that Right Intention is specifically directed to solving: craving, ill will and harmfulness. A handful of states

which are equally useful in this exercise were omitted from this list, although they are also important elsewhere in Buddhist doctrine. We will be discussing them here as well, and putting them on an equal footing. For these "immeasurable" states to function as antidotes we have to first remember that they have this use, and then remember to call them up. This is not always easily done in the midst of an emotional hijacking. This remembrance is a big part of Right Intention. It is a learned skill that has to be practiced in the middle of the unwholesome mental states in question. It makes use of dynamic memory and the ability to "rewire" new associations to old emotional triggers and resentments. Several of the practices using these states are given in the *Visuddhimagga*, Chapter 9, "The Divine Abidings," which offers this for purpose:

"The general purpose of these four divine abidings is the bliss of insight and an excellent [form of future] existence. That peculiar to each is respectively the warding off of ill will, and so on. For here loving-kindness has the purpose of warding off ill will, while the others have the respective purposes of warding off cruelty, aversion (boredom), and greed or resentment. And this is said too: "For this is the escape from ill will, friends, that is to say, the mind-deliverance of loving-kindness ... For this is the escape from cruelty, friends, that is to say, the mind-deliverance of compassion ... For this is the escape from boredom, friends, that is to say, the mind-deliverance of gladness ... For this is the escape from greed, friends, that is to say, the mind-deliverance of equanimity" (D III 248). (The *Visuddhimagga*, by the way, is a large and useful book. Like most Buddhist scriptures, it is available as a free download, see Links).

The first Immeasurable is *Metta*, literally meaning friend or friendship, but usually more precisely translated as loving-kindness. It is also good will, fraternal love, the bestowing happiness, amity, or benevolence. It is love without any desire to possess, love without clinging. It is to see and know the goodness in others. It is the wish for happiness for all sentient beings. It is advised in the *Visuddhimagga* that *metta* first be practiced towards oneself, then a friend, then a neutral person, then a difficult person, then all equally, and finally the world. Obviously it gets more difficult, but we learn things as we grow, especially about the usefulness of time and fortune in our growth process. The word kind is a closely related to the word kindred. In other words, to treat others with kindness is to treat them as relatives, whether they are human beings, wild animals or trees. Our capacity for kindness can evolve with our ability to see our genetic relationship with others who share this world. The Lakota Sioux phrase *Mitakuye Oyasin*, all my relations, is prayed in an affirmation of this interconnectedness that reminds us to be kind.

The second is *Karuna*, compassion, sympathy, mercy, gentle affection, and the aspiration to be truly helpful. It is to be with eyes and ears open to the cries of the sentient beings and their suffering. To "attend the cries" is *Guan Yin* in Chinese, and the name of the goddess of compassion who evolved out of an earlier male deity, Avalokitasvara, who is the Mahayana Bodhisattva of compassion. *Karuna* is not simply pity or sentimentality, a bleeding heart, or fellow suffering, but a willingness to bear the pain of others and not turn away, not shut down or flee. It helps us to develop empathy and consider another being's feelings before taking actions that affect others. It also moves us to be of some use in the world, even as we are renouncing worldly life. We cannot be oblivious to our impact on other lives when we can feel what pain we might cause.

The third is *Mudita*, rendered as appreciative, altruistic, sympathetic, vicarious, or empathetic joy. This is gladness or joy in another's success, in their well-being, or virtue, or happiness, rejoicing in another's skillful action, merits or attainments. This is the positive complement to *karuna*, and these two in combination are the opposite of

*schadenfreude*, finding humor or pleasure in another's misfortune. *Mudita* is also a polar opposite to jealousy and envy: it is a generosity of heart, the love that wants the best for another sentient being, even if this means surrendering something of value, or permitting them to have a life that is free of your interference. It also has something in common with the Yiddish *naches*, the pride or gratification for others, especially at the achievements of one's children, except that *mudita* is a little more selfless, reaching beyond our own family and hopefully even beyond our own species. It's also less prideful, and less attached to outcomes.

The fourth is *Upekkha*, variously translated as equanimity, dispassion, detachment, serenity, impartiality, tolerance, evenness, equipoise, balance of mind, even-mindedness, or dispassionate onlooking. This is not the same as apathy or indifference. It embodies an understanding that many of our problems must work themselves out, and that sentient beings must work themselves out of their own problems, to which they were generally led by their own intentions and decisions. There is also an extent to which *upekkhaca* express itself as tough love, which can place it in apparent opposition to *karuna* or compassion. In Dhamma-Vinaya, detachment and compassion form a paradox that must be lived with. Sometimes those lessons that a being needs most to learn can only be learned first hand, and compassionate intervention in that process will do that being no good at all. "For this is hardest of all: to close the open hand out of love, and keep modest as a giver" (Nietzsche, TSZ #23). *Upekkha* is not flight: it is occupying a place in the eye of the storm, or at the hub of the wheel. It is accepting without approving, and tolerating without resenting.

Forgiveness (*Khama*) as a practice (*khamanasila*) belongs among these healing states. It is the opposite of *upanaha*, or resentment, vengefulness, rancor, withholding forgiveness, intending retaliatory harm. Sometimes the Pali *khanti*, one of the ten paramitas or perfections, is translated as forgiveness, but this word might be better understood as forbearance, endurance, or tolerance. Forgiveness is the willingness to let go of anger, resentment, bitterness, or vengefulness in response to an insult or injury, but it comes along with the understanding that these difficult affective states are ultimately our own creation and our responsibility. We may question the reality or the "right" to exist of such states, and we certainly question the good that they do for us. Forgiveness is not primarily done for the benefit of the person being forgiven. It is even fully permissible to consider that such a person does not deserve it. There can always be the hope, however, that the other person will grow by the experience, by the guilt or remorse they may feel, or by the act of being forgiven. But this is not the primary point, which is that it does us no good whatsoever to keep ourselves tied up in knots of resentment. Neither is forgiveness the same as forgetting, and we are well-advised to keep a memory of the insult or injury "on file," even after it has been stripped of its emotional charge. This will help us to avoid getting insulted or injured in this way again. Such an attitude makes considering forgiveness easier, which is not to say easy. When we refuse to forgive we only maintain a pocket of pain and suffering inside us, and the encrustations, scabs and scars that will form around this become integrated into our self-identities, a part of who we mistakenly think we are. It isn't worth the trouble and pain.

Gratitude (*Katannuta*) or thankfulness, is a healing affective state that was only incompletely developed by the Buddha. In general, he only spoke of gratitude towards a "gratitee," someone who provided a kindness or something of value for us, and he used the seeker's parents as his go-to example. So he considered requited or reciprocated gratitude (*katannuta-kataveda*) to be *katannuta's* proper practice. But gratitude as used here, as a nominee for Brahmvihara status, has a much farther reach. To feel gratitude for the whole of existence, for life itself, for the ancestors all the way

back, and for the opportunity to be alive, does not, as many might hastily think, require a god or creator to be thankful to. This is a feeling that is necessary to truly feel oneself in a state of grace, but it is not one that is denied to the atheist or the agnostic. Far from it. Some might argue that this does not obligate us to helping or giving in return, to reciprocity, or to "paying our rent" to the biosphere, because these sources for our gifts are not watching or judging us, but these are just the arguments of infantile and brainwashed minds. Real gratitude must express itself. This state has some subjective aspects in common with *piti* or rapture, but the two are not the same because *piti* doesn't require the specific tone of thankfulness. Ingratitude (*akatannuta*) is a smug sense of entitlement, that is incapable of appreciating or tolerating temporary frustration or lack. It fails to see the worth of what we already have and thus binds us to what we do not have. It is a guarantee of suffering.

Reverence (*Garava*) or devotion, is another noble state that has only received a partial development in Dhamma-Vinaya. It finds its primary expression in *apacayana*, the act of paying our respects to those who are worthy of it. Sometimes the term *saddha*, treated here as the uniquely Buddhist version of faith, is also translated as reverence, but this does not fit the context, except as Buddha specifically used it to refer to a deep and reverential respect for the Dhamma. As with gratitude, reverence does not require an object of reverence or devotion. It does not require a deity, or the deification of all-of-life, of our world, of existence or the universe. But if we want to feel its full force, it will require us to open ourselves up to how freaking big the universe is, how cool it is that there is something rather than nothing, and what a miracle it is that some of it can look around at the rest of it. And to regard all of that as good fortune. A deep sense of the sacredness of it all requires no feeling that needs to be called religious, and a good scientist is just as capable of entering this state as any mystic poet. A reverential and devotional state of mind is a normal consequence of what is great and noble, and what is great and noble is hardly limited to we human beings and our primitive ideas about divinity. Reverence here is a deeply-felt combination of awe, respect and humility.

Patience (*Khanti*) is another of the ten *paramitas* or perfections that deserves consideration as one of the divine healing states. Its meanings include tolerance, forbearance, acceptance, acquiescence, compliance and endurance. It is sometimes rendered forgiveness but this is not its finest gloss. In the *Visuddhimagga* it is prerequisite to the development of *metta*, along with contemplating the dangers of hate. It can be regarded as a cousin, or even a sibling, to *upekkha* or equanimity, but it has its own qualities, and is more specific to the dimensions of time and the unfolding of time at time's proper pace. It encourages the development of expanded time horizons. For some this seems to require a perception that all things are unfolding as they should or ought to in this, the best of all possible worlds, but this view is neither necessary nor respectful of the way the world works. At its simplest, it is simply the proverb "don't push the river, it flows by itself." Impatience leaves us with no control over our urges. It leaves us in a battle with the inertia of the universe, which has a lot of inertia that even the galaxies can't resist. It is better to take some time to learn which direction the universe wants to take and work with that. Then we have free energy. "Time and I, against any two," as the Spanish say.

### **The First Tasks of Right Intention**

In Right Intention the greatest of our motivational distractions from the path are clustered into three general groups and targeted for correction. The more purely cognitive distractions leading to ignorance and delusion received a similar treatment in Right View. Here we turn to the affective states of feeling and emotion, and, with

longer-term practice, we can even attempt to tune up our longer-term temperaments and dispositions.

### **Freedom from Craving**

*Nekkhamma* is the renunciation of lust and craving, resisting the draw of desire and sensuality. You can see the root of the word in *no-kama*, that is, an abandonment of the pleasure motive. A synonym for *nekkhamma* is *viraga*, fading of passions, detachment, dispassion, no *raga* or rage, letting go. This requires deep, systematic attention (*yoniso-manasikara*) to the unwholesome root of desire, the sense of oneself as perpetually unfulfilled. This is the opposite of and substitution for sense craving or sense passion (*kama-tanha* or *kama-raga*). This renunciation merits a little clarification. We all have needs and necessities, and we are moved to fulfill them by various evolved traits and innate motivations that express themselves in our awareness as feelings and emotions. In addition to these we have wants, some of which are wholesome and lead us to wiser, more skillful living, and some of which are neurotic, or unnecessary to an optimal life, or wholly manufactured and implanted in us by social forces. It's important to remember that Buddha called his path "The Middle Path," one lying between the extremes of self-mortification and sensual gratification. He was not an enemy of pleasure and happiness, and he is frequently seen in the scriptures praising the pleasantness of desirable states, and the happiness of a pleasant abiding. What he worked against was the destructive and self-destructive behaviors that people engage in while in the pursuit of pleasure and happiness, the lust and the craving in particular. We can enjoy, or at least appreciate, just about anything while it is happening and in its passing. It's just a bad idea to get attached to it.

It's fairly easy to imagine the Buddha examining Abraham Maslow's pyramid of needs and agreeing that an optimum way to move through life would be to take these needs systematically, in the order of their priority, set about to meet them at some level of simple sufficiency, and then move on. It is also easy to imagine him not rebuking a student for enjoying a little pleasure or happiness as it comes and goes. These are simply facts of our existence and any wisdom that authentically seeks the facts of our existence will not run and hide from them. Enjoyment is not the problem: craving, clinging and attachment are the problems.

There are many synonyms and cognates for *kama* as it names this category of affective troubles (see glossary), among them: *kamachanda* sensual desire, cravenness; *amisa*, worldly or carnal happiness; *tanha*, desire, craving or thirst; *lobha*, craving, covetousness, thirst, desire, passion, lust, greed, attachment, unskillful desire, self-centered desire for more; *raga*, the rage for more; *kamasava*, taints of sense, addictions to senses, lust, longing; *bhavasava*, taints of being and becoming for the ego, lust for life, existence infatuation; *abhijja kayagantha*, the bondage of craving, greed, covetousness; *issa*, jealousy or envy; *macchariya*, stinginess, avarice, miserliness, selfishness; *adinnadana*, taking what is not given, stealing; *kamesu-micchacara* misconduct in sensual pleasures; and *upadana*, clinging, grasping, holding on or attachment. The renunciation and conquest of craving makes use of equanimity, gratitude, reverence and patience.

### **Freedom from Aversion and Ill-Will**

*Abyapada* is the absence of aversion, ill-will, anger, resentment and animosity; it is the intention of good will, resisting the draw of anger. It is loving-kindness (*metta*), put to use to get the *kamma* moving in the right direction. *Metta*, of course, needs to begin with some self-acceptance and self-love. If you love your neighbor as you love yourself, but then you hate yourself ... . This is the opposite of and substitution for

*vyapada* (or *byapada*), as aversion, ill-will, anger, resentment, irritation, distaste, dislike and animosity. *Vyapada kayagantha* refers to this as a kind of bondage. One of the synonyms used for *byapada* is *dosa*, meaning hatred, aversion, anger, aggression, fear of getting what we don't want or of not getting what we want, avoidance, rejection, a will to be separate, resulting from the unwise contemplation of repulsive objects. Another synonym often encountered is *patigha*, meaning repugnance, aversion, revulsion, repulsion, resentment, resistance; also sensory impact or impingement. This is often felt specifically as a reaction to an intense, offensive or aggressive stimulus, and is the subsequent resentment or grudge, giving it a shade of distinction from *dosa*.

One of the most logical reasons to call upon *Metta* early in a negative emotional reaction is that it helps to restore the benefit of the doubt and a presumption of innocence towards what we perceive to be an offending party. It helps to not take an offense personally while our understanding of the situation is still ripening. Unpleasant emotional reactions usually present themselves as responses to facts rather than to our perceptions, but frequently a perceived offense is only a misunderstanding. Sometimes it is only an honest and thoughtful comment that is tactlessly delivered. Sometimes the offending party is temporarily subject to a hormonally driven irritability. Sometimes the cause is clinical, as with depression, bipolar disorder, autism, or OCD, and the offending party deserves an attempt at compassionate understanding. Sometimes there is a smaller fault involved, like a simple lack of proactive courtesy. The word "slight" is interesting in this context. Being the victim of a social or interpersonal slight does feel more like a "huge" when it involves an undeserved lack of attention or respect, but the word at least reminds us that it might be manageable. Sometimes taking a few seconds to back up and look for these less highly-charged possibilities, all while trying to presume that the other person isn't out to hurt us, can save a good relationship, or at least save ourselves from a bad day.

*Abyapada* also means cooler heads prevailing. We can begin halfway towards defeating these feelings of ill-will by not overreacting to the stimulus or trigger to begin with, which might entail the assumption a noble stance and regarding ill-will as beneath us. Victims are all too ready to welcome such stimuli and triggers and respond as they are supposed to because they believe they cannot help themselves. A defensive strategy, by definition, has us on the defensive and calling on defense mechanisms and cognitive biases, to deny either the realities or our affective reactions to them. Some common favorites here are alcohol and drugs, or extreme behaviors that otherwise alter our neurochemistry. If we avoid having the original sentiment in the first place we avoid the re-resentment as well. The release from aversion and ill-will makes use of compassion, equanimity, loving-kindness, forgiveness and patience.

## **Doing No Harm**

*Avihimsa* is better known as *ahimsa*, its Sanskrit equivalent, thanks to Gandhi's use of the term. This is the intention of harmlessness, of non-violence, resisting the draw to violence, cruelty and harm. *Avihimsa* is central to the Jain religion of India, where it is taken to such extremes that insects are gently brushed away from the path of pedestrian adherents. Buddhism doesn't take it anywhere near this far, and in fact many sects permit the eating of meat, and most will even allow for violence in acts of self-defense. This is the opposite of and substitution for *vhimsa*, doing injury, harmfulness, cruelty, malice, violence. At its worst, *vhimsa* is *panatipata*, the destruction life, the injuring or killing of living beings. *Panatipata veramani* is one of the five moral precepts, being a conscious restraint from doing harm. In its most obvious form, *vhimsa* is *kodha*, anger, fury, or rage, or *upanaha*, resentment, vengefulness, or rancor converted to assertive action, but its roots can be more subliminal, and cruelty, acting out, passive aggression

or just a simpler meanness is often expressed without conscious awareness.

The idea of harmfulness goes beyond doing physical injury to flesh and bone. Harm can be done by words, for which Right Speech is the proper corrective; by indirect action such as theft, for which Right Action is the corrective; and by degrading the social, cultural or natural environment, for which Right Livelihood is the corrective. Harmlessness is developed across the whole range of *sila sampada* or the moral attainments, detailed below in the next three steps of the Eightfold Path. This is one of Buddhism's several expressions of the Golden Rule, since we recognize our own struggles with our own suffering as they reappear in sentient beings everywhere. The conquest of harmfulness makes use of loving-kindness, compassion, forgiveness, reverence and patience.

## Right Speech, Verbal Self-control

With *Samma Vaca* we begin to develop *Sila Sampada*, the three ethical or virtuous attainments comprising Steps Three, Four and Five on the Path. By these practices we manage the effects that our intentions have on the world. Here we are consciously taking charge of our *kamma* and its repercussions. Most of the discussions of Right Speech that are found in the *suttas* concentrate on four general principles, each one being both an abstinence (*veramani*) from a particular way of speaking and a positive exhortation to speak towards a more wholesome effect. While these principles may be enforced as rules of etiquette within the *sangha*, to the Buddhist on the loose they are not regarded as commandments. There is nobody watching or sitting in judgment, not even a law of *kamma*. They are merely prescriptions for verbal behaviors that have shown themselves to be conducive to our well-being and good mental health while generally avoiding the more troublesome consequences of unmindful speech.

### **Musavada Veramani, Avoid Falsehood, Speak True**

*Musavada veramani* avoids falsehood, lying or deceit and speaks truth, reliably and worthy of confidence. Truth, of course, is an unreachable asymptote, and often just a pretentious delusion. True as a verb works better with the real world, but only carpenters, archers and wheelwrights get to use it this way. This is unfortunate because "truing our speech" translates the core meaning of *Samma Vaca* quite well. So, backing off a bit, we want to not knowingly or intentionally lie or deceive. We want to avoid representing more than we are certain about as the truth, without qualifying our further conjecture as guesswork and our filling in of blanks as hypothesis. Partial truths, revealing only the parts that we want to have heard, are the mainstay of our courts with their adversarial system for getting to "justice," so a Buddhist talking an oath to "tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth" might want to consider having a sidebar with the judge. The Buddha himself would sometimes get a little extreme here and cite pranking and kidding around, teasing someone with a fabrication before finally revealing the truth, as false speech and an ethical weakness. Perhaps whether or not this was done in a mean-spirited fashion would count for something, but he does not say so in the *suttas*. The Buddha is not officially known to have had much fun or to have had much of a sense of humor. False speech can be an easy vehicle for the expression and the work of greed, hatred and delusion, and so ruling our speech can deprive these three of some of their most useful tools. And just as important as disarming these three is the creation of climates of trust or trustworthiness in human society, which are many times easier to break down than they are to build up.

Hundreds of millions of people in this world will tell you with a strait face that this earth was created around 6000 years ago by a celestial deity with an image similar to human. They believe they are speaking the truth, and that they have the written word of this deity to prove it. When offered some equally preposterous explanation from somebody else's beliefs they will dismiss this as myth and superstition. But these are not the kind of truths that Buddha wanted his disciples speaking about in the first place. All of the metaphysical stuff was both too grandiose and too premature for someone on the path: the truths that concerned the seeker were all down at the scale of living correctly and simply being true.

Both self-delusion and exaggeration can be big portions of an addict's cognitive, social and verbal worlds. Dialing down all of the whiskey talk, the mouthing off, boasting, alcoholic grandiosity and tall tales to a more modest, more authentic, simpler, humbler reality might be challenging at first, even given what the humiliations of addiction can do to the addict's self-esteem, but there is also something of an element

of relief in giving up the maintenance and herding of these big packs of lies. Like Mark Twain told us, if you tell the truth you don't have to remember anything. Recovery groups not only offer an encouragement to speak the truth: they are also attended by people who have heard most of the lies before. The relative difficulty in telling "unheard-before" lies to such a group might contribute even more to the recovery group's success rate than the actual program that the group practices.

### **Pisunaya Vacaya Veramani, Avoid Slander, Speak to Reconcile**

*Pisunaya vacaya veramani* avoids tale bearing, slander, backbiting, calumny, malicious or divisive talk or speech and speaks to friendship, reconciliation, concord and harmony. The main point of such speech is to drive wedges between people or alienate one person or group from another, but sometimes it's also a misguided attempt to boost one's own public esteem or repute by tearing down the repute of another. And as transparent and pathetic as this may seem, other people and groups cannot always see through it, and so it works to achieve the intended effect and the cycle is perpetuated. Writ large, this also perpetuates xenophobia and war. The outcast becomes a scapegoat, the out-group becomes an enemy and often something less than human and sentient. This only contributes to more suffering and works against enlightenment. The counter-effort engages in diplomacy, arbitration and mediation and the celebration of tolerance and diversity. Here, biodiversity has become a paradigm for creating systems with greater strength and resilience. But as with the building of trust, peace and harmony are much more easily ruptured than repaired until they can grow robust.

### **Pharusaya Vacaya Veramani, Avoid Invective, Speak to Benefit**

*Pharusaya vacaya veramani* avoids harsh, angry, abusive, insulting, impolite, hurtful, sarcastic, or offensive speech and speaks instead to benefit, refinement and courtesy. "He avoids harsh language and abstains from it. He speaks such words as are gentle, soothing to the ear, loving, such words as go to the heart, and are courteous, friendly, and agreeable to many." Usually invective is intended to directly cause the hearer pain, by a second-person bad-mouthing, as slander is done for the third-person listener. There may not be enough said in the *suttas* regarding the more problematic aspects of sweet talk, even though it is still pretty clear that smarminess, mawkishness, fawning and flattery are not what is being recommended here. It would be inconsistent with the rest of Buddhism to assert here that we cannot explicitly disagree with someone, or to point out the error in their thinking. The Buddha himself is quoted in the *suttas* as beginning some of his verbal responses with "Oh, witless man ..." and "Oh, misguided man ..."

The great challenge arises when all concerned would clearly be better off if constructive criticism could be delivered without any of the usual defensiveness, overreaction, antagonism and polarization. A true friend may have even a duty to point out the error of someone's ways. Honesty or candor can often be better for the cultivation of wisdom than sweetness and agreeableness. The challenge of course is in using tact, which is only infrequently a perfected skill. The tact issue also brings up the question: To what extent is a speaker or writer accountable for another's negative misunderstanding or overreaction? To the Buddha he was at least partly so, as long as speech is intentional action.

A young woman has just returned from the beauty parlor with the latest bad idea in feminist hairstyles. Is it really doing her a favor to flatter her and thereby encourage her to continue to look like a man with hormone problems? Does it help the culture for that beautician to stay in business? Who wants to be the one friend who is not lying to

her by calling this new look adorable? Outspokenness, the *Parrhesia* of Diogenes, the original Cynic, has a definite place in a world that sorely needs to evolve into something better. The culture that is just too polite to unlearn its errors, silliness and stupidity will soon become full of meaningless and shallow clutter. All evolution wants selection, and truth is as good as criteria get. At macro scales as well, organizations, governments and corporations will almost certainly run amok if none will speak truth to power. Few will deny that Gandhi did a pretty good job of this with his *Satyagraha*, the practice of holding true in speech, deed and livelihood. Yes, he angered the British empire, but he also got it to leave without going to war. This may be our best example to date of what a middle path can do.

### **Samhappalapa Veramani, Avoid Frivolity, Speak to the Point**

*Samhappalapa veramani* avoids useless, frivolous, pointless, silly, fruitless, senseless, shallow, vain, idle speech, gossip, chatter and foolish babble. "Abandoning idle chatter, he speaks at the right time, what is correct and to the point (*atthavadi*)" (DN 1). Rephrased elsewhere: "One speaks well-spoken words (*subhasitasutta*) at the right time, in accord with facts, what is useful and profitable, gently, with a kind heart" (See MN 27, 38, 51); and "wise words, words to be treasured, words in season" (DN 28). Words should be timely, honest, kind and useful.

The Buddha was more than a little critical or disparaging of most of the usual topics of human conversation, which he called *tiracchanakatha*, low, animal or bestial conversation, a category in which he included "conversation about kings, robbers and ministers of state; armies, alarms and battles; food and drink; clothing, furniture, garlands and scents; relatives; vehicles; villages, towns, cities, the countryside; women and heroes; the gossip of the street and the well; tales of the dead; tales of diversity, the creation of the world and of the sea; talk of whether things exist or not" (AN 10.69). He wasn't much for the small talk. And the kind of conversations that he most supported were fairly limited in number: "There are these ten topics of [proper] conversation. Which ten? Talk on modesty, on contentment, on seclusion, on non-entanglement, on arousing persistence, on virtue, on concentration, on discernment, on release, and on the knowledge and vision of release."

Perhaps if this approach had to be summarized or thumbnailed it could be "mind your own business and don't get distracted."

### **Conflicts Between the Principles**

Conflicts between these four general principles will arise from time to time, as when there is a real need to speak truth, but hurting somebody's feelings in the process may not be avoidable. Easily-remembered tablets of law are notoriously difficult to reconcile with situational ethics: the complex permutations just won't fit on the tablets. The Buddha of course preferred that all four principles be satisfied, and had this to say about that:

"In the case of words that the Tathagata knows to be factual, true, yet unbeneficial, unendearing and disagreeable to others, he does not say them. In the case of words that the Tathagata knows to be unfactual, untrue, unbeneficial, yet endearing and agreeable to others, he does not say them. In the case of words that the Tathagata knows to be factual, true, but unbeneficial, yet endearing and agreeable to others, he does not say them. In the case of words that the Tathagata knows to be factual, true, beneficial, and endearing and agreeable to others, he has a sense of the proper time for saying them. Why is that? Because the Tathagata has sympathy for living beings." *Abhaya Sutta* (MN 58)

We can wonder if this might have accounted for some of the Buddha's long periods of silence. It might be that he just wanted to keep some of the chatter down around the retreat. A rule this strict would certainly keep talk to a minimum, but if a whole community took up a simple guideline of speaking from the heart to the point we might soon learn to listen more carefully. We might also learn how to listen with the right words, instead of being so eager to re-translate what is being heard.

Still, it is difficult to regard letting errors go uncorrected as a service to the one in error, or to higher purposes of awakening and the elimination of suffering. At the same time, our attempts to rectify errors in others, particularly in highly charged matters of personal evaluative beliefs that reflexively call up defensive strategies when threatened, will often make matters worse and further cement the errors into place. And now trickery, and maybe even subtlety, is regarded as at least potentially wrong. In the end, such conundrums are just one more reason that we seek wisdom first. Wisdom is so much better suited than precepts to those situational ethical questions.

### **Sophistry and Argumentativeness**

In the Buddha's day, the Vedas and other traditions were a big deal, and there was already a great lot of philosophical and metaphysical wrangling between rival teachers and competing schools of thought. Fishing for seekers appears to be yet another of the world's oldest professions, and the disciples of the Buddha who developed and passed down the *suttas* were among those who were ever ready to compare their own teacher with others. But they particularly liked to recount his words when he was observing two other doctrines and their zealots in mid-wrangle:

"You don't understand this doctrine and discipline. I am the one who understands this doctrine and discipline." "How can you understand this doctrine and discipline?" "You're practicing the wrong way. I'm practicing the right way." "I'm being consistent. You're inconsistent." "What should have been said first you said last, what should have been said last you said first." "What you took so long to think out has been confuted." "Your doctrine has been refuted. You're defeated. Go, try to save your doctrine, or disentangle yourself now if you can." The recluse Gotama abstains from such wrangling argumentation." (*Brahmajala Sutta*, DN1).

In modern times, the latest of sophistry's attacks is on the whole idea of meaning itself, under banners like post-modernism and deconstruction. Meaning cannot be shared because it changes as it moves, so the intent of an author to convey a meaning is meaningless in itself and we are simply stuck with whatever we can make of the words. But it may in fact be most true of these particular thinkers that there was not much meaning there to begin with. Nietzsche offered the suggestion that what drives the endless obfuscation was an effort to muddle the waters to make them seem deep. In modern terms it has been expressed as "baffling with bullshit." It's like solitaire to the death for two or more.

### **The Power of the Word**

The Buddha became one of the first teachers to explicitly acknowledge the power of words, written or spoken, in doctrine and in dogma, for good or for ill. Today of course we see so much damage done in the quoting of religious scripture to justify atrocities, or in the sweeping panoramic shots taken at one of Hitler's rallies. And we see the benefits done in surveying thousands of years of accumulated human wisdom, or in the diplomatic mediation that can stop a war in mid-carnage. And it all starts with the running monologues and dialogues that we hold in our own heads. Our words shape our thoughts, our thoughts shape our mental states, and our mental states shape our lives. When we rule our words we gain some new footholds, power and control, early

in this process. There is a logic to the more innocent, pragmatic and vital lies that we tell ourselves to get by in the everyday world. While the Buddha would most likely still disparage most of these, he might take a gentler approach to their eradication and simply advise that mindfulness be applied to watch them in their telling. By mindfulness we see where the words come from and what they are worth. Above all, we take a more honest look at long-term outcomes.

We are referring here to both speech to others, verbal and written, and to the lies, slander, invective and nonsense that we tell to ourselves. In the beginning, learning to true our speech to others is practice for the more difficult art of truing our speech to ourselves. The point of correcting our internal monologues and dialogues is not to save our souls: it's to stop propagating the errors where the error and the propagation begins, in thoughts that lead to actions.

With respect to recovery, Right Speech would suggest that we begin with an honest and candid admission of the dimensions of the problems that we have to solve. We do this first to ourselves and then gradually to others. I say gradually because we learn as we go and communication that isn't small talk is often uncomfortable to others. But it's important that what needs to be said gets said and this means tact, and subtlety. It isn't necessary to tell anybody other than yourself that you're beginning to correct addictive patterns of behavior, but it may solicit some help from friends to know that you are working on your issues, and in some cases it will tell you which of your friends are not really your friends and permit you to cut some bad influences loose. Following our admissions we may also find confessions and/or apologies to be in order. Both admissions and confessions are central to the 12-Step approaches to recovery and more will be said on those in the first Appendix, which reviews the steps from one of many possible Theravada Buddhist points of view.

## Right Action, Behavioral Self-control

A fool is characterized by his actions; a wise man is characterized by his actions.  
(MN 33)

### Good Karma

*Samma Kammanta*, Right Action, is behaving yourself. It recognizes that all intentional actions or doings (*kamma*) have their consequences. The bad ones may be escaped in advance by not doing inappropriate acts. *Kammanta* is the same root word as *kamma*, which is better-known as Karma. *Samma* has a wide range of meanings, including simply good, so in a linguistically respectable way, Right Action could also be translated "Good Karma." *Samma* also means "making the most of," so here is the practice of optimizing the consequences of our intentional actions. While Right Action is usually understood as concentrating on several Precepts, instructions on types of behavior to avoid performing, another series of abstentions (*veramani*) like we found in Right Speech, the name can also imply doing or practicing the right thing positively and proactively.

### Natural, Ingrained Goodness

The Buddha had the idea that we humans are basically good or moral. We have a normal, natural, genuine way of knowing right from wrong called natural virtue (*pakati-sila*), and sometimes rendered "without-crisis morality." Under normal circumstances we behave ourselves reasonably well. It's when our complications lead into confusion and crisis that we increasingly stray, often increasing the confusion and exacerbating the crisis and so engaging in vicious cycles. In part we owe this natural virtue to two of eleven "wholesome mental factors" (*kusala cetasikas*), also found among the seven attributes of the virtuous (*satta saddhammas*). The first is *Hiri*, an innate sense of shame and disgust with wrong or evil that seeks to maintain a sense of personal dignity and self-respect. This is internal and without regard to external consequences. It is our conscience and our conscientiousness, illumined by consciousness or mindfulness. The second is *Otappa*, an ethical wariness, fear of wrongdoing or moral dread that seeks to maintain discretion, prudence and decorum and avoid the reproach of others. This is consideration or concern that arises out of our observations of how the world responds to our behavior. Opposite to *Hiri* and *Otappa* are *Ahiraika* and *Anottappa*, which are found among the Ten Defilements.

Human social sciences are slowly emerging from a long, embarrassing phase wherein it was believed that, while the animals were behaviorally informed primarily by instinct, humans ran by a different set of rules, due to us being made in god's image. We were more like blank slates and the bulk of our behavior was shaped and in large part determined by what our various cultures had inscribed or scribbled thereon. Often conjoined with equally ignorant ideas of cultural relativity, this human exceptionalism has long protected us from learning many of the truths of the world we live in. The evolutionary sciences, including evolutionary psychology and darwinian medicine, are slowly stripping away this nonsense to expose a human nature that is looking increasingly like that of many of the other sentient beings with which we share the planet, most particularly the birds and mammals and especially our fellow primates. We have, as it were, an ingrained morality that we can move with or against. We have a way of being that is natural to us. There is a human Dao.

Our basic natural morality provides us with a rough approximation of how best to get along in our social environment. It's by no means a tablet of rules or laws, and it still leaves us with much learning to do, but it sets us up with something akin to what Kevin

Horrigan calls "moral taste buds," a readiness to sense experience along several identifiable axes such as care and compassion, or fairness and justice, or liberty and oppression, or loyalty and betrayal, or authority and subversion, or sanctity and degradation. We seem born to recognize and categorize behaviors according to a number of universal types, as though these were set up as modules in the brain. As we grow up, certain social roles become reliably associated with certain types of behavior: mother, thief, shaman, trickster, helper, hero, *puer*, coward, ally, stranger, etc. Our perceptions of these roles seem to carry natural affective loads urging us to move towards or away from them. By this relatively simple form of sorting we develop approximately universal archetypes for behavioral patterns, our good and bad examples of how to behave.

This ultimately leads us straight into what David Hume termed the "is-ought problem." In this case, nature has given us a moral foundation, with neurological substrates, that is a fact of life, and evolution has preserved it for having served our needs. Does this mean it is necessarily right? That question goes too far of course, but it will keep us from saying with any certainty that we have now grounded our new behavioral values in the scientific facts, which is probably a good thing following our experience with religious certainty. Our natural human virtue is only a starting point. We build from there. But it begins with something that we were "born to be" and if we cannot accept that as a starting point then we begin with a delusion. When we begin with what we are given, and if we bravely look around us at what "behaving like animals" truly means, we note that we might just be genetically programmed for empathy, reciprocity, affection, friendship, and fairness. And a readiness to bite evildoers.

It can probably be safely said that the Buddha regarded wrong as that which caused or perpetuated the suffering of sentient beings. He did not stop with human beings, nor did he stop with the sentient beings in the present: he explicitly expressed his care and compassion for the future generations several times in the suttas. He appealed to the "better angels of our nature." But we need to grow there. Given that we can use criteria like suffering to distinguish wholesome from unwholesome, and apply them to all sentient beings across cultures and longer spans of time, we can assert our ability to avoid moral relativism and its toxic notion that there are no right answers. We have only to learn our lesson from religion with its tablets of law and quit carving our answers in stone.

### **Morals and Ethics**

Irrigators regulate the waters, fletchers straighten arrow shafts, carpenters shape wood, and the good control themselves. (*Dhammapada* 145)

It might be useful here to again distinguish morals from ethics. We can let morals stand as a subset of the broader *mores*, the conventions of a community, and see these as developing out of our needs to get along and find our places socially, supported to an extent by biological evolution. Thus they are closely tied to our "natural virtue" or *pakati-sila*. But they are not fundamentally tied to conscious and thoughtful reflection and analysis, and in fact our pressures to conformity and getting along can quickly turn into getting swept along with the momentum of the crowd, with tragic and horrifying results, particularly since our civilization has so far outgrown the sort of social environments to which evolution has adapted us. Philip Zimbardo's "Lucifer Effect" illuminates this problem further, if pondering "*Ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Fuhrer*" fails to enlighten. So morality gets us started with modules in the brain and the archetypes developing out of these modules and out of our social experience. Ethics, regarded here as a branch of philosophy, implies the next steps: inquiry, analysis, evaluation and

decision. Ethics generally tries to systematize mental concepts of right and wrong and prescribe behavior according to rules, whether the rules are generalized precepts or situational guidelines. The word ethics comes from the Greek *ethos*, meaning character. When it manages to detach itself from what we have evolved to be, as from the body with its drives and feelings, it can set up some very deep conflicts and schisms in its practitioners. Such was St. Augustine's conflict with Brother Ass.

Ethical wisdom in Buddhism is judgmental. It will say: "this is unwise, unwholesome, unskillful, unworthy." But it does not say this by calling rules down from Heaven or by insisting we follow some teacher's decree as there is no moral authority in Dhamma-Vinaya, not even the Buddha. We develop the rules by observing the consequences of our behaving in specific ways. An act is unworthy if it impedes our progress towards the end of suffering. And this judgment takes the whole being into account, from the glandular secretions on up.

### **The Precepts for the Laity**

*Sila*, as ethical practice or virtue, provides an objective guide, a way to gauge behavior outside of our subjective judgment, although not entirely outside our formidable powers of rationalization and denial. It is in the nature of prescriptive approaches to start with the proscriptive, and suggest that not doing the wrong thing is the first part of doing the right thing, or, in order to start making things better you first have to stop making things worse. Dhamma-Vinaya has not been an exception. And in theory, not doing something saves money and energy, so it's a cheaper way to feel better, with fewer pesky karmic costs. The real question here is: why would we need religious conviction to behave morally? There is certainly an ill-examined, population-wide, majority opinion that the two are somehow entangled, one that somehow survives a lot of evidence to suggest that religion can just as often and easily promote evil as the good. I personally think the entanglement is moronic and needs to be outgrown, and that we can at last begin to build a consensual ethic independently of any religious belief. A consensual ethic will likely point to a scientifically verifiable one, but not because of some virtue that inheres in democracy. Rather, it will evolve out of our human universals. Dhamma-Vinaya, at least in its Theravada version, should not have been called a religion in the first place. It is more accurately a highly articulated psychology. In this spirit, the precepts should not be viewed in the same light as the Ten Commandments. Rather than "Thou shalt not ..." try "You're likely to be much better off not ...". It's not a sin to fail and you won't be punished, but it's likely to be a mistake and there will most likely be consequences. There are several versions or enumerations of the Precepts, but the most commonly encountered version lists Five Abstentions (*Veramani*), called the *Panca Silani*:

1) *Panatipata veramani* is the restraint from injuring or killing living, sentient creatures. Positively, it is being desirous of the welfare of all sentient beings or creatures (*pani* or *satta*). This is closely related to the virtue of harmlessness (*avihimsa*). There are several much-explored dimensions to this. Some sects will take this in the direction of the Jains and become vegan or vegetarian, while Buddha himself allowed his disciples to eat meat that came from animals not butchered specifically to feed them. For Buddhists, life begins at conception, so abortion may be an issue. We can at least say that since abortion is the most traumatic of all of the forms of birth control, then much-improved and more universal contraception practices are a very good thing. Suicide is discouraged on the grounds that there is no escape, but at MN 144 there is a discussion of an *arahant* or saint "using the knife blamelessly." Dhamma-Vinaya is not really homocentric: all of the sentient beings are being nudged towards awakening, although in Theravada this is not necessarily a

destiny and not the destination of all sentient beings as it is in Mahayana. We can suppose that the parasites may be targeted for "early release," for their mindless contributions to the general suffering, while symbiotes would be encouraged. There is a whole new branch of zoology that is waiting to be created, and named, that will explore interspecies relationships that go beyond simple commensalism into play, affection and friendship. This could be a good Buddhist career. At bottom, any urge to injure or kill can be driven out by the *Brahmaviharas*: *metta*, *karuna*, *mudita* and *upekkha*, together with the four I've made bold to add, *khama*, *katannuta*, *garava* and *khanti*, already discussed under Right Intention.

2) *Adinnadana veramani* is the restraint from taking what is not given, taking anything by force, fraud or theft. Positively, any such urges may be pushed aside by our cultivating gratitude, by senses of satisfaction and generosity. There are, of course, gray areas here: one classic example is Jean Valjean stealing a loaf of bread for his starving sister and her family. I stole a valuable book once in an act that I justified to myself by using it to help dozens of people, and I don't feel any guilt about it to this day. But I doubt that anybody ever discovered that it was missing. Property is an interesting concept that is not a human universal. But the usefulness of trust is, and that is what this precept is ultimately supposed to secure.

3) *Kamesu micchacara veramani* is the restraint from misconduct in sensual pleasures. Generally this refers to any craving of sensation that leads to loss of equilibrium. Elsewhere it is specified primarily as sexual misconduct, ignoble practice or unchastity (*abrahmacariya*) which for the laity refers to rape and relations with women who are married, betrothed or have not yet come of age. The sexual initiation of young boys by older women isn't mentioned, so I think we're still good there.

4) *Musavada veramani* is restraint from lying, deceit, or the speaking of falsehood. This is one of the five precepts but it is not given as one of the elements of *Samma Kammanta* because it was already presented as an element of *Samma Vaca*.

5) *Surameraya-majja-pamadatthana veramani* is restraint from using wine, liquor or intoxicants\* which result in heedlessness or negligence (*pamada*) of the mind or emotions. \* Note what happens if we punctuate this with a comma after intoxicants: we remove the possibility that there are intoxicants that do not cause heedlessness and negligence. This is how the Fifth Precept is often presented by those with a recovery agenda. Obviously the fifth precept is seized upon by nearly all programs linking Buddhism and recovery. The essence of the message is clear enough: stop doing the behaviors that compromise your heedfulness and mindfulness. Given what we now know of the neurochemistry of addiction, we can also classify a variety of addictive behaviors as intoxicants, even where they involve no ingestion of substances, activities that get us doped up on dopamine or oxytocin, for instance.

I would submit that there are intoxicants, or at least experiences with intoxicants, which do in fact contribute to heedfulness and mindfulness, and not just coffee and tea either. Here I am speaking of entheogens or psychedelics, and with the assumption that these are being taken with an informed, responsible and mature attitude. In a *Tricycle* article entitled "Recovery and the Fifth Precept" ([see](#)) its author Don Lattin, wonders: "whether drug-induced feelings of wonder, awe, empathy, and interconnectedness are authentic religious experiences. My answer is that while the experiences may be authentic, the real issue is what we do with them. Do the experiences change the way we live our lives? Do they make us more aware and compassionate human beings? Looking back on my own history, I'd have to say that a few psychedelic drug experiences back in the day did change the way I think about the world and live my life. They did make me a better person. But I can't say the same thing about a few decades of experiences with other drugs, including alcohol." As offered, and with

specific regard to recovery, a large part of this effect is the gift of *samvega*, an unflinching glimpse into the two worlds of what has been and what could be. In the latter is a rekindling of a sense of the sacred. Bill Wilson, of AA fame, began taking LSD in 1956 and credited LSD's success to ego reduction instead of reframing. Wilson even took first preliminary steps towards working regular special meetings with LSD into the AA program, but this proved a little too much for the republic.

Despite all the propaganda to the contrary, I do think that for brave and responsible souls, the hands-down most effective first step in a cure for addiction is the careful use of entheogens, especially within the context of accepted and sometimes even legal spiritual disciplines, such as peyote within the Native American Church, ayahuasca (*hoasca* or *daime*) in the syncretic churches of South America, ibogaine in the Bwiti rituals of Africa, psilocybes and toad venom globally, and even the temporarily-illegal administration of LSD-25 by clinical psychiatrists. Fortunately, some doors seem to be opening up again for the resumption of serious, peer-reviewed scientific research into the psychiatric uses of these substances. Out of ignorance, arrogance and fear, repressive governments have been allowed to obstruct research into these methods, partly to insure that they can continue to call any success stories "merely anecdotal," but these walls seem to be cracking. The [MAPS](#) and the [Vaults of Erowid](#) websites are currently the two best internet resources for ongoing progress reports on these scientific fronts. Unfortunately, addiction sufferers must still find their own way to these largely illegal medicines. Or to their *samvega* by alternate routes.

The ethical discipline continues with the adoption of the Ten Precepts (*dasa-sila*), ten aversions to or abstentions from further unwholesome behavioral missteps (*veramani-sikkhapadam samadiyami*). But the ten includes the remaining three abstentions already presented for Samma Vaca: *pisunaya vacaya veramani*, avoiding slander and speaking to reconcile; *pharusaya vacaya veramani*, avoiding invective and speaking to benefit; and *samphappalapa veramani*, avoiding frivolity and speaking to the point. So for our purposes here on this step of the path, we have three remaining precepts, all restatements of the need to eradicate the three unwholesome roots (*lobha*, *dosa* and *moha*) discussed at the Second Noble Truth of Suffering:

*Abhijjhaya veramani* is restraint from actions born of covetousness, envy or unrighteous greed. *Abhijjhaya* has synonyms at *lobha*, *vaga*, *kamaraga*, and *kamacchando*.

*Ayapada veramani* is restraint from actions born of aversion, ill-will, animosity, malice, anger, hatred, malevolence, hostility, resistance, irritation. *Vyapada* has synonyms at *dosa*, *patigha*, *pratigha*, *dvesha* and others.

*Micchaditthiya veramani* is restraint from actions born of wrong views, misbelief or misunderstanding. *Micchaditthiya* has synonyms at *moha*, *ditthi*, *ditthasava*, and *avijja*.

### **The Precepts for Monks and Nuns**

Although this is probably not immediately relevant to any recovery process, we might at least mention that a few more general precepts are adopted by Buddhist monks or nuns (*bhikkus* or *bhikkunis*, respectively).

The Third Precept, *kamesu micchacara veramani*, the restraint from sensual misconduct, is reinterpreted in a much stricter sense here and followers are enjoined from any sexual activity whatsoever, as well as pleasure seeking in general. Further, within the context of the explicit social contracts of monastic life, the consequences of violating this precept can be as severe as banishment for life.

Further abstentions are from solid food after noon (*vikala-bhojana*); and a litany of various sensual entertainments (*nacca-gita-vadita-visuka-dassana*); various bodily decorations (*mala-gandha-vilepana-dharana-mandana-vibhusana-thana*); high and

luxurious beds (*ucca-sayana-maha-sayana*); and accepting alms of gold and silver (*jatarupa-rajata-patiggahana*).

The codes of conduct for monastic life don't end here. One third of the Buddhist scriptures found in the *Tipitaka* or Pali Canon comprise the monastic rules for *bhikkhus* and *bhikkhunis*. This section is known as the *Vinaya Pitaka*. Followers have counted 227 major rules for monks and 311 for nuns, nearly rivaling the *Tanach* (Old Testament) of Judaism in scope. Conventions of etiquette, political organization, practices of confession, procedures for conflict resolution, administration of justice: all find their articulation here.

### **Positive Ethics and Recovery**

When you choose an action whose consequences you can foresee you are also choosing the consequences, and you accept that fact.

(*Dark Buddhism*, p. 124)

Whether proscriptive or proactive, the word *sila* means moral discipline or virtuous conduct, with the connotations of practice and habit. To the extent that *sila* requires initial concentration and effort, beginning with withdrawal in the case of addiction, it is also initial training in Right Mindfulness (*Samma Sati*) and Right Concentration (*Samma Samadhi*). And to the extent that it requires the maintenance of both energy and attitude it is also training in Right Effort (*Samma Vayama*). Except where the meddlers and democratic socialism have prevailed and "everything not forbidden is compulsory," it is easier to specify what not to do than what to do. Once we have our don'ts in place and have plugged some of our major energy leaks it will behoove us to find something to do with the rest of our lives and our newly rediscovered surplus of *elan vital* and *brio*, hopefully some useful activity beyond attending regular 12-Step meetings for life. In this regard, it is fortunate that most addicts deserving of the name have left at least some damage in their *kammic* wake that may now be possible to repair. The making of amends, which holds a prominent place in the 12-Step programs, can give us some great starter projects, and it makes a nice addition to the "admission, confession and apology" that we saw in *Samma Vaca*. The 4th step of the 12-Step programs calls for a "searching and fearless moral inventory" and this too can provide a good punch list for the projects ahead. Where there is damage done that cannot be directly repaired there is always reparation or atonement in kind, such as an act of generosity to atone for a theft. Nobody is saying that this works because of some cosmic plenum of *kammic* justice, or even that it works at all: only that accountability can be practiced, and to some extent it might be monitored by some form of accounting, just to keep us honest and our efforts proportionate.

Our addiction itself may or may not have been a failure of morals or a defect of character, although certainly a deterioration of our values can easily lead to a weakening of our character, and the way out will require the adoption of healthier values and the strengthening of our character. Sometimes a good, or sensitive, or bright, or otherwise promising human being can get so discouraged by repeated disappointments with human society and certain self-destructive aspects of human civilization that they just give up and start sinking. But if, after learning what they can of what suffering has to teach, they cannot find the strength to pick themselves up and go on, then it will have to be someone more fit to carry our evolution forward. We have to live and learn, and turn our errors into life lessons. The errors themselves are not the failures. A refusal to learn is a failure: to repeatedly and willfully ignore good information is ignorance at its root.

Liberty is a teacher. Libertarianism is potentially a teacher as well. A lot of the people who would champion their liberties and rights over duties and the rights of others have

missed the point entirely about how liberty works: it's the ultimate teacher of duty. In the exercise of my rights I learn that they end where yours are compromised, and we learn that we require the pact of mutual respect for reciprocal rights for the system to keep working. Importantly, we need the exercise of our liberties in order to discover what their limits are. And equally important is that we not be prevented from experiencing the due consequences of our actions. Parents may have a duty to guard their children against mortal danger, but it's also important to let the child touch the fire or stick his finger in the fan to really learn what "hot" and "owie" mean. Governments that shield their adults from the consequences of the free exercise of liberty simply fail to understand the whole point of liberty.

Looking forward next, instead of back, we have to look for guidance within ourselves, to take the place of the bait and the allurements we have until recently been following. Hopefully we have now learned something about our inferior self-leadership and won't get taken in by some new movement or fad. In the 3,000-year-old original portion of the Chinese *Book of Changes* there is a short phrase, yǒu fú, that is used 23 times. Yǒu is simply the verb to be, or hold, or have, fú denotes truth, sincerity and confidence. For some reason this simple phrase has quite bedeviled western translators and its straightforward meaning has passed right over the heads of respected scholars and diviners alike: Be True. In effect it has the same literal and etymological meaning as Gandhi's *Sataygraha*. Perhaps the difficulty in arriving at this comes from the fact that the *Book of Changes* does not once explain what "true" is. But, in fact, that is the whole point. Deep down in our original nature we already know what being true means and what it asks of us, and this may be why we avoid it. We just need to stop lying to ourselves and others. Archers, carpenters and wheelwrights use the word true as a verb: to bring something into a correct, upright or balanced state. In these three contexts, true is devoid of any and all of the moralistic, philosophical or metaphysical overtones and simply means doing something correctly. The proper path could be our default path if we could only recover the genuine in our nature and learn to hold true to this, even in times of confusion and stress. In Dhamma-Vinaya this is being informed by *Hiri* and *Otappa*, by our conscience and by what we have learned of consequences.

We can take our directive to Be True in two directions. We can live for ourselves and for our own personal evolution or we can serve a higher purpose. No stigma is being attached here to living for ourselves, or being self-ish. Any bad reputation that selfishness has really comes from doing it poorly. Someone who is truly optimizing their life is very likely also working on the ethical problem of suffering. They will probably have meaningful friendships and be taking great care about what enemies they are making. Someone who is selfish in this way has nothing to prevent him from being charitable or altruistic. In the other direction, serving a higher purpose is living for something greater than we are, something longer lasting, farther reaching, more sustainable. It may not in fact be as rewarding as living for ourselves, and a lifetime of dedication and hard work might even go completely unrecognized and unrewarded. This can be a painful discovery or a rude awakening for someone who is expecting the cosmos or society to find ways to reward them or to celebrate their efforts, but this is also a useful lesson that higher purpose is not about you and it may even have nothing whatsoever to do with you. Both of these offer a life of living forward and plenty of incentive to practice Right Action. And both are leagues beyond living aimlessly and desperately.

## Right Livelihood

*Samma Ajiva*, Right Livelihood or Occupation also has its proscriptive and proactive sides. First, it abandons ways of living which bring harm and suffering to ourselves and other sentient beings, and then it adopts ways of living which will further our personal evolution and our higher purposes. There are also two sides to Right Livelihood along a different axis: at it's most literal level it refers to our occupation, the means by which we acquire the wherewithal, usually money, to meet our physical needs; and at it's most comprehensive level it refers to our Work in the highest sense, how we develop character and dignity, how we fulfill our human potential by meeting our broader range of needs, how we live a noble life and make the world a better place. To the Hermetic alchemists of the west, the Great Work was the transformation of humankind. To Eliphas Levi: "the Great Work is, before all things, the creation of man by himself, that is to say, the full and entire conquest of his faculties and his future." Nietzsche, of course, took this another step forward in claiming "Man is something to be surpassed." In Buddhist terms, this Work is the cultivation of wholesomeness and skillful living. In Theravada Buddhism particularly, studying and learning go nowhere when they find no way into practice and our everyday lives. In general this also pervades the rest of Buddhism. The *Dhammapada*, a Mahayana text says: "Much though he recites the sacred texts, but acts not accordingly, that heedless man is like a cowherd who only counts the cows of others: he does not partake of the blessings of the holy life." (D19). The talk must be walked.

As with the virtuous practices (*sila*) of Right Speech and Action, this is not simply moralizing. Right Livelihood will free the disciple from the distraction, remorse, regret, misgivings, guilt and shame, from the inferior *kamma*, from the consequences or ripenings (*vipaka*) or fruit (*phala*) of unwholesome action.

### Five Unwholesome Occupations

The most familiar of the teachings on the subject of Right Livelihood runs thus: "These are the five types of business that a lay follower should not engage in" (AN 5.177):

- 1) *Satthavanijja*, trafficking in weapons or lethal arms;
- 2) *Sattavanijja*, trafficking in people, slaves, prostitutes and children;
- 3) *Mamsavanijja*, trafficking in flesh, butchery, and animals for slaughter;
- 4) *Majjavanijja*, trafficking in intoxicants (drinks and drugs); and
- 5) *Visavinijja*, trafficking in poisons or toxic products.

These five are all straightforward enough to require little elaboration. Today we know things about the human condition and its future that were likely not foreseeable twenty-five centuries ago. Civilization has brought new problems and occupations into our lives and even simple common sense could expand the list quite a bit. We might now, for instance, add advertising to the list, at least to the extent that it creates artificial wants and dissatisfactions that it then turns into artificial needs in order to sell products to the newly insecure. And we can also include those occupations that overexploit the environment, extinguish species, pollute the commons and lay whole ecosystems to waste.

While the Buddhist monks and nuns live pretty simple lives, they too will find themselves needing to gather food, clothing, money and other wherewithal. In the *Majimha Nikaya*, Sutta 117, and in the *Vsm* I:61-65, five more forms of wrong livelihood by deceit (*kuhanadi micchajiva*) are identified:

1) *Kuhana*, deceit, scheming, trickery, fraud, especially by pretending to work wonders;

2) *Lapana*, flattery, talking to please donors with a view to acquiring gain, honor and renown;

3) *Nemittikata*, innuendo, hinting, semblances, inviting others to make offerings by giving all kinds of hints (as at supernatural rewards);

4) *Nippesikata*, belittling, disparaging, backbiting, harassing in order to induce offerings; and

5) *Labhena labhau nijiginsabata*, offering enticements of getting goods with goods, gain from invested money.

Monks are also enjoined from using the base arts of reading signs and omens (*tiracchana vikka micchajiva virati*).

There are legitimate half-measures to Right Livelihood, for people on the path to liberation but not yet ready for the renunciate's life. A great deal of the progress that we are making towards enlightenment and the elimination of suffering might still be made by the householder with property and a family to care for. In the *Vyagghapajja Sutta* (AN 8.54), economic stability and well-being come to the householder by way of:

1) *Utthana sampada*, the production of wealth by skilled and earnest endeavor;

2) *Arakkha sampada*, the protection, wise investment and savings of these earnings; and

3) *Samajivikata*, living within one's means, or balanced livelihood. This of course is a big one in a culture with so little restraint as ours.

In the *Anana Sutta* (AN 4.62) the householder or layman might help himself to four kinds of happiness (*sukha*) or satisfactoriness without straying from the path:

1) *Atthi-sukha*, the happiness of ownership, economic security, sufficient means, wealth righteously gained by work and zeal;

2) *Bhoga-sukha*, the happiness of enjoyment, from wise and economical expenditure of lawful wealth, especially in funding meritorious deeds;

3) *Anana-sukha*, the happiness of debtlessness, of solvency, of not owing others, freedom from usury and the threat of repossession; and

4) *Anavajja-sukkha*, the happiness of blamelessness and harmlessness in body, speech and mind.

There may be a misconception about Buddhism suggesting that we are to shun beauty and other finer things of life, renouncing all but simplicity and plainness. There is a point of view from which the main purpose of gathering wealth is gaining control over what you have to see and hear, particularly out of the windows of your own home, together with gaining control of what others see of you. Much wealth is spent on this pair. It is certainly true of Dhamma-Vinaya that we are encouraged to see past and through all of the "trappings" of glamor and culture. But when we do see past this it is often the case that what we see is more beauty, and of a deeper, more authentic kind. There is a lot of beauty that we overlook or dismiss just because we overlay a film of plainness on it, beauty that we only glimpse rarely in those special moments when the ordinariness seems to rub off. There is beauty that we will take for granted only because we have "been here and done that", or because we have now learned a once-wonderful thing's name or category. Sometimes we will simply but perversely refuse to adopt the point of view needed to see it. And there is beauty that is available only to giant squids because only they have the giant squid eyeballs that are needed to see it. The world also has music both above and below the range of our hearing. Because so many of us are out to find only the most glamorous beauty, the most pleasing surfaces, most of us miss the more interesting big picture. A simple life of just adequate

prosperity frees us to renew our way of seeing, to find the things we overlook. And importantly, entering into this richer world does not require selling ourselves into slavery.

### **Compassion for Future Generations**

It is central to Buddhist philosophy that the future is the consequence or the *kamma* of the past and the present. There is a continuity in the journeying forward (*samsara*) that goes beyond genetics and the physics of cause and effect. The people waking up in the years to come with our memories, and with what we have passed down of our evolved sentience, will have us to either thank or curse for their conditions. Cultures with philosophical traditions of either rebirth or reincarnation have a head start towards this understanding, a more familiar sense of connectedness to future generations. If the world is worse the next time around it is so because of our human greed, ill-will and shortsightedness (*lobha*, *dosa*, and *moha*). Others have managed to develop an ethic towards our legacy in other ways. The Native Americans developed an ethical tenet to act with regard, remembrance and respect for the seventh generation down the line from ours. The cultures that practiced ancestor worship had a subtler message hidden between the lines of their ritual scripts: if you wanted to be honored or revered in this way, you would make an effort to become worthy ancestors yourselves.

The Buddha voiced his concern for future generations in a number of places. In some his first concern was with the propagation of inferior *dharmas*, ideas or doctrines, and in others with the quality of life that we are leaving to the unborn. We have a responsibility to the natural world as stewards for the simple reason that there is nobody else that is able to take responsibility for the damage we are doing. It is our job because it is our mess and at best we can only avoid the consequences temporarily. The exhaustion of natural resources, the extinction of species, pollution, even the loss of natural beauty are increasingly pressing the more perceptive among us to develop consensual environmental and social ethics that can stand independently of divisive religious and cultural factions.

To a much greater extent than in Buddha's day, the human being is a parasite on this world, and yet the majority of human beings alive still will not or cannot admit that overpopulation and overconsumption are serious problems. I once tried to get the board of directors of a statewide environmental group to publicly acknowledge human overpopulation as an environmental problem. They refused to touch the issue for political reasons. I left the group in disgust. We have cooked up our terminology to support our denial, so that now something that is either "green" or "environmentally friendly" is only ten percent less damaging than the business-as-usual thing it seeks to replace. We don't look at real costs, life-cycle costs or net values. We don't look at embedded materials, energy or nutrients, the real costs of manufacturing products. Most of the people in government seem incapable of seeing anything beyond the next budget or election year. And the single most abused term in the English language today is the word "sustainable." To the U.S. Forest Service, a "sustainable harvest" doesn't mean a level that can be continued in perpetuity, it means "a non-diminishing flow of commodity outputs." Then there is "sustainable petrochemistry" that ignores the end of oil to concentrate on the steep costs of the next congressional election and the costly purchase of new congressmen. The U.S. "national debt" is another example of deceitful language. It doesn't include any of those "unfunded liabilities" like the commitments to Social Security, Medicare, veterans benefits or pensions, the sum of which dwarfs what is officially called the debt. This may be taken as a very general reflection of the human capacity for denial in matters of livelihood: most of us are spoiled children, borrowing with no thought of paying back the debt. One supposes that there are

architects who will set their foundations on wishful thinking, but they build nothing for future generations.

### **Simple Living**

A bird, wherever it goes, flies with its wings as its only burden. (MN 51)

Waking up in such a world as our species is making, really waking up, is problematic to somebody with a conscience, who cannot simply "go with the flow." And it's particularly problematic to a Buddhist who cannot submit to anger and outrage any more than they can submit to ignorance and denial. This will discourage many from waking up at all. Of all of the things that I invited to drive me to drink, the powerless outrage at my species' unspeakably dangerous and ignorant behavior topped the list. I seized on Sebastien Chamfort's words, "Whoever is not a misanthrope at forty years can never have loved mankind." And I am still much more embarrassed than proud to be a human. The best I could do was to calm down eventually, sober and wake up, and continue to live the simplest, most harmless, smallest-footprint life that I could manage to live. And write furiously, and publish the work for free. It was easy to adopt Dave Foreman's prescription, used by Earth First: "... do something. Pay your rent for the privilege of living on this beautiful, blue-green, living Earth." And this story from Loren Eiseley helped a little, too:

A small boy was running up and down the beach, feverishly hurling starfish, deposited by the tide, back into the water before they died. An old man approached him and skeptically asked, "Do you honestly think your work will make a difference?" The boy looked at him with sparking eyes, held up a starfish and said, "It makes a difference to this one!" and threw the starfish back into the sea.

There are tradeoffs to the benefits of simple living. I get experiences instead of stuff. I'm spared a lot of pressure, stress and fatigue. But I can't get a credit card since I haven't owed anybody any money in forty years. There are no waiting lines for potential lovers or mates wanting to share in my wealth. The nice things I own will fit in just a few boxes, except for a decent library, compiled just in time for books to become obsolete and the eyesight to start failing. What I have had, that some people work all of their lives to get and never do, is forty hours a week to spend in any way that I wish. These aren't regular hours either, but cubic hours, with length, breadth and depth. This is the kind of time that labors of love require. It also doesn't hurt to live without having to run the human race.

Some researchers have correlated income with happiness and graphed the results. Not surprisingly, the curve rose steeply at the lower income levels, below subsistence, so that somebody making twice the income was vastly more happy. As the higher incomes were reached the curve leveled off, so that the billionaire was only slightly happier than the millionaire. There was a point where the curve could be bifurcated, called an inflection point, that represented the maximum bang for the buck and the real beginning of diminishing returns when it came to acquiring wealth for the sake of happiness. That point was almost precisely at the United States poverty line, the point where our real needs can be met and discretionary expenditure of life's time and energy becomes practical. Discretion, then, has a cash value that is largely ignored in an affluent society. Part of the problem here is the standardized forty-hour work week, when the wages earned exceed the cost of true necessities: people resign themselves to spending their whole paycheck and more instead of saving for early retirement or working less than full-time. Such a shift requires discipline, which requires motivation, which requires reassessing the value of our time. Reassessment like this often comes with the untimely death of a close friend or loved one. We rethink what is important

and reevaluate our values. The Buddha had his disciples ponder their own mortality as well as that of others to get the sense of urgency needed to forcibly remove distractions and dead weight from their lives. To lose what you did not need is not a real loss.

Right Livelihood means leading by example. There is certainly less danger of hypocrisy when it comes to environmental concerns, and that often counts for something. But making the impressive impressions is not the main point of the effort, and that is fortunate: simple living isn't really all that attractive to others unless we have something else to show that such a lifestyle clearly enables. It cannot be counted upon to glorify much of anything, and so it appears mainly to those who can notice the subtle and the understated. In other words, it's mostly great for preaching to the choir.

### **Livelihood in the Social Environment**

Once the disciple Ananda spoke to the Buddha, saying, "It seems to me that half of a holy life is association with good and noble friends." The Buddha replied, "Not so, Ananda. The whole of a holy life is association with good and noble friends, with noble practices and with noble ways of living." And "admirable friendship, admirable companionship, admirable camaraderie is actually the whole of the holy life" (SN 45.2).

Our means of livelihood concerns the social environment as well as the natural. It is, after all, the human culture that now carries the bulk of the human project forward through time, with all of its problems and all its solutions. It's this environment that future generations will live within. It is an economy with its own kind of currencies, such as trust, reputation, charity, good will, knowledge and wisdom. We all make our living in this way as well.

The Buddha tells us that advantageous friendships (*kalyana-mittata*, and *metta*) are crucial to our awakening. Although he would propose that we eventually try to attain to an unconditional fraternal love, compassion and supportiveness (*metta*, *karuna* and *mudita*), we must begin with the conditions that are imposed by our own necessity, the conditionality of advantageousness in friendship, the need for selection and discretion. In recovery, this might sometimes mean upgrading our circle of friends to something more like a Sangha than our old circle of ex-drinking buddies. "Should a seeker not find a companion who is better or equal, let him resolutely pursue a solitary course; there is no fellowship with the fool" (*Dhammapada* 61). This one was particularly challenging for me in a rural environment with a less than vast pool of potential relationships. But I did wind up going to the occasional AA meeting just to meet people to whom I couldn't lie. There were also a number of internet forums, once the internet really came into being.

Surrounding ourselves with people of like inclination, such as a Sangha or intentional community, was a large part of the Buddha's approach. We are, however, still living for ourselves. The group life, and particularly the group mind or conscience, is still only a fiction. Social livelihood isn't a question of immersion, submission or conformity, or at least it isn't when it's healthy. Our own health and welfare will be served or else we do not belong. The good doctor will attend to his own health first. "Let one not neglect one's own welfare for the sake of another, however great. Clearly understanding one's own welfare, let one be intent upon the good" (*Dhammapada* 166). The value is in symbiosis and synergy, or mutual benefit. The feeling of belonging is only a feeling that we have: it isn't a master to be served. If being honest about the problems of the group itself is needed, then consider that the group itself has no feelings and lay the problems out. Let's say that a recovery group is bogged down and going nowhere in a swamp of collective helplessness. Some flesh-and-blood individual

really needs to point that out if it is ever going to change. And if such a group cannot get that message, this is good information about the need to find another group.

Refuge or sanctuary will have two functions. The first is protective, it can provide a safe place for confession, apology, the acknowledgement of our error and the reestablishment trust. A recovery process is a deliberate vulnerability. Out in the world there is cultural pressure to feel insecure, unloveable and ashamed. The young trees need staking and fencing. New relationships with others need to be nurtured, and sometimes new kinds of relationships need to be invented. But shelter or protection is only an interim need, and protection from the truth of the longer-term goals, of competence, self-reliance, or self-efficacy, doesn't even serve in the short term. The common problems are not all common troubles. We just want the troubles out of the way right away so we can get to work on problems, and in an environment where we can regard the problems as puzzles.

If I had to sum up an ethic of Right Livelihood that would apply to our impacts on both natural and social environments, I think it would be: Leave the world a better place than the one you emerged from. Failing that, at least don't make things worse.

## Right Effort

When we are tired, we are attacked by ideas we conquered long ago. Nietzsche

*Samma Vayama*, Right Effort, endeavor or exertion, is the cultivation of energy, diligence and persistence. Given that we are each responsible for our fortunes and the mental states with which we either create or greet them, there are no shortcuts. What we get out of our efforts is directly proportional to what we invest in them, and if we want something as lofty as wisdom or enlightenment or an end to suffering, we really ought to be prepared to make a proportionate investment. Energy (*viriyā*) names the mental factor (*cetasika*) for effort and this wants good sources of fuel, or what Buddha called "wholesome nutriment." The broader problems with our hungers notwithstanding, one still needs a healthy appetite, just not in the sense of a big, largely random appetite. The disciple needs to sustain both his energy and his enthusiasm for the practice of heedful diligence (*appamāda*). Often a lot of energy can be obtained simply by plugging energy leaks, or avoiding them to begin with. "A bhikkhu awakens zeal, makes effort, arouses energy, exerts his mind and strives" (MN 77). There are four Right Efforts generally prescribed for this step of the path, four strivings, exertions or endeavors (*sammappādāna*), efforts to be carried out "without any unwillingness, and with zealous energy" (*atāpavīrya*).

It might be useful to remember here that energy is frequently used as a metaphor or description of a subjective feeling. It is not always being used for something convertible to calories or kilowatt hours. Someone walking into a room may say that they feel a strong or peculiar energy, or vibe, but this is not always the kind of energy that does work. This is a conceptual metaphor that can be incorporated into our models of how the world works, but it is only useful to the extent that this itself can be put to work. Otherwise it is simply a sensation. If we want to think of this as a quantity, or some sort of current which we can run through our mental devices to get something done in our minds, or keep us awake, energized or enthused, we might as well use it. It can give us some command or organizational power over our thoughts. If you're going to pay attention with mindfulness (*sati*) and concentration (*samādhi*), it's good to have some currency to pay with. Just bear in mind that this is real only to the extent that it works, or performs work, or gets work performed. This is useful to know because there are also other ways to stay awake that do not involve a great deal of excitement.

You should now be familiar with the terms *akusala* and *kusala*, which are central to the practice of this step of the path. *Akusala* is demerit, bad, unskillful states and deeds, karmically unprofitable, unhealthy, flawed, unwholesome, ineffective, productive of unhappy results. *Kusala* is merit, good, skillful states and deeds, karmically profitable, healthy, efficient, wholesome, productive of happy results. Buddha left us with many lists of unwholesome processes and states that threaten the seeker's progress on the path, and many lists of wholesome processes and states that further the seeker's progress. A few of these lists are specifically cited in the *suttas* as being associated with this step. The process of Right Effort is aided by the cultivation of the Five Root Faculties (*pañc indriyani*) or Five Mental Powers (*pañc balani*): conditional faith (*saddhā*), energy (*viriyā*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*) and discriminating wisdom (*pañña*). It is also said to be important that conditional faith and discriminating wisdom not be out of balance with each other, and that energy and concentration remain in balance with each other as well.

To avoid all evil, to cultivate good, and to cleanse one's mind - this is the teaching of the Buddhas (*Dhammapāda* 183).

### **Restraint: Preventing the Arising of Unwholesome States**

To prevent the arising (*anuppada*) of unwholesome (*akusala*) states or thoughts (*dhamma*), the first prescription is to practice restraint of the senses (*samvara padhana*), also called the faculty of guarding the sense doors (*indriyesu guttadvarata*). We ought not forget here that the mind is regarded as one of the six senses, so the term refers as well to guarding or keeping watch on our mental activity in general. Here we make use of our memories to identify those enticements, hot buttons, triggers and baits which tend to draw us into trouble. Here we practice shutting down our usual, habitual or historical response and reaction patterns. More broadly speaking, it is restraint, patience, deferred gratification and the ability to look away or aside. In our discussion of *paticca-samuppada*, the Chain of Conditioned Arising, we talked about the chain reaction of mental events that culminates in suffering and identified a number of links along this chain where timely intervention would most effectively short-circuit this process. Guarding the sense doors is only one of these links (the 5th, *salayatana*) but it's the first where we can really step into the process with the accompaniment of awareness. As such, restraint of the senses might be better considered as a mnemonic for the act or process of intervention in the chain in general, and equally applicable to later links, particularly contact (*phassa*), feeling (*vedana*), desire (*tanha*), grasping (*upadana*) and self-identification (*bhava*). The further along this chain we go, the closer we are to having to disengage from states that are already arisen or well-developed instead of preventing or precluding them in the first place. Sustained watchfulness or mindfulness is required here. In theory, the trouble that is avoided hereby will free up some energy for the process. The loss of a minus is as good as a plus. There is a "tirelessness in wholesome states" (*appamado kusalesu dhammesu*). (DN 34)

### **Renunciation: Abandoning the Arisen Unwholesome States.**

To set aside, abandon, discard or dispel (*pahanaya*) the already-arisen unwholesome thoughts or states, the second prescription offered is *ahana padhana*, abandoning or overcoming the Ten Defilements (*kilesas*). The removal of the defilements is also called effacement (*sallekha*). In other places the Five Hindrances are given (also or instead) as unwholesome states to be targeted. There is considerable overlap in these lists (see Glossary for more detail and glosses). The Ten Defilements are: craving (*lobha*), ill-will (*dosa*), delusion (*moha*), conceit (*mana*), misunderstanding (*ditthi*), cynical doubt (*vicikiccha*), sloth (*thina*), agitation (*uddhacca*), shamelessness (*ahirika*), and carelessness (*anottappa*). The Hindrances (*nivaranana*) are: craving pleasure (*kamacchanda*, roughly synonymous with *lobha*), ill-will (*vyapada*, synonymous with *dosa*), sloth and torpor (*thina-middha*), agitation and regret (*uddhacca-kukkucca*), and cynical doubt (*vicikiccha*).

Some of the recommended methods for removing these states are: thought substitution (*tadanga*), attention to conscience and consequences (*hiri-ottappa*), the diversion or redirection of attention, confrontation and investigation, and the forcible suppression of inferior states. This array of tools is described in the *sutta* for *The Removal of Distracting Thoughts*, or *The Relaxation of Thoughts*, [MN 20](#). The simplest approach uses the understanding that wholesome and unwholesome states will either wither and die or thrive and flourish according to the nutrition that we provide for them. This story has been making the rounds quite a bit lately:

An old Cherokee was teaching his grandson about life. 'A fight is going on inside me,' he said to the boy. 'It is a terrible fight and it is between two wolves. One is evil; he is anger, envy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego.' He continued, 'The other is good; he is joy,

peace, love, serenity, hope, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, compassion, truth, and faith. The same fight is going on inside you, and inside every other person, too.'

The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked grandfather, 'Which wolf will win?'

The old Cherokee replied, 'The one you feed.'

Negativity has acquired a bad name of late, particularly among the so-called spiritual folk. Even among those who profess an acceptance of evolution there seems to be a serious distaste for selection. At least they are under tremendous social pressure to deny the potential utility of any selection within the human population, which somehow gets transferred to saying yes to all culture. But Buddhism is not afraid of judgment. To prevent or remove the bad is a good, to prevent or remove the wrong is a right, to prevent or remove a loss is a gain. To identify the defects and negatives and avoid them is a positive act. Amory Lovins, an energy consultant, coined the term *negawatts* to quantify energy conserved, and early on in the conservation movement he began convincing public utilities that they could increase their profits by providing energy saving devices to their customers, sometimes free of charge, and thereby spare themselves the still-higher costs of building new power plants. Laozi, of course, also extolled the virtues of getting things done by not doing.

There is power, therefore, in the surrender or renunciation of something that is holding you back, or wasting your energy and resources. There is freedom in letting go of what you are gripping too tightly. Governments the world over all have the power to destroy organized crime overnight, with little more than the energy it takes to lift a pen. The only thing that organizes crime is prohibition. The whole ugly mess would collapse completely with the simple decriminalization of drugs, prostitution and gambling. That would assume that this was a priority, instead of the creation and maintenance of enemies and the police power. But as with individuals, they have other reasons to perpetuate the suffering. Most war would go away too if governments could let go of their need to create devils and their minions in order to define themselves from the outside.

### **Development: Cultivating the Wholesome States**

To create, nurture, cultivate and develop (*uppadaya*) the wholesome (*kusala*) thoughts or states (*dhamma*), the third prescription is *bhavana padhana*, cultivating or developing the Seven Enlightenment Factors (*satta bojjhanga*). The first three of the seven, energy (*viriyā*), mindfulness (*sati*) and concentration (*samadhi*) have already been mentioned with the five mental powers, declared useful throughout this step of Right Effort. These are seven states or conditions of mind to be regarded as vital sources of stamina and persistence. The remaining four are mental investigations (*dhammavicaya*), exhilaration (*pīti*), tranquility (*passadhi*) and equanimity (*upekkha*). Clearly these last two also contribute to the effort by avoiding the waste of energy in nearsighted overreaction.

As *upekkha* has already been mentioned, it probably wouldn't hurt to suggest the cultivation of the remaining three *Bramaviharas* here as well: lovingkindness (*metta*), compassion (*karuna*), altruism (*mudita*). And then, for good measure, we can also add the four states that we previously nominated for *Bramavihara* status to correct their omission: forgiveness (*khama*), gratitude (*katannuta*), reverence (*garava*) and patience (*khanti*).

How do we cultivate such states? With mindfulness and concentration we take the time and expend the effort to get to know ourselves, instead of endlessly distracting ourselves. We learn which attitudes lead to which kinds of experiences and adopt the

attitudes that give us the wholesome states. It isn't as easily done as it is said, and it certainly isn't as quick and easy as letting your mind go to be embraced by some deity. But quick and easy only gets you cheap and sketchy. Mindfulness and concentration train us to adopt our mental states at will. For the addict in recovery, *samvega* is a most useful goal and state to develop and practice.

### **Persistence: Maintaining the Arisen Wholesome States**

To support, promote or maintain (*thitiya*) the already-arisen wholesome thoughts or states, the fourth prescription is for *anurakkhana padhana*, preserving vigilance, concentration, or heedfulness. As anybody who has ever made a New Year's resolution knows well, our best intentions and our firmest resolutions have a way of fading over time or running out of energy. It doesn't even seem to matter that the new direction that we have chosen is rich in rewards, so there is little wonder that the addict who is asking himself to give up his potent dopamine fixes in exchange for a far milder sort of serenity soon finds plenty of excuses to turn back. A big part of the problem is hedonic adaptation, or the hedonic treadmill, already discussed under *Tanha* in the chapter on Suffering's Causes. We tend to get used to and bored with the steady states as our expectations adapt upwards. If we can't have constant improvement, or at least some gradual intensification, then we will go after variety instead. It is perhaps for this reason that the Buddha recommended all seven of the Enlightenment Factors to keep us moving forward. And perhaps it is also a good reason to have added a few more *Brahmaviharas* as well. With these we can have more of a palette to paint with, more notes on our instrument. We can have our variety and texture and still remain not-bored, on the Path and in forward motion.

### **The Function of Self-Control**

When a human being judges a particular course of action to be the best course, why would this being take any course other than this? Where are the disconnects here? *Akrasia*, the lack of command over oneself, acting against one's better judgement, is an old philosophical problem in the West, and Greeks like Plato and Aristotle had no solution. There are a lot of factors and culprits that might be identified here: *aboulia* or weakness of will, conflicting drives and motivations, disagreements between head and heart, or reason and emotion, or left and right brains, impatience or hyperbolic discounting on a long-term path, or guilt and self-sabotage. At one point our souls were just caught in a tug-of-war between god and the devil, or we were cursed by the village witch.

A Buddhist can offer a straightforward answer here: *anatta*. There is no single or simple entity at the core of our being. What we call self is a momentary snapshot of an ever-shifting coalition of the multitude of components of our being. Each of us are legion. We are a running straw poll taken from this mob. Some people are better than others at holding this coalition together in more-or-less stable formations, and when this has stable and meritorious results, these people are said to have integrity and character. They have their shit together. This comes from developing a constructed sense of self, which is only an illusion in Buddhism if it is mistaken to be some essential core self or homunculus. It is not an error unless it acts in error or perceives itself to be the very center of things. It is, in essence, an ego. While Buddha had plenty of problems with conceit (*mana*), the sense of self that identified with or laid ownership claims on the endless transient phenomena of experience, there is still a healthy use for a sense of who we choose to be, who is going where we choose to go. Thanissaro Bhikkhu, in "Hang On to Your Ego" offers: "The test of how far your wisdom has matured lies in the strategic skill with which you can keep yourself from

doing things that you like to do but that would cause long-term harm, and the skill with which you can talk yourself into doing things that you don't like to do but that would lead to long-term well-being and happiness. In other words, mature wisdom requires a mature ego."

What are the components in our mental makeup that enable our acts of self-control, self-determination or self-efficacy? Where in the brain is our free will or agency enthroned? Or is it a question of neural software? It certainly isn't enough to simply believe that we have free will and flick it on like some kind of mental switch. Religious believers who hold that free will is god's gift are often the quickest to fall into hypocrisy and sin. Just saying to themselves "god gave me free will" does not give them any free will. They find the function inoperable or unplugged, so disconnected from what is going on in their subconscious and their glands that these mysterious processes often appear to them to be the work of some devil.

I have never been a big fan of the extended analogy between the mind and computers. Those who believe that computers will someday wake up and be sentient when they finally get the capacity, the right information and the right software, are oblivious to the neurochemistry involved, the juices of cognition, and their synergies with neural information storage and processing, as well as the possibilities of strong emergence. But with that said, here is one more analogy: There are three general levels of software to your actual desktop computer. Down at the bottom are all of the ones and zeroes. These are almost certainly incomprehensible to you. At the middle level lives the programming language that the software developers use. This is in code, but the specialists can understand and use it. At the top is the graphical interface with its pointers, its windows and its pull-down menus. If the programmer has done his job, you need not worry about those two mysterious lower levels. Your pointer or window or pull-down menu allows you to reach down and move those ones and zeros around just fine. Sometimes the software that allows you to do this is intuitive and user-friendly, but more often you have a PC. Our best functions of self-control want to be on the upper level and accessible to our conscious minds. But it is not enough just to see those things on the desktop. We have enough dummy buttons to push in our psyches. These need to be integrated with the deeper workings of the mind. This requires something akin to science. It is not the same as science, since the study of the software below is deeply personal, subjective and phenomenological. We must, as the faux Buddhist poster says, "inquire within" and come to understand our own neural code with practice. This is what the next two steps, Right Mindfulness and Concentration are all about: learning what is going on down below and finding ways to turn this understanding into an ability to make correct, wholesome and skillful choices in life. This is connecting the commands that we give to ourselves to what our neural circuits and glands are really doing. It's a complicated business and it takes a lot of time and effort, but we start out imperfectly and live and learn. We use teachers as well, and "learn in other heads."

Control functions are emergent processes. They are qualia. They do not need to assume the existence of an abiding core self, possessed of free will, although they often get mistaken for one. Emergent processes such as the human will emerge out of antecedent conditions. They remain dependent upon the conditions out of which they emerged. The human will is more determined than it is free, and it is not at all clear that much of it exists in most human beings. But when you know what you are doing, you can nominate a part of yourself to intervene in this dependent or conditioned arising as an interested party and thus co-determine the will, freeing it at least to a point. To do this requires having more than one optional state of mind. It requires favoring one element in the mind over another and being able to choose.

## Drives, Motivations, Desires and Wants

You dangles a carrot in front of his nose and he goes wherever the carrot goes.

Author unknown.

The word discipline (*vinaya*) is used a lot in Buddhism, and for monks the training is rigorous enough to warrant such frequent use. But our self-discipline is not the motive force that moves us towards our goals: this force is supplied by drives, motivations, desires and wants. Yes, desires (*chanda*) are useful even in Buddhism, although hopefully we can learn to stop well-short of cravings and obsessions. To be moving forward, we need to see ourselves as incomplete, as not yet done. We need the energy that our displacement from what is desired can provide us. It is not a Buddhist recommendation to view ourselves as already perfect in this moment. That's just another narcissistic, new-age platitude. We need something to fill our sails. Discipline is only a rudder, and useless when the boat isn't moving.

Deeper down even than drives and motivations are those baseline states that tend to change only slowly if at all. The slowest moving of these are our native temperaments, which are generally regarded as permanent. Experiments seem to indicate that a person's overall emotional intensity, as well as the felt intensity of specific feelings and emotions, will tend to vary around "set points" or durable averages. So some people will always be happier on average than others. And this is not fair at all, particularly when the happiest person in the room has never does a thing to better himself and would never even consider trying to improve the world or even harm it a little less. Meanwhile the sensitive one with great promise and compassion commits suicide. It's really hard to find justice in such *kamma*. The irony of it all once inspired me to write this:

"A master and student were walking one day through an old cemetery, discussing the lessons of history. In one corner they came upon a pair of dissimilar graves, both with monuments. One was that of a long-dead and still-detested tyrant, memorialized for his contributions to an orderly government, but vilified for his arrogance, thoughtlessness towards his subjects and cruelty to captives from the neighboring tribes. Next to this was the grave of a still-loved sage, a holy man who spent - and gave - his life helping others less fortunate, righting the wrongs of the tyrant and teaching Dhamma.

"Master," the student queried, "there are two peculiar things here. It is odd enough that these men were buried side by side, but I am troubled that the grave of the tyrant is covered with such a thick carpet of flowers in full bloom, while the grave of the sage is barren, except for some thistles and a little thorn bush. What is this?"

"Young sir," the master said, "this is what to expect from this world. That these men are side by side is no mystery - they lived and died at a time when this part of the cemetery was being filled. But as for the second: over the centuries mourners have come to the sage's grave to weep for his passing and, one tear at a time, salted the soil. But the people would visit the grave of the tyrant and leave tributes of garbage and shit, and spit on his memory."

There's no moral to that story. Some of the *kamma* survives intact in the memory, much of it still circulates in the general soup of all things. We can suffer a great deal simply over wondering why. We can whine all we want, but the bottom line is that we have to play the hand we are dealt. How important is happiness if it is not the best measure of merit? Maybe the value in that question is that asking it gets us to look around a little. Maybe there is much more to life than our happiness.

Dispositional affect lies somewhere between native temperament and our somewhat more ephemeral moods. These are background states that beings brings to the experience. Like primordial drives, they are internal sensations of agitation or calm, fatigue or liveliness, discouragement or enthusiasm, malaise or health, disequilibrium

or stability. These are a little more susceptible of the Buddhist training, but we shouldn't expect miraculous results unless we are also attending to diet, potential neurochemical imbalances, exercise, and control of environmental stresses as well. The goals of Right Effort are first to enable our choice, and then sustained effort in accord with that choice. We can work all we want on the levels of affect that are easier to tune or adjust, notably our drives, motivations, desires and wants, but we really need to attend to the deeper, less conscious levels as well.

The tendency in psychology is to think of drives in terms of internal and generally homeostatic processes, like temperature regulation, hunger, thirst, pain avoidance, positional change, exercise, sleep, and even raw exploration. They set us in motion by way of signals from interoceptors, without requiring external stimuli. Sometimes the emotions associated with these are called primordial, although there is considerable control that can be exerted here using higher cortical functions. Drives assume a deficiency. Motivations, on the other hand, are said to be derived from appraisals of the external environment. Some liken the difference to push vs pull, contrasting drives with desires. Motivations are associated with the co-called classical emotions, fear, attraction, love, anger, etc. And the happiness of pursuit. Some also claim the motivations do not assume a deficiency, at least not in the ways that drives do. Many are wired in to the neural modules that we have evolved for life in a society.

Presumably, the Buddha would ask right away what became of the motive forces originating primarily in the mental world or brain. Or we could ask what became of the motivations that Maslow identified as our higher needs for self-actualization. Maybe a decent word to use for this category of mental affect is attitude, as the Buddha used it here: "The world is conducted by our attitude (*cittena*), the world is harassed by our attitude. Everything comes under the control of this unique power" (SN 1.39). The word attitude is useful in its comprehensiveness, as it implies a position to take, a direction to face, a combination of thought and affect, a valuation and general implications of the behavior required to get where we want to go. These are the components of Right Effort. This leaves us with the task of weeding out the wrong or bad attitudes, choosing the ones that most skillfully serve our ends and then committing to expending whatever investment of energy our project is likely to take. Perhaps the most remarkable feature of this aspect of our mentality is that there is a wide variety of attitudes that are potentially available to us in any given situation. The scope of this variety is a function of the examination or investigation that we have done. In any given situation particular attitudes can be examined for their worth, value, utility, relevance, promise and salience. Frequently these will come with behavioral scripts that help us to plan our activities. But most important is the fact that when a number of alternative attitudes are known, then choices are offered, and choices are the absolute key to freedom of the will. We then back our choices by deciding what to really want and commit ourselves to the needed action.

In the early 1970's I went to stay with a shaman who served an island's population in an hereditary capacity. He lived in the rainforest and had never spoken with a white man before. I brought him two questions: 1) In my culture it is believed that a person needs to be down as well as up, unhappy as well as happy, depressed as well as elated. Do you agree, or is it possible to be up, happy and elated all of the time? [in effect I was asking about his psychology] and 2) I have been a student of people who perform your function in other societies and know some things about their methods. If I share some of these with you, will you share some of yours with me? His reply to me: "When you are up you have accepted your power, when you are down you have abandoned it. So instead of complaining, you decide what you want. Then to answer your second question, if you have accepted your power, these methods will come from

you naturally. And if you have abandoned your power, you can learn everything there is to know about them and they will still do you no good. So instead of complaining, decide what you want." That could have been the Buddha talking. Deciding what we want enables Right Effort.

The Buddha used the term mind functions (*cetasikas*) for many useful attitudes, and there are dozens listed in the Glossary (search *cetasikas*) Take special note of the list of the "beautiful mental functions" (*sobhana cetasikas*). These include such states as enjoying the nimbleness of consciousness (*cittamuduta*) or enjoying its competence (*cittapagunnata*). They include also the *Brahmaviharas*. This may surprise some people, but catalogues of our alternative attitudes exist the world over in systems of thought that are used in divination. This shouldn't be surprising as they identify alternative attitudes with which to face our future prospects. This of course isn't a particularly shallow or commonplace approach to these systems. The sixty-four Hexagrams of the Chinese *Book of Changes* are an excellent example of such a catalog of attitudes. Or the 78 cards of the Tarot. Or the the 120 combinations of Planet and Sign in Astrology. Or the Ten Sephirot of the Qabalah. These systems will take on a whole new level of meaning and depth when examined in this light, and they will also be relieved of the need to prove any pretentious and erroneous claims that they represent some sort of science. They are simply languages about mental states, developed rather spontaneously, as languages are wont to develop, in counseling contexts to address people's anxieties about their future and their choices. They help us identify the attitude that allows us to want what is best for ourselves.

## Right Mindfulness

I do not say that final knowledge is achieved all at once. On the contrary, final knowledge is achieved by gradual training, by gradual practice, by gradual progress. (MN 70)

*Samma Sati*, Right Mindfulness, attention or awareness, is the second of the three mental attainments (*citta sampada*) between Right Effort and Right Concentration, and the seventh step on the Path. The word *sati* also means memory or recollection. The phrase "keeping in mind" may be a common link, but here it would carry the charge to not keep by clinging. This is not an easy practice and will require most of the energy developed in Right Effort: "Arise! Sit up! Train yourselves strenuously for peace of mind. This doctrine, monks, is for the energetic, strong and firm in purpose, and not for the indolent" (AN 8.30).

First-hand or direct experience was more important to the Buddha than the acceptance of his teaching by students. He taught a discipline, not a system of belief, and the directive in this discipline was to get to the first-hand experience and attend to it mindfully.

There are two general directions in which the practices of Mindfulness and Concentration may be taken, and these two will somewhat color the practices themselves. The first *Samatha Bhavana*, the development of serenity or tranquility, peace or calmness, and fixedness of the mind or concentration. This is also referred to as unification or one-pointedness of mind (*cittakaggata*). It is the attainment of the unitive experience. It is letting go of habits of mind that like and dislike, that get us "worked up" and work us over, that maintain our many illusions about who we are. We try to accept what is, reality unfiltered by our anxieties. *Bhavana* is the word used for meditative practice, but its primary meaning here is development, specifically mental development or mental cultivation, literally making-to-become. The second direction is *Vipassana Bhavana*, the development of insight, through introspection, by being unblinkingly watchful, seeing or knowing phenomena for what they are as they arise and disappear. The experience of every specific thing that is attended is recognized to be impermanent, unsatisfactory and not-self. The insights of *vipassana* are tools for living, not states of attainment. Insight isn't as passive as serenity: it means a dynamic reorganization of our perceptions and cognitions. Critical analysis is permitted, but after something is seen for what it is and not before. An insight that doesn't get down and dirty and start shifting things around just doesn't get the job done. This wisdom isn't attained, it's lived and practiced.

### Beginner's Mind

*Sati* is called bare attention, direct mental experience, mindfulness that is, as much as possible, stripped of belief and disbelief, without judgment, evaluation, interpretation, association, or choice. It is "the clear and single-minded awareness of what actually happens to us and in us, at the successive moments of perception" (Nyanaponika Thera, 1972, p. 30). The mind is kept detached from feeling, reaction and emotion. There is no need to fight thoughts and feelings if you do not take them personally. When they arise they are not suppressed or fought back down but simply allowed to pass. Their passage may be registered in the moment, but then it's on to the next moment. The onset of a sensation of fear or pain might simply prompt closer examination instead of a reaction. The general state of mind is peaceful but not relaxed, alert but not hypervigilant: it might best be described as simply "ready." A friend who conducted a regular Zen group would on occasion clap his hands loudly

in the middle of the session. Anyone who was either too agitated or too sleepy would just about jump out of their skins, but when we were in the right frame of mind, the sound would just wash through us. It was a very good way to learn and teach what this "ready" meant.

Daniel Goleman offers: "While we mind or attend the various objects of mindfulness, we merely notice them as they come and go, like frames in a film, not allowing them to stimulate the mind into thought-chains of reactions to them" (*B&P*, p. 9). In a way this is similar to listening to music: you don't freeze a piece of music on one particularly good note just to keep hearing it. The experience is in the ongoing diversity and the progression of the individual moments. You are not constantly referring back to previous notes. The moving finger, having writ, moves on.

Beginner's mind is sometimes used to describe attending to experience with fresh eyes, as if for the first time. The term *jamaïs vu* names the opposite of *deja vu*: you know that you have been here before, but the experience feels like the first time. This is a common experience with entheogens ("have you ever *really* looked at your hands?"). Maintaining a beginner's mind requires us to avoid concluding our perceptions and then filing them away. We leave some mystery still open, we let some novelty and specialness remain in what we experience. The faculty of attention is most readily triggered in the brain by a promise of novelty, by changes in the environment or in mental states. The threshold of awareness keeps rising when a stimulus level is constant and the object familiar. When the objects of our attention stabilize into familiar states the brain adapts, tries to go back to sleep or move on to something new. In *sati* we attempt to keep things new, fresh and alive, even when they are same old same old. We want to avoid having been there and done that.

The Buddha outlined four categories of mindfulness exercises which he referred to as the Four Foundations or Establishments of Mindfulness (*Cattaro Satipatthana*) or four realms for the practice of contemplation (*anupassana*).

### **Kayanupassana, Contemplations of the Organism**

Mindfulness immersed in body (*kayagata-sati*) is usually the gateway practice for *sati*. It might seem like something of a paradox or contradiction when we understand that many of the more advanced meditative practices seek to leave physical awareness behind altogether, and with directives having names like "guarding the sense doors." But since who or what we are is not fundamentally on some higher level but emerges from a synergy that very much includes the "physical plane," the work that we have to do on ourselves requires our inquiry, investigation and understanding on all levels. The fully mindful person is fully present, not daydreaming, or indulging in this or that, not worrying, and not living elsewhere. But, lest this be misunderstood, we will still peer into the future and anticipate consequences, and learn from the past, and look both ways before crossing the street. The present moment that we live in is only the center of things, not their outer limit. We can be in the center of something and still embrace the farther reaches.

Of special usefulness and importance here is mindfulness of breathing (*anapana-sati*). While techniques exist for special breathing, the normal exercise here does not involve any control of the breath. It is nothing more than paying extended attention to all aspects of our natural breath, including the wind in the nostrils, the movement of the diaphragm and ribcage and the general feeling of oxygenation.

*Kayanupassana* continues bodily mindfulness through the four "usual" postures (*iriyapatha*): standing up (*caram*), walking (*nissino va*), sitting (*sayano*) and lying down (*yavata*), all of which are suitable positions for mindfulness meditation, assuming we can avoid sloth or sleepiness. Many would be quick to add such

meditations as chopping wood and carrying water, synecdoches for the living of everyday life or meditation in action. Such pervasive mindfulness is indeed the goal here, being able to wake up within our everyday, moving-about life, at least when this sort of mindfulness is wanted.

It will be helpful here to explode the oversimplification of our sensory world into five senses, or six, counting the sensations of our minds. There is too much we ignore in doing this. We actually have a different sense for every kind of sensory neuron we have, and binocular and binaural seeing and hearing can even be considered separately from monocular and monaural. We have five kinds of taste that we know of, and even more smells. Too often overlooked are the senses called interoception or somatoception that give us the world within. The kinesthetic, vestibular and otolithic senses give us our muscle, tendon and joint position and movement, linear acceleration and angular acceleration in space. We have receptors for pain (nociception), heat loss and heat gain. We have visceral sensations and erotic sensations. We sense our memories and our movements within the brain. We have senses of time and rhythm. Each of these in fact can be made into an exercise in *kayanupassana*, and each will give us something more to awaken to.

The brain or the mind does not end in the skull. In fact, we have some abilities to control sensory inputs at the organs of sense themselves. In a classical experiment the signals in a cat's auditory nerve were sent to an amplifier. Signals sent by a metronome registered until a mouse was let into the room, whereupon they diminished and stopped. While it is possible that the signal's relevance was decided in the brain, the action was taken at the organ of sense. Turning a blind eye or a deaf ear on an experience may not always be a metaphor.

Another reason to enrich our understanding of our sensory world is that our memories of sensations become key components in our conceptual worlds, where they are termed sensory or conceptual metaphors. For example, many of our go-to references for abstract force in the field of physics derive ultimately from kinesthetic signals and our perceptions of resistance to our muscular activities. The term for this phenomenon is embodied cognition. And it may be only the limitations of our sensory metaphors that prevent us from regarding it as obvious that light would behave as both particle and wave, or that magnetism is electricity seen sideways, or that time and space are made of the same stuff. In the rich acoustic world of the cetaceans, time is the go-to measure of space. When we finally learn to communicate with them they might tell us that special relativity is obvious. The scope of sensory or conceptual metaphors will also be important below when we speak of mindfulness of mental objects.

The Buddha outlines a number of other exercises in body-mindfulness that I will only mention briefly here. Simply Google the Pali terms for more information. *Satisampajanna*, mindfulness and clear comprehension adds to bare awareness, making some basic connections that reach outside of the moment, but without trailing off into endless proliferation of associations and embellishments (*papanca*). We see more context and real intent, salience and appropriateness of the phenomena under study. With *dhatuvavatthana*, analysis into elements, we deconstruct or reduce the organism into its elemental components, exposing our ultimately impersonal nature. We contemplate ourselves as a physicist might, as heat, fluidity, oscillation and solidity (the four *dhatu*s, fire, water, air and earth). With *asubha-kammattana*, contemplation of unattractiveness, we contemplate parts of the body and its functions with intentional disgust in order to learn to distance ourselves from the fleshly passions. And with *svathika*, the cemetery meditations, we envision the body's final stages of dissolution.

## Vedanānupassana, Contemplations of Feelings and Sensations

Mindfulness of feelings or sensations forms the second group of the Buddha's mindfulness exercises. *Vedāna*, you might recall, is the second of the Five Aggregates or constituting factors of our being, as well as the seventh link in the Chain of Conditioned Arising. It is the very beginning of wanting more or wanting less, following contact (*phassa*) with the world. We ought to be careful how we understand this contemplation, however, because in many ways it is the exact opposite of "getting in touch with our feelings." Rather, this requires us to put a little of the distance of objectivity between the observer and the observed. We are simply assessing what Bhikkhu Bodhi calls the "affective tone or hedonic quality of experience." The main interpretive axis by which the Buddha himself assessed these feelings and sensations was the simple scale from unpleasant, through neutral, to pleasant, although we mentioned at least one additional candidate earlier, that being the level of activation or intensity. *Vedāna* is not the same as fully developed emotion. It does not yet have any mental overlay of value, or utility, or purpose. We are only now becoming aware that we are feeling anything at all. It isn't any more complex or articulated than the rawest of data. The task might be likened to being only one of a large crew operating a complicated aircraft, and your one assignment is to call out the readings on the air speed indicator. You do not yet have any additional information to tell you what this means, so you are not fearful about stalling the craft or anxious about wings falling off. Your only business is to watch the needle go up and down and note how quickly or slowly it does so. When we contemplate a feeling or sensation we are not looking to name or identify it. We are only looking at its charge and the charge's intensity. We are also observing where the affect seems to come from and where it tries to go, from contact (*phassa*) onward through the chain of conditioned arising, and we practice not-grasping or clinging the whole way.

*Vedayita* is feeling what is felt, as it comes and goes. We attend instead of indulge. We may have a sense of what the feelings are, and we might even appreciate them for what they are: we just no longer need to own them or believe in them, or try to make them go or stay. A more detached observation of these comings and goings of our affect accomplishes these three things: 1) the ephemerality or impermanence of these states is recognized (*annica*); 2) the incompleteness or unsatisfactoriness of these states is experienced (*dukkha*); and 3) the distance between these states and what we would like to think or as a core or essential self is stretched (*anatta*). This is a study in impermanence, imperfection and non-identification. Seeing the great and ever-shifting variety of affect helps us with all of these insights. *Guan Yin*, the Chinese name of the Mahayana Bodhisattva of compassion, means to "attend the cries." *Guan* is also the name of the 20th *Gua* of the *Book of Changes*, and is usually translated as observe or contemplate. It is a visual metaphor but it needs to be understood as feeling with all six senses (especially since *Yin*, cries, are only audible). *Guan Yin* does not have the kind of compassion that gets sucked into suffering: rather, she has the kind that offers a way out. The same can be said of *vedānānupassana*.

Similar to the crime fighter's adage "follow the money," following the affect back down the causal chain can lead us to discover those original traumas and experiences that now generate anxieties, fears and other problems. While we are not oblivious to the emotions that try to arise, including desire and distaste, we just don't let them grow into some big dramatic play. We can see how these feelings and sensations could lead to problems, and we can see foreshadowings of what these problems could be. But we don't follow them there. For the addict this helps us to identify more of our triggers, slippery places, and excuses. We start to decondition these reactions and habitual recourses as we associate them with the more equilibrated states of calm and

dispassionate observation. Each time a memory is evoked, our brain has the potential of wiring that up to new, updated or improved associations. We can examine a resentment and attach a healthier response, specifically, the higher and more mindful state that we are currently in. We will then know subliminally that the last time that state came up we were calm. This is in part how exposure therapy works. We can examine the affect of an old grievance and re-associate that with today's equanimity or forgiveness. It is in such neural rewiring of associations that forgiveness sets us free. Using affect and sense to alter the emotional charge of our triggers, we use some of the same reward structures that worked to ingrain our addictive behavior patterns to begin with.

Feeling (*vedana*) arises with contact (*phassa*) as its condition. Contact arises with the six sense bases (*salayatana*) as its condition. Thus, in these meditations we practice attending to feeling arising from all six kinds of contact, sensory information from our five conventionally named senses (and those we are now able to add) and also the sensations in our minds. We are not doing concentration yet, only mindfulness. But we may begin by practicing alerting ourselves to our senses one at a time.

### **Cittanupassana, Contemplations of Mental Activity**

*Cittanupassana* is mindfulness of the mind itself, even though it isn't correct to call the mind an it. The Buddha had a unique understanding of what the mind is. A *citta* is the word used for the mental apprehension of ordinary consciousness. This may be thought of as a mental moment, like a frame in a motion picture film. Each frame is more or less distinct from the frames that precede and follow it, each is painted with a different palette, different shapes, colors sounds, rhythms, textures, smells, tastes. The constituent factors that these frames are composed from are called *cetasikas*, usually translated as mental factors or activities. These are specific mental functions or specialized tasks, particularly functions of the nervous system working in conjunction with the endocrine. They are numerous. One of the Buddha's own enumerations counts fifty-two of them. See Mind Functions in the Glossary for the full list. The mind or mentality is really little more than a process, or a procession of these momentary frames. It is the attending and collecting of impressions. It is both heart and head, emotion and reason. There is no such thing as a mind, and there is no mind or minding that doesn't arise out of contact with some object of attention or consciousness. We have no mind when we are unconscious or dead. We ought to clarify here that Mahayana and later Buddhist developments have departed a little from this rather stern construction of mind to add some loftier conceptions, Buddha Mind, for example, but we are not exploring those here as they are not a part of Theravada doctrine.

It might be helpful to imagine the *cittas*, or successive mind states, as the successive images in a kaleidoscope. We have, let's say, 52 pieces of glass, our *cetasikas*, tumbling around in our objective lens. The precise pattern never repeats. Now, it so happens that seven of these pieces are so sizable that they appear in every frame, while the others may come and go. The big ones are the seven general *cetasikas* (*sabba citta sadharana*), being contact, feeling, perception, intention, focus, vitality and attention (*phassa, vedana, sanna, cetana, ekaggata, jivitindriya* and *manasikara*). Others come and go, such as initial thought, connective thought, resolve, energy, exhilaration, and desire (*vitakka, vicara, adhimokkha, viriya, piti* and *chanda*). Some of the remaining pieces are really nice to look at (the twenty-five beautiful *cetasikas*) and some are pretty ugly (the fourteen unwholesome *cetasikas*). Most beings seem to regard it as their lot in life to take what comes and deny what they don't like, while Buddhists seem to take to the notion that they can fool around with at least some of the elements in the tumbler. Like all analogies, this one has limits. There is no objective observer here: the

components together create a kind of self-awareness. And the mirrors do not stand for some sort of transcendent consciousness. It's hard to tell if this makes it easier or harder to tamper with the tumbler.

What we are doing as we contemplate this ever-shifting composition of mental processes is twofold. Where we are practicing *Samatha Bhavana*, or serenity meditation, we are cultivating our understanding that all of these states and all of their combinations are *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anatta*. We are freeing ourselves from the traps of believing otherwise, especially the traps of *lobha*, *dosa* and *moha*. Where we are practicing *Vipassana Bhavana*, we are mapping out our possibilities, learning how we tick and how to tinker with our natures. This part of mindfulness begins with raw exploration. Put a rat into an unfamiliar environment and watch him explore: there is no purpose there other than to map out his environment, but he is driven to do so. Then, when the time comes for him to start solving problems he knows where the puzzle's pieces are to be found. It is more than an illusion of intelligence that he can solve his problems so quickly because there is innate intelligence in the drive to collect the database. Cognitive flexibility is a function of options, which in turn are a function of experience. Mindfulness increases our experience in normally unfamiliar realms, and thus increasing our options when the time comes to choose between alternative states of mind.

### **Dhammanupassana, Contemplations of Mental Phenomena**

With this set of exercises we attend to all of the little-d *dhammas*, the constructions, contents and phenomena that we find in our minds. These phenomena include our memories and aspirations, thoughts and emotions, reaction patterns and behavioral scripts, including both innate and learned scripts for cognitive behavior. With *cittanupassana* we simply let our minds run and attend to what they were doing. Here we take up mental *dhammas* one at a time and hold them up to examination. This has a little more in common with concentration or *samadhi*, except that we are surrounding the *dhamma* with our different points of view. The everyday mind wants to take its object of study and run around with it, comparing and associating it to this and that, and then connecting the this and the that to other things. This is called *papanca*, often translated as conceptual proliferation. It is trying to hunt down all of the *sequiturs*. And it is perfectly understandable that the mind is wired to do this. But here we try to restrain this activity to the object of our study in its immediate context or boundaries. We necessarily add new associations to the things we bring to mind in this way, since memory is dynamic, so we don't always leave them unaffected. Once again, this is in part how psychological therapy works: we can add our new perspectives and understandings to what we are remembering or recalling to mind. These can become part of the recollection. This is the mechanism by which mindfulness exercises help us to develop serenity.

The Buddha offered a handful of his many lists of mental processes and happenings to be used in systematizing these contemplations. First, each of the Five Hindrances (*nivarana*) to our meditative efforts become the object of our attention. Second, we examine the Five Aggregates (*khandas*) the constituent factors of our being. Third, we take up the sensations, ideas and memories provided us by way of the Six Sense Bases (*sadayatana*), which we can now take to include the underpinnings of our sensory and conceptual metaphors. Fourth, we take up the Seven Factors of Enlightenment (*satta bojjanga*) and work for a while on each one in order. Fifth, we make a contemplative study of the Four Noble Truths.

Once through initial withdrawal, the addict, in theory, will have some free time, even after going around town confessing and making amends. There will be plenty of

character defects remaining, and values to repair. A disciplined practice of Right Mindfulness can provide a structure for examining any of these remaining problems one at a time, a format for the indispensable step that the 12-Steppers call "a searching and fearless moral inventory." This is assuming that our subject can set aside the time and energy. There is no need to be limited to meditations on the Buddha's five sets of mental objects. Any set of mental functions or problems can be addressed in this way. There is much to be said for addressing whole sets of mental objects systematically and in sequence, particularly for someone who has not spent much time or effort in keeping an organized mind: there is a sense of security in not being adrift and picking at things at random. Such an approach might also be likened to an organized search and rescue pattern. It's partly a question of efficiency, one of covering the maximum ground with the least wasted effort. It also has us covering ground that we might not intuit to be worth searching. We all live in part by undetected errors that lead to suffering, so the problem becomes one of detection. Given that so many of our errors can learn to either conceal or defend themselves, sometimes it helps to sneak up on them, or catch them by surprise in their unexpected places.

### **Cognitive Bias and Distortion**

There are a number of questionable claims made by proponents of the Buddhist doctrine about the powers of mindfulness, at least given what modern sciences have led us to suspect. Specifically, it is claimed that we can penetrate to the true nature of phenomena to know the actual reality that underlies them, that we can know things as they truly are, that we can fully get around our thoughts, concepts, ideas and metaphors, and the limitations that our limited sensory experiences impose upon these. I certainly wouldn't go that far. For a fact, we can collect a lot more and more varied experience with reality. There are good reasons to think that mindfulness can get us considerably closer to grasping reality as it is. Mindfulness can help us to get around many of the limitations of words and symbols. It has a well-proven value in helping us to true our lives, to adjust how we live in accordance with a higher degree of wisdom. It brings us closer to waking up and being truly alive. It allows us to put enough space between ourselves and the phenomenal to make more rational choices and avoid being victims and puppets of this and that. And it brings us a lot closer to understanding and accepting that all of our phenomena are going to be temporary, imperfect and inessential.

Phenomenology and self-examination are not the same as science, and there are always difficulties in assuming that we humans can be truly objective about anything. There are very few reasons, even for the most evolved among us, to forsake the second-person opinions of good friends, mentors, counselors, confidants and confessors. Peer review may be a drag in science, a generational brake on our headlong progress, but the right idea eventually takes hold. It is a healthy thing to keep questioning the precision of our own objectivity. Still, the Buddha asks us to dive right in and start trying to be objective about ourselves. It's really the only way to get the kind of first-hand experience that connects those abstract buttons and commands in our conscious minds to the more messy affairs of our neural circuits and glands.

Evolutionary psychology has taught us over the last few decades that we arrive with some considerable prepackaged neurological software, adaptive, evolutionary cognitive traits that the Buddha called formations (*sankharas*) conditioned by past intentional action (*kamma*). The world is notably different now from the one in which most of these cognitive traits evolved. The social world is a lot more complex. We have become by far our own worst predators. Xenophobia isn't serving us at all well anymore. Once-scarce resources are much easier to come by today, while once-

plentiful resources are growing more scarce. We invent new needs every day. Inherited cognitive traits are adaptive responses to an environment that no longer exists. Many of them allowed us to make snap judgments and fast, unthinking decisions in potentially life-threatening situations. This is "the 'first line of cognitive processing of all perceptions, including internally generated 'pseudo-perceptions', which automatically, subconsciously and near-instantaneously produces emotionally valenced judgments of their probable effect on the individual's well-being" ([Wiki](#)). We also evolved higher cortical functions that allow us to further ponder these matters, provided we have the time. We often have to wait for these to offer a more reasoned second opinion, but even here the gut instinct or knee-jerk reaction, even in error, may get the benefit of the doubt, having already mobilized forces such as adrenaline.

We developed such mental processes as pareidolia and apophenia, the abilities to perceive order where little or none presents itself in any obvious manner. These two give us an ability to make apparent sense of utter rubbish and nonsense, and jump to our conclusions with impressive speed. Pareidolia finds meaning in cloud formations and tea leaves. It also fuels the new age imagination and conspiracy theory. Apophenia will find meaning in white noise. Both are fundamental to creativity. Maybe it was better from the point of view of survival to imagine the tiger in the tall, striped grass or hear some menacing approach in the rustling of the wind, just to give us the tiniest bit of a head start. But these processes also give us an increasingly inaccurate picture of the world as the new world itself evolves. We do a lot of our responding to perceptual illusions. Anybody who has played with optical illusions or watched a magic show should get how convincing illusion can be.

The human capacity for self-deception and denial is very impressive. It would and probably should constitute a large sub-domain for the field of psychology. Psychologist and Buddhist scholar, Daniel Goleman, wrote an interesting book on the subject called *Vital Lies, Simple Truths: the Psychology of Self-Deception*, in which he scoped out the field from the microscopic world of cells up to the scale of global social and economic dynamics. With various explanations (which is instead of saying "for various reasons") we have evolved and maintained a number of whole categories worth of cognitive processes in which self-deception plays key roles. Most of these appear to be mental processes that we come equipped with, at least judging by their relative universality across human cultures.

One category is composed of our Cognitive Biases, when this is viewed as a set of flaws, or Cognitive Heuristics, when viewed more positively as a set of somewhat dated or primitive cognitive tools. "This ... explicitly challenges the prevalent view that humans are rational agents maximizing expected value/utility, using formal analytical methods to do so" (ib). These are perceptual and cognitive shortcuts that spare us pondering and agonizing when our urges are urging us on, or when the beast is snapping at our heels. About the best known of these is the confirmation bias, the inclination to cherry-pick information that confirms our preconceptions. The self-serving bias is another big one, our inclination to remember our successes and forget our failures. The scariest is the Bandwagon Bias, the force that holds the lemmings together, and the Nazis, and the Christians. Many dozens of these have been identified, as this ([Wiki](#)) list will attest.

A second category collects our Coping Strategies. These are cognitive and behavioral scripts that we use to manage our internal and external stresses when these appear to push the envelope of our limitations. We try to either master, minimize, or tolerate these stressors, but this is often accomplished at the expense of a more authentic view of the world or of ourselves within it. The strategies may address our appraisal or evaluation of the problem, or the causes and dimensions of the problem itself, or they

may reevaluate our own affective response to the situation in search of a calmer approach. An addict is likely to be quite familiar with some of the more maladaptive strategies, since addiction and denial themselves are two of them, but he might need to step back out of his problem for a while to begin to know them more clearly. Only a portion of our coping strategies can be called maladaptive. Buddhism or Dhamma-Vinaya itself might be called an adaptive coping strategy. Another ([Wiki](#)) list.

A third category is our arsenal of Defense Mechanisms. These are stratagems that we use to protect our egos, self-images or self-schemas from perceived threats, even if this means lying to ourselves or distorting reality. In George Eman Vaillant's (1977) categorization, defenses form a continuum related to their psychoanalytical developmental level. There are: 1) pathological defenses (psychotic denial, delusional projection), 2) immature defenses (fantasy, projection, passive aggression, acting out), 3) neurotic defenses (dissociation, intellectualization, reaction formation, displacement, repression), and 4) mature defenses (humor, sublimation, suppression, altruism, anticipation). It also considers some of the "mature defenses" to be immature. It is perfectly fine to use both Buddhism and meditation defensively, such as in dissociating yourself if you've been associating with the wrong thing. It is frequently OK simply to flee from trouble, to ignore a bad influence, to get distance from a thought that would otherwise over-involve or obsess us. We don't need to be mindful in ways that harm us.

A fourth category gathers together our Logical Fallacies. A crude but more easily-remembered introduction to these is Carl Sagan's "Baloney Detection Kit" ([see](#)), but this is a long way from being a complete list. See, for example, another ([Wiki](#)) list. Fallacy or specious reasoning underpins a lot of the propaganda, both intentional and inadvertent, that sways both individuals and whole cultures off the broad path to truth. A common example is the Excluded Middle fallacy that considers only two either-or extremes in a range of possibilities. Another is the Argument from Authority that assumes someone with greater power holds the greater answer. Another is *post hoc ergo propter hoc*: after this, therefore because of this. Many people take up heroin after smoking pot, therefore pot is a gateway drug that causes you to go further. In fact the gateways are 1) you discover that the government has been lying to you, so further investigation is warranted, 2) you can now regard yourself as an outlaw, so why not take another step? and 3) you have put yourself in contact with the black market and/or organized crime now, so you can purchase just about anything you can imagine. The Buddha's use of the Five Hindrances as a central set for exercises in *Samma Sati* suggests that the above four sets of *dhammas* or mental phenomena might also be well-used for this same purpose. Since the field of psychology is still a relatively backward science, still more of an art, and somewhat more bluff than true expertise, there are no complete and definitive lists of the *dhammas* within the above four categories. Partially because there is no authority to appeal to, it might be more interesting to try the following: Rather than attempt to develop a set of four lists of these processes here, I think I should simply suggest that the reader or recovering addict do some research and reading on these four subjects and come up with a personalized list of the processes that seem most relevant. Some of these categories have examples numbering in the dozens and hundreds but I would think that ten of each would be a good place to start. Then I would suggest taking them systematically and in order, perhaps working on one a day for forty days. This approach makes the exercise an inquiry on two levels: into the nature of the category of behavior and then down into the relevance of the particular activities and processes. Maybe these exercises could be thought of as a photographer getting to know his lenses and filters, to understand the mechanisms by which he sees what he sees, and those by which he also distorts what he intends to see.

For anyone who had read this far, we might assume that the seeker here is interested in doing the work needed to get past the self-deception and denial. This is not a light challenge. Most of these processes are used to serve, protect and defend the ideas of self that we have spent a lifetime in constructing. This tends to be regarded as a big and precious investment. Divestment will require at least some provisional disinterestedness or equanimity, founded on understanding that we cannot be fully committed to getting at the truth as long as protecting our own feelings from hurt remains a top priority. But it hurts my feelings quite a bit less if I try to understand that there is no real me to begin with, and that it's only this process of self-deception that will be doing the suffering.

## Right Concentration

*Samma Samadhi* is Right Concentration or concentrative absorption. The mind is fixed and held here on a single object or objective. This is a narrower application of one of the seven always-present mental functions called one-pointedness of mind (*cittekegata*), or focus.

As with Right Mindfulness, Right Concentration is developed in two aspects of mental concentration, culture or cultivation (*bhavana*): there is *Samatha Bhavana*, the development of tranquility, serenity or calmness and the fixedness of mind or concentration; and *Vipassana Bhavana*, the development of insight by introspection, seeing or knowing phenomena for what they are as they arise and disappear, the formations that are ever impermanent, unsatisfactory and not-self.

Regardless of the object, the initial stage of the meditation is called preliminary concentration (*parikamma-samadhi*) and the object taken up is the preliminary sign (*parikamma-nimitta*). Some meditation manuals collect the objects for serenity meditation into a set of forty, called the Places of Work (*kammatthana*). These forty include ten objects with colors (*kasinas*), physical objects which are turned into strictly mental objects; ten unattractive objects (*dasa asubha*), concerning death and decay; ten recollections (*dasa anussatiyo*), being an assortment of ideas from the scriptures such as the Three Refuges; the four sublime states (*Brahmaviharas*); four immaterial states (*aruppa*), discussed below, one perception (*eka sanna*) of the repulsiveness of food, and one analysis (*eka vavatthana*) of the being reduced to its material or elemental components. You can clearly see in some of these meditations a deliberate attempt to cultivate the more horrifying half of *samvega*. The serenity provides or permits the kinder half. There can be other objects of serenity meditation, which are usually prescribed by a teacher. On the other hand, the object of *vipassana* meditation can be anything requiring investigation. It can also be a simple, straightforward stream of consciousness meditation or momentary concentration (*khanika samadhi*), wherein the meditator just maintains mindfulness of the stream itself, while noting what emerges and dissolves, but clinging to nothing. This is equivalent to Zazen. The approach to absorption is called access or neighborhood concentration (*upacara samadhi*). This is being on the threshold, still examining, not yet one-pointed, not yet absorbed. The approach to full absorption, as anyone who has tried it will attest, is much like herding cats or monkeys. The work done collecting sources of energy is useful here. Distractions will abound, but mind is returned again and again to the center of focus, firmly but without any agitation or forcefulness. Full absorption is called *appana samadhi*. We are not really doing *samadhi* until we are doing *appana samadhi*, which names a progression through several layers of depth of concentration called *jhana*s. *Jhana* is the Pali equivalent of the Sanskrit *Dhyana*, the Chinese *Chan*, and the Japanese *Zen*.

### The Cetasikas of Right Concentration

As mentioned before, all *cittas* or mental states are accompanied by seven omnipresent *cetasikas* or mental processes (*sabba citta sadharana*), to wit: contact, feeling, perception, intention, one-pointedness, vitality and attention. One-pointedness or focus is of course central to *samadhi*, where it is augmented. One of its functions is to orient and unify the other factors. But *samadhi* also enlists the assistance of several more *cetasikas*. These are sometimes called the *jhana* factors or the factors of absorption. *Appana samadhi* names a state that is not really entered until all five of the Hindrances are brought under some degree of control. The *jhana* factors are applied towards this end and then released or transcended as deeper levels of concentration are

reached. The five mental factors mentioned and developed here are said to counter the Five Hindrances. They are *vitakka*, *vicara*, *piti*, *sukha* and *ekagatta*.

*Vitakka* is called the initial application of mind, directed or applied thought, conceptualization, mentation, the movement of the mind onto its object. It is closely related to *sanna*, perception, but follows this with ideation, not simply noting the salient features of a mental object but getting a boundary or a name around it to distinguish the figure from its ground.

*Vicara* is called the sustained application of mind, evaluation, analysis, examination, ongoing or discursive thought or reasoning. This allows us to examine a mental object from different points of view and across a span of time. It's a moving reflection, or a movement of perspective. This allows us to watch mental objects change and evolve. To distinguish this from conceptual proliferation (*papanca*), we might think of *vicara* as more linear, where the later thought follows from or is conditioned by the earlier thought. *Papanca* will branch in every direction that it can find a connection.

*Piti* is called exhilaration, elation, ecstasy, rapture, joy, bliss, delight, zest, refreshment, *brio* or enthusiasm. Elsewhere, this can often be an anticipatory state as *sukha*, below, but here it refers to the relishing of states already attained, and thus it is less in danger from disappointment.

*Sukha* is happiness, pleasantness, pleasure, satisfaction, blessedness, ease, happiness, well-being and sweetness. It has the same Indo-European root as sugar. Here again it refers to the relishing of mental states already attained, instead of happy anticipation and potential disappointment.

*Ekagatta* is one-pointedness of mind, focus, concentration, singleness of preoccupation. This mental factor is broader in scope than *samadhi*, which is specifically concentration with wholesome mental factors, while the focus of *ekagatta* could be that of a hunter about to kill, or neutral, as with someone threading a needle. It is the mental equivalent of foveal vision.

*Upekkha*, equanimity, is one of the four *Brahmaviharas*, and the seven enlightenment factors, and the ten perfections, but only finds its way onto the list of "beautiful *cetasikas*" by way of a synonym: *tatramajjhittata*, balance or neutrality of mind, equilibration, impartiality, equanimity, or even-mindedness. It is, however, mentioned here as one of the mental factors involved in *appana samadhi*, and so must also be assumed to be a *cetasika* here.

The Five Hindrances (*nivaranana*) are called thus specifically because they hinder or obstruct right effort, mindfulness and concentration. The hindrance of sensual craving (*kamacchanda*) is countered best with one-pointedness, which resists distraction; that of ill-will and aversion (*vyapada*) with exhilaration (*piti*); that of sloth and torpor (*thina-middha*) with applied thought (*vitakka*); that of restlessness and worry (*uddhacca-kukkucca*) with happiness (*sukha*); that of cynical doubt (*vicikiccha*) with sustained thought (*vicara*).

### **The Four Rupa Jhanas**

Four levels or stages of mental concentration or meditative absorption (*appana samadhi*) are described many times in the *suttas*. They are called the Four Fine-Material Absorptions (*Rupa Jhanas*) because they have some bounded form or mental object at their center. These are epistemic or psychological realities, not metaphysical ones. They are the training grounds for the development of insight. These four are progressive, as are the four still-more-mystical states to follow. As discussed, several mental factors are brought into the meditative process, and as they serve their function they are gradually left behind. These stages of concentration are defined by what we

have transcended and by what is still with us. It is counterproductive to think of these as spiritual attainments, even though they are a way of noting our progress.

With concentration on the First Jhana (*pathamajhana samadhi*) we are still accompanied by both applied and sustained thought, by ideas and their analysis (*vitakka-vicara*). We are still experiencing within reason, thinking discursively, even as we begin to fill with the higher affect of exhilaration and happiness (*piti* and *sukha*), which begins when we have detached or secluded ourselves (*viveka*) from the hindrances (*nivarana*). One-pointedness (*ekagatta*) is a necessary condition of this state.

With concentration on the Second Jhana (*dutiyaajjhana samadhi*) we detach ourselves from applied and sustained thought, from thinking and pondering (*vitakka-vicara*). Exhilaration and happiness (*piti-sukha*) now occupy more of our mind states as one-pointedness (*ekagatta*) becomes a truer concentration (*cetaso ekodibhava*) and we develop more internal confidence (*ajjhatai sampasadanai*).

With concentration on the Third Jhana (*tatiyaajjhana samadhi*) we leave exhilaration (*piti*) behind, but a happiness (*sukha*) related to abiding in equanimity (*upekkha*), or a "sweet equanimity" (*upekkhā-sukha*) stays with us. We have developed mindfulness (*sati*) and clear comprehension (*sampajanna*).

With concentration on the Fourth Jhana (*cututthajjhana samadhi*) we leave behind any happiness that might be related to a lack of pain, retaining only such imperturbable (*anenja*) forms as the happiness of renunciation (*nekkhamma sukha*), seclusion (*paviveka sukha*), peace (*upasama sukha*) and enlightenment (*sambodha sukha*). We abide with a purified mind consciousness (*parisuddha manovinnana*) arising from equanimity (*upekkha*). We are now "serene, pure, lucid, stainless, devoid of evil, pliable, able to act, firm and imperturbable." (Nyanatiloka, 1994, p. 34)

### **The Four Arupa Jhanas**

The next four meditations are now referred to as the four Formless or Immaterial Absorptions (*arupa jhanas*) or the Formless Realms, although they were not yet called *jhanas* when the Pali Canon was written. These states are "beyond bodily sensations, without sense of resistance, without attraction to the perception of diversity" (DN 9). Once again, these are simply experiences and not metaphysical worlds. As soon as they are transformed into entities with anything like an objective reality, they will try to become permanent, satisfying and spiritually yours. In these states, as the name indicates, the mind strives to transcend all form and boundary, image and visualization. Sensory and conceptual metaphors founded on our sense memories can be the hardest of all to let go of, if indeed this is even possible. This is especially true of our most abstracted sensory and conceptual metaphors of expansion in time and space.

There is a fun little mystery in our word "concentrate." Etymologically it means "with the center." But this does not mean the same thing as narrowness of focus to the exclusion of everything else. This is in its elements the same as the word concentric, as in concentric circles, like the ripples spreading on a pond. The outermost ring of these ripples is still concentric or concentrated on the center. The formless *jhanas* are expansive states. They do move outward from a center, but this is a center for which there is no boundary or circumference, since that would be *rupa* or form.

*Akasanancayatana* is meditation on the base, sphere or dimension of infinite or boundless space. Space is not the same as Nothing. If you were somehow able to travel to the emptiest and darkest part of our universe, you would find it still humming with electromagnetic and gravitational fields, enough weird and intangible stuff to hold light down to the speed of light. There will be plenty of starlight passing through the emptiest part of space. Space, which must now be thought to include Time, is perhaps

Existence's ability to accommodate existences, or simply the locus of the fact that it does. Physicists call the difference in energy between empty space and nothing "zero-point energy" and they even hope one day to exploit this gradient. The meditation on infinite space is practice in stretching and opening our minds in acceptance and accommodation. But we are not filling this space with anything yet. This is only a stretching exercise.

*Vinnacayatana* is meditation on the base, sphere or dimension of infinite or boundless consciousness. We have said many times here that consciousness in Buddhism is simply an emergent property, arising out of and conditioned upon the stream of existence, not a core or fundamental property of existence. Humans, being largely vulnerable, ungrateful and frightened narcissists, have great difficulty in coming to terms with the three marks of existence, *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anatta*. The vast majority will hasten to latch on to this idea of infinite consciousness, with the great relief that even the Buddha used the words, and think: "Aha! that is the infinite Deity of which I am a spark. This is the Deity with whom I will be reunited, that I might live forever, unchanging, in perfect bliss." But no, this is simply a meditation, by which we seek to expand our minds ever outward, to make room for everything that we could not otherwise be mindful of, to increase the reach of our minds. But we are not looking for anything here. We are not filling this consciousness with anything yet. This is only a stretching exercise.

*Akincannayatana* is meditation on the base, sphere or dimension of nothingness. This is the real nothing, not even no-thing, about which not much can be said. It is the vacuum abhorred by nature. Theories abound about how this is required for anything to come into being. The *En Sof* of Qabalah had to create *En* or Nothing before it could bring anything else into being. Only then could some of the Limitless Light (*En Sof Or*) be fed into any kind of context that enabled existence. Nothing allows for existence and is creative in this way. It is the capacity for existence, with capacity being a synonym for emptiness or nothing. We are not looking for anything here with this meditation. We are not putting anything into the context of this nothingness yet. This is only a stretching exercise.

*Nevasannasannayatana* is meditation on the base, sphere or dimension of neither-perception-nor-non-perception; there is nothing perceived, nothing not perceived. Even less can be said about this one, except that, unlike the first three meditations, we are already fully immersed in the possibilities of this experience. This is the same world that we attempt to imagine when we try to imagine the world as it truly is, the stream in which we, and everything we think we know, are just tiny and temporary eddies and bubbles. In this meditation we try to go to this place, into this stream, but paradoxically, at the same time, we quit trying to figure it out. This is reality as it is (*yathabhuta*), the ground of becoming (*bhavanga*), the stream (*sota*) and suchness (*tathata*). When immersion is complete this is release or liberation (*vimutti*) and the final extinction of identity (*nibbana*). We are probably not going all the way with this meditation. At least not in this lifetime. For now, this is primarily a stretching exercise.

In the end, the main point of Right Concentration is the creation and maintenance of the altered or alternate states of mind that are required for the cognitive flexibility that we need to put an end to our suffering. They do not themselves end suffering. Not all of these alternate states require a higher degree of consciousness, and particularly not the self-conscious consciousness that our new age narcissists are so fond of. With Flow, for instance, as described by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, we can emerge from ten straight hours of our single-minded, creative immersion and not have a clue where the time went, or where we were in that time. Stretching our mental horizons, we acquire a lot more room in our minds, room to move around in time or space, to distance

ourselves from the too-near, to get closer to the too-far, to circle around for newer perspectives, to frame our puzzles and problems in newer and more effective ways.

We appear to have evolved certain specific cognitive capabilities for these alternative states of mind that are founded or rooted in our neural structures and neurochemistry. These have, at a minimum, been exploited for dozens of millennia by the shamanic or proto-shamanic elements in our societies, using both rituals and entheogens. Abraham Maslow regarded such needs as self-actualization, personal growth, creativity, spontaneity, ethical evaluation, problem solving (for its own sake), transcendence, and acceptance as real needs of the very highest order, and, if this is so, it not surprising when these appear to have evolved some neurological support. Neuro-cognitive evolution has given us some fascinating capacities for trance and mystical states that have been of great service to our cultural inventiveness and hence our very survival, despite leaving us with such toxic byproducts as religious ideology and belief. When it was reported that part of the human brain is especially active during intense religious experience (Ramachandran, "Neural Basis of Religious Experience"), the religious were quick to call it the God Module. Alas, this is also the part wherefrom He tells us to kill the entire family. Further, it is even likely that we have evolved pathological processes that allow us to explore new cognitive pathways, as may be the case with the emergence of genius in certain forms of autism, or creativity in schizophrenia, or hypervigilance in paranoia. Do we have real drives to explore altered states, akin even to our drives for play and sex? This could be evidenced by the frequency with which they result in euphoric states. A reward system is likely to be selected for. But it may also be possible for such drives to exist and not be universal or species-wide. It is sometimes enough for evolution to give these gifts to only a portion of us, with some of them activated only epigenetically during our fetal development in response to certain environmental stressors. It seems unlikely from looking around that any form of Richard Bucke's "cosmic consciousness" will ever be a consistent or universal feature of the human experience.

### **We're Not There Yet**

The eighth and final step on the path does not bring us to the end of the path. The path is a metaphor. Maybe we could think of learning the steps as learning dance steps. The path doesn't end until the consequences of our intentional actions come to an end. The Buddha doesn't leave us with a promise of salvation here. His very last words were "compound beings are ephemeral, strive with heedful-diligence" (*vayadhamma samkhara, appamadena sampadetha*). It will all end in time. If we have no off-world descendants it could all end when our sun becomes a red giant, unless of course it was Hindu Vedantins who were right all along. In the doctrine it is claimed that many will step off the wheel and out of the journeying (*samsara*) long before this, and that many already have. In the Pali Canon there is a familiar valediction spoken by the Buddha and others who get free: "Birth is finished, the holy life has been lived, done is what had to be done, there is nothing further here" (DN 2).

In places in the doctrine, the Eightfold Path is subdivided into three categories of *Panna Sampada*, the Wisdom Attainments of Right View and Intention; *Sila Sampada*, the Moral Attainments of Right Speech, Action and Livelihood; and *Citta Sampada*, the Mental Attainments, of Right Effort, Mindfulness and Concentration. In these it is said that development of the Mental Attainments merely prepares us to begin again by bringing new and improved wisdom to our Wisdom Attainments. We have, in other words, done all of this hard work for the sake of a better beginning, starting over with better Views and Intentions.

In the *Mahacattarisaka Sutta* and elsewhere we are presented with two Surprise Bonus Steps. Lo, there are not eight but ten path factors (See AN 10.118), ten descriptions of the nearest and farthest shore and the journey across. Here the Ninth Step is *Samma Nana*, Right Knowledge. This is first-hand knowledge, clear comprehension, discriminating wisdom and penetrating insight. This step is said to include, among other things, the remembering of previous births (*pubbe nivasanussati-nana*), knowing the death and rebirth of sentient beings according to their *kammas* (*sattanam cutupapata-nana*) and knowledge of the destruction or exhaustion of the defilements, taints, cankers or stains (*asavakkhaya-nana*). The Tenth Step is *Samma Vimutti*, or Right Liberation, becoming completely unbound (*parinibbuta*), having done what was to be done. It is liberation through acquired wisdom or discernment (*pannavimutti*). We're not there yet. This could take a while.

## Appendices - Surveying the Field

There are, of course, many who believe with all of their hearts that the Buddha's wisdom was perfect, that his word on the human condition was the final word, that the Dhamma he left for us would need no amendment, that the Discipline he left us is all we could ever need to get free. It might go against the teachings to spank these people, or to dunk them in icy water, but in some cases they might benefit from such an awakening. We've learned a lot about the human mind and the minds of our fellow sentient creatures in the twenty-five centuries since the Buddha's final release or *parinibbana*. We've learned much about craving and aversion, and about how these processes can further entrench and armor themselves as addiction and denial.

H. H. the Dalai Lama offers us his succinct understanding of doctrinal evolution: "If science proves some belief of Buddhism wrong, then Buddhism will have to change. In my view, science and Buddhism share a search for the truth and for understanding reality. By learning from science about aspects of reality where its understanding may be more advanced, I believe that Buddhism enriches its own worldview."

One of the Buddha's primary teachings was to use the information that we have personally verified and not simply believe what our teachers tell us. Many would argue that this does not open any door to eclecticism, or to cherry-picking, or high-grading the doctrine. But I, for one, am a fundamentalist eclectic and think it right to pick and choose. While it makes some good sense to look at systems as a whole and understand their creators' main ideas within their intended contexts, it makes no sense to load ourselves up with ideas, rules, and scripts that we will never need. And it certainly makes no sense at all to reject good ideas, rules, and scripts for the simple reason that they lie outside of a cherished system of belief. That said, we can take some time with the following Appendices to explore what those other people are doing, those other alcoholists and their alcoholology.

Dhamma-Vinaya has been known to the West for a few centuries now, and not all of its significant influences on our Western culture have been explicit or acknowledged. Naturally it has been particularly attractive to psychologists and, to a lesser extent, philosophers. There are, therefore, likely to be a number of ideas emergent in the field of psychology that have derived their original inspiration from Buddhist thought. This is in addition to the co-evolution and co-discovery of human universals and convergent evolution due to universals. It should not be surprising to find strong parallels between Dhamma-Vinaya and several of psychology's disciplines and practices.

## A Buddhist's Look at the 12-Steps

Please note that this is not entitled "A Buddhist look..." and also recall that I am not, strictly speaking, a Buddhist. This is a look at the Twelve Steps from an adopted Theravadan Buddhist-like point of view. It would be presumptuous to speak here for Buddhism in general, within which lies much variation.

### Attempts to Merge Twelve Steps with Eight

There is no question that 12-Step programs like Alcoholics and Narcotics Anonymous have done a lot of good for a lot of people. Most of the evidence may be anecdotal, and the scientific analysis isn't there, but people have been getting and staying sober with these programs for a long time. These programs are not for everybody, however. Working the 12-Step programs with any kind of doctrinal fidelity may necessitate the adoption of certain philosophical, religious and spiritual ideologies and assumptions that many consider to be just as toxic as the behavior patterns that they are trying to escape. Particularly controversial is the request made to a deity for help out of a situation over which one has no control, out of a predicament that one has no responsibility for entering. Buddhists, being non-theistic and committed to the idea that we are each responsible for the consequences of our own intentional choices and actions (*kamma*), may be troubled by this problem. Many will refuse to buy into a toxic narrative, seeing this as asking for more evaluative beliefs of the sort that lead them astray to begin with. But it isn't at all necessary to trade one for the other.

Almost all of the Buddhist recovery programs to date have attempted to capitalize on the success and popularity of the 12-Step programs by offering Buddhist versions, wherein each of the more familiar twelve steps is rephrased in more Buddhist-sounding terms. There are two big problems with this: 1) The fit is a poor one. The Buddhist doctrine has its own internal structure that is organized around an entirely different psychological model of mind and its place in the universe, and 2) The ideas for which Buddhist counterparts are sought are often irrelevant to the real problems at hand. There are other difficulties with many of the Buddhist 12-Step programs. After rendering their steps into Buddhist-sounding terms, they may offer little else beyond a recitation of the fifth precept of *Samma Kammanta*, to wit: "restraint from using wine, liquor or intoxicants which result in heedlessness or negligence (*pamada*) of the mind or emotions," and then remind us that meditation is mentioned in the Eleventh Step. These will generally regard Buddhism as more of a supplement to the twelve steps, when in fact the general program of Dhamma-Vinaya has point-by-point applications to the problems of addiction and denial which are sufficient to the task on their own. It is true that Buddhist analogs can be found to many of the twelve steps, and also to "apocryphal" elements of the programs that lie outside the twelve enumerated practices. But the place to identify these is in an appendix, not in a rearrangement of Buddhist doctrine. This chapter and the next will attempt this analysis, because we do still have much that we can learn from other recovery programs.

One of the questions to ask here is: what are the ingredients in religious and spiritual experience that allow the 12-Step programs to work, and can these be isolated from the wrongheaded notions of a father god? Are we prepared to also account for people sobering up under the questionable guidance of the televangelists, and signs found on burned tortillas and toast? Another important question is: how far do we intend to go beyond simply ending the addictive behavior? There is much to be done in the first year of sobriety that may take nearly all of the recovering addict's attention, but many are fully prepared to see this as a lifelong struggle. While it is laudable that the end steps of the program encourage the more successful to reach back and help others to

recover, there is really nothing said about simply moving on and putting addiction behind you. It's really a question of freedom from versus freedom for or to. Many will want to set themselves up for a gradual transition to a life with addiction well in the past and nearly forgotten, having now returned to higher pursuits and purposes. Many will only retreat by backing up, and many of these will become addicted to the meetings or the recovery program itself, or else to their substituted religious delusions. Others will retreat by walking away facing forward, leaving their problems behind, still not forgetting lessons well and thoroughly learned.

## **The Twelve Traditional Steps**

*Step One: We admitted that we were powerless over alcohol and that our lives had become unmanageable.*

It might be legitimate to claim that to date we have demonstrated an apparent powerlessness over our addictive behavior and have so far failed in our attempts to manage this problem. But the step as written actually helps to put the speaker into a position of powerlessness, if not one of inanimacy, like some insentient and lifeless puppet. This is the victim mentality: I have no power, and so ultimately I have no responsibility for being here. My childhood made me do it. My disease made me do it. My genetics made me do it. The devil made me do it. This flies in the face of one of Buddhism's most fundamental postulates: *sabbe satta kammassa*, all beings own their *kamma*. You got yourself into this mess with your unwholesome views, intentions and actions. It is up to you to get yourself out. In fact, you might truly have had a messed up childhood, you may have a disease at work here, and you might even have inherited a genetic susceptibility to developing addictive behavior patterns. All three of these things may in fact have been contributing factors, but the most that can be authentically said is that they have made it somewhat easier to develop an addictive disorder, and that they can make it somewhat more difficult to break completely free. Addiction is both a disease and a choice, but only regarding it primarily or ultimately as a choice will offer an authentic way out that doesn't require delusional thinking.

According to emergence theory, one of the problems we face here is that we are not born with a fully formed faculty of agency or will. This is something that develops out of our also-emerging sense and cognitive assessment of who and what we are. It may also be plausibly argued that most human beings never really develop self-efficacy to any noteworthy degree, but merely drift along in a tide of peers and social pressures. Agency and will require nurturing, and this makes Step One dangerous as a self-fulfilling prophesy. In the "How it Works" section of the AA Big Book it is said: "Remember that we deal with alcohol, cunning, baffling, powerful! Without help it is too much for us." Alcohol is not sentient. It has no agency. It is not cunning, or baffling, or powerful. But alcohol is only a simple, colorless liquid composed of simple, organic, sugar-like molecules. To somehow see this as being "out to get us" is, in fact, paranoia. But so is believing that the creator of the universe stands ready to correct our mistakes for us, or that his arch-rival is out to undo us. Agency and will are tender things at first, and have likely taken quite a beating so far in suffering the consequences of an addict's unwholesome behavior. These don't need Step One to make things even worse. We can simply admit instead that we have failed to occupy an effective causal position relative to this problem. The image of ourselves as being passively swept along here might keep us from examining the motives that brought us here.

The deeper understanding of the first step to be taken in the recovery process is almost completely obscured by the toxic verbiage. We need to accept the reality of our

situation and then acknowledge that something important has been missing. This is different from accepting the reality as the facts of life. It's OK to accept that we have come to this bad state of affairs. We need to admit reality instead of admitting defeat. Once again, acceptance is not the same thing as approval. Acceptance of things as they are is the first step in changing them in realistic ways. Yes, we have been caught up in a vicious cycle: eventually, drinking is what we do to temporarily blot out the suffering caused by the drinking. But we are only powerless within the ambit or orbit and limitations of that cycle. There are known ways to step off or out of this, into a larger world that is full of other options. Something is very wrong with an identity that leaves me feeling powerless and unable to manage my own life. But this identity does not yet encompass all of the options that are available to me. The solution may simply require me to step outside of myself and locate a new sense of purpose, heedfulness and diligence. Outside of the vicious circle, powerlessness is not so permanent.

As we saw in Chapter Three, *samvega* is the best candidate experience for turning us around here. It's the more positive way to hit bottom and thus change direction abruptly, and it's less painful by far than insanity, prison, injury, sickness and death. It still means that you can't go on like this. But the *samvega* experience really means it. Suffering is loaded with all sorts of useful information if only we can get our wrongheaded views and reactions even temporarily out of the way. This suggests finding some way to get past our ego, our big conceit, and our self-deceptions. This helps to collapse the self-serving and other biases that distort our view of things, without the shame and guilt cycles that require a twisted, negative sense of self-importance. There is a place for an admission of defeat, but this is merely the defeat of a construct of self that has proven ineffective, the delusion that we have been identifying with. It is not a defeat for the new thing that can take its place, the new management. Neither of these, according to the Buddha, is the real you anyway, so why not choose the one least inimical to our well-being and wholesomeness? *Samvega* is only the first step here, a moment of clarity. It cannot by itself override the unconscious, automatic, compulsive behavior, but it can let the bad gas out of the delusions that supports this.

*Step 2: Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.*

It is clear in the 12-Step literature that the only higher power really being referred to here is a god. A great deal of words are used to explain the liberality of the use of the name, but ultimately it is still the male sky-god of the Judeo-Christian-Islamic traditions, the one with a plan, the one who loves us deeply enough to send us to hell for all eternity for disobedience. *The Big Book*, in Chapter 4, "We Agnostics," pleads with the newcomer to be patient and just allow the program work, but this is inauthentic as a call to any honest inquiry and is at bottom smug in its implication that when you are well or more mature you will find that this god is the real thing. Also in this chapter it is asserted that when this higher power is seen to work this constitutes empirical evidence of its validity or reality, with no acknowledgement of the psychodynamics of surrender or the placebo effect. Step Two goes as far as asserting that "One who won't believe in God is in a savage state of mind." It is truly interesting, if sometimes painful, to watch people in recovery trying to salvage what they can from this by twisting the idea of higher power: "I can even take that doorknob for my higher power because that doorknob doesn't need a drink." I went to such lengths myself and tried using the physicist's definition of power as "the rate at which energy transforms," and then saw life itself as the power to transform my cheeseburgers into serenity, courage and wisdom. Life was a higher power to the extent that it elevates things, but ultimately the arising was still my job. I'm not sure how much good that did at that pre-

*samvega* stage of recovery, but at least I didn't need to entertain patent falsehoods and fairy tales.

While some forms of Buddhism are more religious than others, most would agree that any higher power in Buddhism would be pretty much the same as the one in science. It would not have a plan for you. It would not love or even like you. There exist people who are higher and more evolved than you who would be more than happy to help you straighten out your life, but these are all creatures, not the creator. The Buddha never really spoke of a power greater than ourselves or even of a larger interconnectedness, other than the Stream out of which we emerge and into which we dissolve and are no more. Power would certainly not be a volitional entity with a purpose or a plan.

What we can be sure of relative to a power greater than ourselves is that something significant is missing from our makeup, our world view, our intentions, our ethics, our values, and our mindfulness. There is a big missing piece to our puzzle, as indicated by our suffering. If it isn't buried deep within us then it must be "out there" still, in the powerful world that is truly greater than ourselves. I can still come to understand (rather than believe) that there is something I'm missing if others are sobering up. I can come to see that others have addressed and beat this problem, and I can acknowledge that many of them had terminal specialness just like me. Maybe the bottom line in this is in first getting some kind of real humility, about how much of everything is greater than ourselves. When this is truly known we may be encouraged to get out of ourselves and do some more exploring for what is missing. There are even paths with signs that suggest this and people moving along them without weaving and puking. We don't need to come to believe in anything. We need to acknowledge the evidence that there is in fact at least one way out, and then set about to make it part of our repertoire of life skills. Getting outside of ourselves is to get things from outside of ourselves. Einstein's definition of insanity was "doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results." It may therefore prove that the different thing we need to do next time is something we will find out there, in our culture, or maybe in something that nature has to teach us. To do this we need a higher appreciation for the potential of second-hand knowledge, in order to avoid making all of the mistakes for ourselves. We need more respect of the sort that comes with humility. The word re-spect means "to look again."

*Step 3: Made a decision to turn our will and our life over to the care of God as we understood Him.*

It is probable that most addicts have made a series of bad decisions and probably understandable that they might now want to externalize their steering and control functions. AA has its point in referring to an addict's loss of control as "self-will run riot," and even its assertion that the locus of control stands much in need of shifting. The Buddhist program isn't about surrender: it's about our being victorious in a noble way. There are things which need to be surrendered, of course, although "renounced" is a much better term for Dhamma-Vinaya. We renounce the things that have been dragging us down. We blow ballast. We cut away the necrotic parts. We dump parts of who we have been. We abandon people we mistakenly regarded as friends. We part ways. We do understand that there are places in our lives where we need to submit and accept help. We might surrender some of our sense of self-reliance and accept some refuge in assistance from others. But this refuge or sanctuary does not free us from working on ourselves, from deciding what we want to become. It is not a place to hide.

There is also a viable alternative to "surrendering to a higher power" to be found in "serving a higher purpose." Higher purpose may be regarded as directed behavior that is a function of something greater, better, more lasting, or more sustainable than we are as sentient bags of mortal meat. Both require a trust that after this reawakening there

will be new options for us on the other side. But this is where Theistic faith and Buddhist faith, or *saddha*, part ways. Buddhists have no business with a god. To the extent that we suffer we are going to twist our cognition and affect around in order to see what we want to see. There is, therefore, no reason to have faith in what we see, and much less in what we cannot. We still make a decision to try something new without clearly seeing the end of the process. We trust that waking up further will allow us to locate more options or choices. And finally, being in service to a higher purpose can give us the evidence that leads to *prasada*, serene confidence, whereas blind faith may only lead to smugness. Many confuse these two.

*Step 4: Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.*

It is more than a little surprising that so few Buddhist reinterpretations of the 12-Steps focus on Step Four because this step is almost perfectly consistent with Buddhist Doctrine and Discipline. This will not correlate to any specific step on the Eightfold Path because such an inventory runs throughout the Buddhist program's eight steps. It might only require us tweaking the term "moral inventory" to "ethical inventory" to imply a process of rigorous philosophical and psychological investigation instead of the adoption of our society's mores. We are not obliged to agree with everything the 12-Step literature says about Step Four, but here is another partially relevant statement: "Nearly every serious emotional problem can be seen as a case of misdirected instinct ... we want to find out exactly how, when and where our natural desires have warped us." We should not be so quick to make instinct (presumably meaning natural tendencies) the primary culprit in our suffering. The Buddha did identify seven Latent Tendencies (*anusayas*) that approach some of the implications of the word instinct here, while allowing nature to be not-all-bad or contrary to god's plan for us. These seven were: sensual lust, hostility, prejudice, cynicism, conceit, ego and ignorance (see Glossary, *Anusayas*). But it is not our natural desires that have warped us. It is what we have made of, or done with, our natural desires, what we have created as workarounds following the thwarting of these desires. Simple conduct with respect to primary instincts or needs is what must move us along if we're to survive, and we need to honor these instead of deny them.

*The Big Book*, in Chapter 5, "How it Works" relates failure to being "incapable of grasping and developing a manner of living which demands rigorous honesty." Setting aside the problems that we may have with the dishonesty of theistic approaches, our capacity for rigorous honesty in developing insight into our views, intentions, behavior patterns and practice is in fact a key to success. The big problem here shows up when we try synching honesty to being objective about ourselves. Any ethical inventory in Buddhism means looking long and hard at both the good and the harm that we have done. Certainly one of the important points in doing any inventory is to identify damaged or unsaleable merchandise, but we also want to tally our assets. The development of the wholesome is as important to Right Effort as the prevention of the unwholesome. We want to inventory our virtues and strengths as well as our failings. We should also understand that some of our failures might have had good components. We might sometimes be inclined to renounce all that we were, to paint the whole past in a negative light and the bulk of our behavior as monstrous, rousing ourselves to self-loathing and contempt, all in order to give us some sort of momentum to start fresh. This is also dishonesty.

The good that we do doesn't lie in our good intentions, so it's difficult for us to be a good judge of our own character. The good lies in what becomes of these good intentions. This morality is pragmatic, and often situational. This means our inventory needs to process feedback from outside of ourselves. We are well-served by getting

second opinions. In Buddhism there is the *sangha* or community for help here. In 12-Step recovery there is the group and the sharing of our stories. In both of these there are usually peers to help with the second opinion, usually people who have used the same lies and self-deception that we have, and it's almost a relief to know that we are very likely to get caught and called out if we try to lie here.

The use of the term fearless is also quite appropriate to Buddhism. We are not talking about the fear of walking along high ledges here, or of bandits in the bushes, but of confronting the problems deep within our psyche, particularly those that have managed to armor themselves against discovery and correction, such as addictive behaviors. We need to map what we own here, and own what is ours, taking responsibility for our problems, dealing sometimes ruthlessly with denial, defenses and biases. The focus on what has been done to us shifts to what has been done by us, including the part we have played in becoming a victim. We haven't entirely lost the ability to blame others, but rigorous honesty demands we give all credit where actually due. We have invested a great deal of time and energy in developing our neuroses, cravings, aversions and delusions, and we can't expect them to go gently. This is not a task for sissies and cowards.

*Step 5: Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.*

Two-thirds of this step, at least, is consistent with Dhamma-Vinaya. The tradition of confession is also practiced in Buddhism, particularly in the *sangha*, where it is a regular process termed *apatti desana*, meaning confession of wrongdoing, infractions, offenses or faults. Confession is the opposite of blame. But unlike in Catholicism, there is no subsequent absolution, no lifting of accountability. There is certainly a feel-good element to this. In *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, the sense of great relief that is felt in unburdening is described: "The dammed-up emotions of years break out of their confinement, and miraculously vanish as soon as they are exposed. As the pain subsides, a healing tranquility takes place. And when humility and serenity are so combined, something else of great moment is apt to occur." The healing sense of release is described here in Christian terms as the arrival of god's grace. In Buddhism it is simply a species of *pamojja*, relief, with maybe a touch of *piti*, or rapture.

There are several dimensions to the positive affect that follows from confession. It may be regarded as the first step to being forgiven. And the first step to receiving counsel. There may be a hope of a reconciliation in the process and thus the promise of being on both sides of forgiveness. There are positive feelings that are associated with the extending of trust. In addition to acknowledging the pain we have caused, there is also the likely possibility of discovering the pain we did not cause, but only feared we had. It may be that a lot of the people we thought we had hurt really couldn't care less. Despite the fact that our emotions are not the same as hydraulics, there is at least the feeling that dammed up affect is being released. Internalized guilt and shame do feel like pressure and certainly are stressful. Another apt analogy reminds us that sunlight is the best disinfectant, that things kept in the dark will only fester there, and rot us from the inside. And there is a more cerebral, cognitive satisfaction that insights from a second opinion or another point of view will soon be coming our way. The tremendous effort put into concealment is relieved when we stand up and say *ecce homo*.

Confession does a lot, but it is sufficient to attribute what it gives us to our evolved affective and cognitive processes. It is also the exercise of *Samma Vaca*, Right or True Speech. But again, it brings us no absolution. The damage that we've done and the pain we've caused are the *kammic* wake that is following behind us. There is no escaping this, only dealing with it. Buddhists cannot just walk away here to sin some more. It is

vital to declare and own this damage and pain with *karuna* or compassion, to try to feel it as it was felt by those we have wronged, as the first step in setting things right. Our *kamma* is never undone simply in theory, or by mouthing a prayer.

*Step 6: Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.*

This of course is completely inconsistent with Dhamma-Vinaya, with the exception of the word ready and some of the entirely. There is no easy path to salvation in Buddhism, particularly in the Theravada school. It is a lifetime of practice with heedfulness and diligence, usually just to get us partway there. We are now learning things about our defects of character, especially that they are learned or conditioned behaviors, and so we learn that they can be unlearned or reconditioned. We are learning renunciation. After authentically owning our defects we move into a position where we can authentically disown them. First we need to understand that they are peripheral to what we are. Even who we are, or who we seem to be, is a function of the life that we choose to practice. We can start revaluing our difficulties as worthy of being discarded. Once we get some authority over our impressive powers of denial, we can start to say "This is not mine, this is not me, this is not who I am." *Sama Vayama*, Right Effort, is the practice of refilling the voids left by these "losses" with wholesome practices. We may not have a higher power, but our higher projects and purposes will certainly help diminish the attractiveness of practicing our defects. The investments that we have made in these start to look less significant as losses, and much easier to cut. To an extent this is simply a natural function of developing insight and a growing knowledge of our options.

We can, however, take a deep breath and say "let the healing begin." Since we maintain our defects by effort, by clinging and resentment, by actively practicing them, letting these go means letting them go away, letting them not be continually created and maintained. We let nobody practice these defects, we let it not be us doing these behaviors. There is in fact a real passive element to this process. Being more or less entirely ready is to open the windows and doors, to invite circulation, to invite sunlight, to invite energy into what has been a more stagnant system. And then, in the words of Harold Morowitz in *Energy Flow in Biology*, "the flow of energy through a system acts to organize that system." We can accomplish much with *wu wei* or not-doing. Simple self-organization does much of the cleaning out and cleaning up when the system gets more energetic and dynamic. Self-organization is negative entropy. And health breeds more health.

*Step 7: Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.*

The humility here is consistent with Dhamma-Vinaya, although we should be careful to understand humility as something quite other than self-effacement. And Buddhists can humbly ask that shortcomings be removed, but it would be inconsistent to ask this of somebody other than ourselves. At least this approach acknowledges that these shortcomings have been devalued to a negative worth in preparation for detachment. We can ask our friends for some help. We can even ask friends who died twenty-five centuries ago, if we are honest about what kind of help they still have to offer while remaining dead. Prayer is different in Buddhism from what we see in the West, and is quite unrelated to petitionary prayer. It is an expression of our humble intent, a sharing of good will with the world, not a request for favors and gifts. Meister Eckhart had a sort of Buddhist slant on the subject when he said it would suffice if the only prayer we ever said was "thank you." He also said that to ask the divine for anything other than more of the divine was faithless and false.

*The Big Book*, in Chapter 5, "How it Works," declares that "we claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection." This shows the right attitude, insofar as this can be practiced without coming to believe that "He" has already responded to the prayer by granting salvation. This can be a slippery slope to smugness and further delusion. We should probably even be cautious in using the word spiritual, and redefine this without reference to any sort of immortal spirit. Once again, salvation is a lifetime of heedfulness and diligence even to get part of the way there. What we wind up doing here is setting our intentions to renounce unwholesome, inferior and ignoble patterns and then replace them with something more worthy. A combination of weeding and cultivation is particularly relevant to the step of *Samma Vayama* or Right Effort. The loss of a negative state is the loss of an energy drain, the plugging of a leak, and so, in the math of it all, it is as important as finding new sources of energy.

*Step 8: Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.*

This step is also consistent with Dhamma-Vinaya. All beings own their *kamma*. Recall that *kamma* is understood here as intentional action and its consequences. Religious devotees tend to overstate *kamma* as a law of nature, with statements such as "everything comes to us by way of the law of merit (*punna*)" and its corollary that nothing does not. They may even take this a step further and state that to merit something is to deserve something. Then, because bad things happen to good people and good things to bad, the effect of the law must be extended across two or more lifetimes. There is no need for us to do this here. The so-called law of *kamma* is not some cosmic retributive justice system. There is nobody doing the accounting. We do not need to suggest that six million Jews or ten million Native Americans deserved their respective genocides. It is enough to state that good *kamma* will improve our odds for good consequences coming back from our well-intentioned actions, and for negative consequences from unskillful or unwholesome behavior. This is still enough to merit an accounting. Unlike in 12-Step programs, we also want to account for the damage we have done to ourselves, the damage done to us by others, and the good we have done as well. We need to take a comprehensive look at what is ripening (*vipaka*) out of what we have sown, the fruits (*phala*) of our behavior, to get a clear sense of the scope of our problems here and begin to understand the degree of commitment that it will take to set things right. We need to clarify the bigger picture of our own role in creating our situation and own it, to see clearly who was truly harmed, who wasn't harmed, who really had it coming, who didn't care or mind. Often, where we can take responsibility, we can also then let go of the resentments we carry in blaming others, which is usually a welcome unburdening all by itself. Forgiving is every bit as important as being forgiven. Resentment derives from re-sentiment, to feel the same thing over and over, to keep hammering ourselves with the same emotions. This only drives us in circles. Sentiment is information. If we are paying attention we only need to take it in once.

Understanding the full scope of the greater ethical or *kammic* problem is only the first step, but it is critical. The ultimate aim is making amends, not being forgiven. Although this will often, and even usually, lead to being forgiven, the important thing is the gaining the compassion or the empathy needed to begin to feel what we have done as others have felt it. It is this that will set us on course and teach how better to move through through the social order without negative repercussions. It is this that will move us to actually do the work of making amends,

*Step 9: Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.*

This step too is fully consistent with Dhamma-Vinaya. We encounter this in its most straightforward form in the Eightfold Path step of *Samma Kammanta*, or Right Action. While *Right Action* is usually understood in Buddhism as concentrating on the Precepts, instructions on several types of behavior to avoid performing, *Samma Kammanta* can legitimately be translated "good karma," implying the directive to do or practice the right thing proactively. There are also applications of this making of amends in *Samma Vaca*, Right Speech, and *Samma Ajiva*, Right Livelihood.

*Kammanta* as "karma repair" is a Buddhist form of redemption, though this is more from error than from sin. Forgiveness in both directions is a big part of this, and these amends can even be justified in the selfish terms of giving someone the gift of forgiving us. Sometimes we find out that others didn't care, and that the guilt was all in our heads, but even that helps to repair our heads. Sometimes, too, we can find ourselves repairing relationships that really aren't worth repairing, or re-friending those whom we are better off leaving behind. But the making of such repairs is not a commitment to linger there.

We encounter a situational ethic here in the exception "except when to do so," which is not typical in the theistic point of view with its black-and-white ideas. This complicates things a bit, since we're called on to use courage, good timing, sensitivity, subtlety, prudence, tact and other such skills that seem unrelated to the making of amends, but then we are becoming fit again to live among others, and social reintegration, to a limited but elevated extent, is an articulated goal of Dhamma-Vinaya, particularly the Vinaya part that develops an ethical structure for the *sangha* or fellowship. We are learning that a local atmosphere of trust, intimacy and friendship is weather that we can to some extent control and so is worth rebuilding and maintaining.

*Step 10: Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.*

This is obviously compatible with Dhamma-Vinaya, with no alteration or "but" required. An ongoing commitment to a personal inventory is *Samma Sati*, Right Mindfulness, and the cultivation of a conscience that courageously and continuously faces up to our errors is represented in Buddhist doctrine by *hiri*, moral shame tied to dignity and self-respect, the internal sense of wrong, and *ottappa*, ethical wariness and due regard for the external consequences of wrongdoing. *Hiri* and *ottappa* develop along with our insights.

The ongoing inventory is a little easier than the original one if we are practicing *Samma Vayama* or Right Effort properly and we are actively suppressing the development of unwholesome patterns, but the human mind is tricky and eternal vigilance the price of personal freedom too. Resentments become easier to identify when we are paying attention. When you've had the same bad feeling before, only moments or days before, you know now that it has already given you the information you needed and now it can be set free. There really isn't anything easy about *apamada*, diligent and heedful practice, except that it makes life run a lot smoother. Life is an ongoing process, and the processing of feedback as we are moving along is a big key to the self-organizing dynamics that make contrived and self-conscious reorganization less necessary. In other words, troubles don't build up in ways that require unnatural correction. Now we take a frequent look at our lives just like we take a daily shower. Eventually the practice becomes second nature. When we stay in balance we stop creating resentments.

The 12-Step literature goes way too far when it says "It is a spiritual axiom that every time we are disturbed, no matter what the cause, there is something wrong with us." It may be that the only thing wrong with us is that we have allowed ourselves to be disturbed in a way that leaves us less effective. We'll talk more on this in the next chapter, but for now let's just say that there are things going wrong in the world that should move people to action. If it is ineffective to let yourself be disturbed, then be something else that at least allows you to not make the problems worse. Once again, our acceptance is not approval. *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* closes its Step Ten with some good wisdom: "Learning daily to spot, admit and correct these flaws is the essence of character building and good living. An honest regret for harms done, a genuine gratitude for blessings received, and a willingness to try for better things tomorrow will be the permanent assets we shall seek."

*Step 11: Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.*

Buddhists can keep "... meditation to improve our conscious ..." as the baby here, and let the bathwater go. We're not even going to include the word contact (*phassa*) here, since that will only lead to attachment. Not surprisingly, the 12-Step recovery Buddhists tend to get themselves all wet and excited over the use of the word meditation here. Prayer, not so much, although Buddhists have a form of prayer that is better described as expressing higher intentions. What we are seeking through meditation is a more precise knowledge of our nature and then more useful ways to optimize the fact that we can be conscious. We seek knowledge of which way to go from here. We seek awareness of how to live more skillfully. We seek through mindfulness and right intention how to wake up, quit suffering, and quit spreading suffering.

The main points of practicing Buddhist meditation are twofold: finding our equilibrium or serenity (*samatha*) and developing insight (*vipassana*). We need no external will for us, and the healthy states that we attain by meditation provide all the power we need to get up and carry ourselves out.

*Step 12: Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics and to practice these principles in all our affairs.*

There is a hint of the Mahayana "Bodhisattva vow" in this last step. We may turn back and help others. In the ten Oxherding pictures of Zen, the highest accomplishment is to find ourselves back in the world with giving hands. David Viscott, in a quote often altered and attributed to Joy Golliver or Picasso, noted: "The purpose of life is to discover your gift. The work of life is to develop it. The meaning of life is to give it away." It is an enlightened self-interest to be giving our gifts away, not a duty imposed from without, but a description of how gifts and the gifted behave. It should be noted that the phrase "carrying the message" does not imply proselytizing in 12-Step programs, and Tradition Eleven specifically states that relations should be based on "attraction rather than promotion." In other words, let the visible improvements that you are making in your life do the talking and do your leading by example. When we do teach, we use *upaya*, or skillful means, and present the teaching at the level at which individuals are prepared to receive it. Unfortunately, many-to-most people seem only to be prepared to receive instruction at the level offered by 12-Step programs, complete with the theology and the victim-disease paradigm. For many, to adopt such a position even for pragmatic purposes, is to tell lies and so violate *Samma Vaca*. While compassion will come with our understanding, the Theravada Buddhist isn't obliged by

any doctrinal ethic to serve others, but it is recognized that increasing our serenity and insight contribute to making the world a better place. And anybody who has found a higher purpose is at least living beyond themselves now and is dedicated to a broader life. This is not the same as altruism, nor is altruism required. It may be that a Buddhist in recovery is moving past all things related to addiction, including the addicts still suffering, and sometimes even past the people who are living in the present century.

It would be pretentious for a Buddhist to claim spiritual awakening, as even the word spiritual is problematic. This is not to say that Buddhists don't do it. Awakening is by steps and still a long way off for somebody just entering recovery. We might claim that we have at least made the journey from humiliated to humbled, and that's a lot.

Practicing our principles in all our affairs has its Buddhist counterpart in *Samma Ajiva* or Right Livelihood, which goes beyond the things we do for money, and even beyond our labors of love to the way that we live our lives. Every day is "bring your Buddha to work day." Human is as human does. Wisdom is in living the wisdom, discriminating in right action, not theorizing. Real awakening has no room for hypocrisy. Or glamor either: we chop wood and carry water to express our highest wisdom.

## Lessons from the 12-Steps other than Steps

I've spent almost all of my adult life in or near small, rural towns, with the nearest stoplight nearly two hours away. This meant that my choice of meetings was limited solely to AA. Being a fundamentalist eclectic I was used to sorting through systems of thought and belief, picking out what worked and discarding the rest. And, being an atheist, I had lots to sort through with the 12-Step program as written. I determined fairly early on to look beyond the twelve delineated steps to the whole of the program and select twelve ideas from that to customize my own path. It worked fairly well except for one period when the local group got infested with born-again Christians, who maintained their aggressively proselytizing approach until their leader committed suicide. Of the twelve formal steps, keeping most of four, five, eight, nine and ten was the most critical part of the plan. The rest of the steps I had to torture into a more honest form, as just discussed. This approach wasn't very popular in any of the groups I went to, especially when I had to bow out of my turn reading most of the documents out loud due to a vow to voice only truths under the Buddhist step of *Samma Vaca*. In fact, the eclectic approach to AA is specifically frowned upon as "Cafeteria Style," or "you can take what you like and leave the rest." But what can we say? Unexamined thoughts are not worth swallowing?

### A Fellowship of Men and Women

The brief "Preamble" that is read at every meeting states: "AA is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking." Building a social fellowship that is dedicated to this one specific task may, in many ways, be the most important and effective part of the program, yet there is no mention made of this in the steps other than a discussion of one of the aspects in Step Twelve. Many if not most addicts have damaged or destroyed a good percentage of their social and family relationships and need to start practicing a new set of social skills, particularly candid and honest communication. The 12-Step fellowship provides this. It also provides a climate in which delusional thinking about addictive behavior, as well as the usual personal drama, "alcoholic grandiosity," denial and hyperbole are just not going to fool anybody. Just about everybody in the room has "been there and done that." It's a safe bet that honest sharing and confession will be welcome.

Social development is also particularly important in Dhamma-Vinaya. In fact, the structure and rules of the *sangha* or fellowship are laid out in great detail in the *Vinaya Pitaka*, and this is one third of the Buddhist scriptures. The Buddha even claimed that good, advantageous and whole-some friendships (*kalyana-mittata*) were a prerequisite to enlightenment. The *sangha* is one of the three refuges.

Of course, people gathering together in groups are in no way protected from mass or group folly. There is nothing inherent in the program to keep members from being swept along by platitudes and cliches, by peer pressure and the simple drive to get along. I heard the inane and vacuous "everything happens for a reason" until I was ready to scream. A majority of recovery groups might also be inclined to reinforce the ideas of individual helplessness and victimhood, or cling to the disease model to the exclusion of all the alternatives. Further, the sharing of misery can be more common than the sharing of goals to leave the problem of addiction behind.

### The Serenity Prayer

A simplified version of Reinhold Niebuhr's "The Serenity Prayer" is offered in AA's

Big Book, Step Three. This is "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference. Thy will, not mine, be done." I found that the only part of this I could recite with integrity was "grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, [the] courage to change the things I can, and [the] wisdom to know the difference." With god out of the picture, this prayer, spoken as a Buddhist intention, is actually very profound. Unfortunately, it seems that a majority of recovering alcoholics and addicts only seem to be prepared to face the first third of this, often winding up with something far short of serenity. Most of the talk on the subject concerns acceptance, with the common view being that if we are upset by events the problem is almost certainly located solely in our own attitudes: "My business is solely to change myself. I have no business making changes in the world." What if Gandhi thought that? Or Lincoln, or Jefferson? If we don't act as though we made a difference, we won't. Without the courage to change the things we can, the wisdom to know the difference is lost as well. Certainly we need to learn acceptance, but as mentioned several times here, the point of acceptance is to find a firmer ground in the real world, a place where we can plant our feet and begin to change the things we can in realistic ways. We do not have to approve of the things we accept. My use of the godless parts of the Serenity Prayer effectively required that all three portions be given equal weight.

### **My Best Thinking Got Me Here**

With statements like this, group members start getting the habit of mistrusting their own self-centered views. "The illness of the spiritual dimension, or 'spiritual malady,' is considered in all 12-Step groups to be self-centeredness ... The process of working the steps is intended to replace self-centeredness with a growing moral consciousness and a willingness for self-sacrifice and unselfish constructive action" (Ronel). While the Buddha certainly spent a lot of time detailing the problems associated with self-views, he nevertheless recommended correcting them instead of setting them aside, or immersing oneself in our more altruistic endeavors. And correcting self-views means altering our deepest understanding of what this thing called self really is. The unenlightened tend to think of self or spirit as the core of our being, something to be listened to and honored, and are thus less likely to understand that the inner self they feel most deeply is capable of grave error, delusion and ignorance.

One relevant aspect of the erroneous self-view in AA is the idea of terminal uniqueness or specialness: "An alcoholic's idea that his or her 'uniqueness' exempts him or her from some part of the program." I was accused of this, of course, on the basis of my cafeteria style. But it was certainly true from other perspectives.

Another aspect is the useful term "Stinking Thinking: an alcoholic's reversion to old thought patterns and attitudes. Stinking thinking may include blaming others, alcoholic grandiosity, fault-finding, self-centeredness, and thinking that you can control your drinking." This describes someone building their way back up to drinking again, and "clinging to any resentment or circumstantial excuse." Particularly conducive to relapse is time spent on the "pity pot." Sometimes this process is referred to as a "Dry Drunk (or Dry Bender): a condition of returning to one's old alcoholic thinking and behavior without actually having taken a drink."

### **Hitting Bottom**

This is "reaching such a state of utter hopelessness that we become willing to admit complete defeat in dealing with our alcoholism. In such a state we become 'teachable,' and are willing to do whatever is necessary to achieve sobriety. The bottom we hit at the end of our drinking days is usually emotional and spiritual. It may or may not

involve other complications such as poor health, financial and legal problems." Bill Wilson referred to this as "complete ego deflation at depth." We discussed this earlier in speaking of *samvega*, the Buddhist counterpart to this idea that includes a clear and horrifying vision of what we have become, but also an undeniable sense that there is a way out that is available now.

AA also introduces the concept of a "high-bottom drunk: an alcoholic who has maintained most of the trappings of 'success'; a family, a home, a job, a car, reputation, health, etc. Almost everyone entering AA has hit some kind of emotional bottom, but for some the social, legal, or financial bottom may be relatively high." What isn't discussed in the literature is that an addict's bottom can be elevated by one or more experiences that start to restore a better sense of value. It is possible to cultivate *samvega* using mindfulness, and also to deliberately immerse ourselves in it using meditation orentheogens.

### **Attraction Rather than Promotion**

A vital piece of the recovery puzzle lies in this simple phrase. It says, in effect, that words and depthless appearances are not enough. There has been enough talk and show that has only led to hypocrisy. We really need to walk the talk, "to practice these principles in all our affairs." Sobriety is not just getting and staying sober: "It also means living a good life and doing the right thing." Human is as human does.

### **An Attitude of Gratitude**

Once we are adequately fed, clothed, sheltered and educated in the basic necessities of life, ingratitude becomes the core of a great deal of human dissatisfaction and suffering. Gratitude means being content with what we have, and being resolved to play the hand we are dealt, and being thankful for having anything at all, such as the chance to be alive. Remember the Last Rites of Bokonon from Vonnegut's *Cat's Cradle*? Bokonon was an atheist, of course, and being ironic, but he still wrote the *Book* with a great Why Not?:

"God made mud. God got lonesome. So God said to some of the mud, "Sit up!" "See all I've made," said God, "the hills, the sea, the sky, the stars." And I was some of the mud that got to sit up and look around. Lucky me, lucky mud. I, mud, sat up and saw what a nice job God had done. Nice going, God. Nobody but you could have done it, God! I certainly couldn't have. I feel very unimportant compared to You. The only way I can feel the least bit important is to think of all the mud that didn't even get to sit up and look around. I got so much, and most mud got so little. Thank you for the honor! Now mud lies down again and goes to sleep. What memories for mud to have! What interesting other kinds of sitting-up mud I met! I loved everything I saw! Good night."

There are some things that are very poorly understood about gratitude as a higher or spiritual state. Even the Buddha failed to explore this one adequately, limiting his discourses to "gratitude towards" a gratitee in some form, citing gratitude towards one's parents as his best example. He regarded this as very important, and if you are looking for examples the search term is *katannuta*. But gratitude does not require a gratitee, and it certainly does not require a god. We can say "thank you" to the world without saying that the world needs therefore to be named god. Neither does gratitude need to be expressed, which follows from understanding that sometimes there is nobody to express it to. But it should be allowed to work its way into actions and affective states. And although it sounds like a silly, new age practice, it doesn't hurt a bit to make lists, paper or mental, of all the things we are thankful for. If we need a place to file that, either Right Effort or Right Mindfulness will work just fine. And, as mentioned previously, we are probably justified in adding gratitude (*katannuta*) to the Buddha's

list of four Sublime States or *Brahmaviharas*, *metta* (loving-kindness), *karuna* (compassion), *mudita* (supportive joy) and *upekkha* (equanimity).

### **Enabling**

This is a cautionary term "used to describe overly compassionate behavior towards an alcoholic. An alcoholic needs to face all of the unpleasant consequences of his or her drinking." People surrounding a recovering addict can be asked not to coddle them or make excuses. Consequences are the best teachers in life and insulating ourselves from them is just the road to continued ignorance. As Herbert Spencer said, "The ultimate result of shielding men from the effects of folly is to fill the world with fools." The utility of consequences is, in fact, the only reason that extensive liberty works as a political system: the feedback from both successes and errors helps the system to self-organize. But feedback from error, without insulation or padding, or laws to protect us from ourselves, is absolutely vital to the process. The recovery program that makes the best use of this is Tough Love. It may very well be hard to back off and let consequences teach, but understanding what the Buddha really meant by equanimity will help. Sometimes we just need to let what is necessary do what is necessary.

### **The Geographical Cure**

This is another cautionary term. It is "an attempt to cure or escape the 'disease' of addiction by moving to a different geographical location in the hope that distance from 'people, places, and things' associated with drinking or using will make abstinence easier or unnecessary." The terms "slippery places" and "slippery faces" refer to physical places, emotional states and people acting as triggers for the addictive behavior. We need to come to terms with these triggers, but not by fleeing from them. It is the realization that "wherever you go, there you are." You can't live safely by relying on shielding yourself from taverns and ex mates. You need to get a grip.

### **The Pink Cloud**

Another cautionary term is the Pink Cloud. This is "the temporary sensation of euphoria and well-being that is characteristic to those who are new to sobriety. For most, the pink cloud eventually dissipates. This heralds the time to get down to business and start seriously working the Steps." It doesn't usually take all that long for sobriety to present itself as a pleasant and inexpensive high in its own right. But for someone in the habit of grasping for quick fixes it can quickly become a substitute addiction which fails when, like all affective states, it fails to last. It is also easy in this stage to confuse serenity with smugness, which soon leads to getting slapped back down. The Pink Cloud is a nice reward, but it doesn't serve us very well as a lasting incentive. Here, as in Buddhism (where it is sometimes called *pamojja*, sometimes *piti*) there is no quick shortcut that avoids doing the work and letting happiness find its own way.

### **Phrases of Mixed Blessing**

#### **One Day at a Time**

According to the literature, this is "a primary strategy for staying sober. For many alcoholics, the concept of permanent abstinence is too overwhelming an option." We can see how this might help, but does it really, in the long run? In Rational Recovery, this is viewed as indicating an openness to drinking again some day, and also a fear about making the longer-term commitment to sobriety that is more useful in attaining it. Yes, it is intimidating to utter "I will never drink again" or "I will always practice

these steps," and doing this shows a poor understanding of the Buddhist *anicca* or impermanence. But there are other ways to verbalize the decision without using the words never, always or forever, while indicating a time horizon greater than a day. My own was "I'm retired" and if further explanation was needed "I had my lifetime allowance, but I already drank my way through it."

### **Fake it 'til You Make it**

This is a little bit like "use it or lose it" in reverse. It hearkens back to seeking spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection, and recognizes that defects of character aren't removed overnight, even by a god. "When we try to do things perfectly, we are attempting to do the impossible. The tendency toward perfectionism is merely a reflection of our alcoholic grandiosity." This is also phrased as "bring the body and the mind will follow." The literature at least acknowledges that small and realistic steps are the surest progress, even with a god's help: "many alcoholics have nevertheless concluded that in order to recover they must acquire an immediate and overwhelming "God-consciousness" followed at once by a vast change in feeling and outlook. The advice given is patience.

What one does here, then, is to adopt both the doctrine and the practices and practice them until the positive feedback starts to roll in. And in ways this isn't very different from the Buddhist version of faith called *saddha*. You give the process a fair chance to prove itself, in the same spirit as a scientist testing an hypothesis. The caution here is against faking it until you're really good at faking it. Or against faking it because this is the only way to feel like you belong. Or against faking it until you're well and truly brainwashed. To fake it is to become an actor in a script, a pretender. This is the meaning of the Chinese *Wei* in *Wu Wei*, not doing. It's opposite is *Ziran*, spontaneity, acting in accord with one's nature. Therefore, the sacrifice of this non-interference should be temporary, used only until a healthier nature is restored or reestablished. If you are caught asking too many questions you can always blame that on the advice to practice rigorous honesty.

### **Self-Will Run Riot**

According to the 12-Step literature, self-knowledge is not the answer: "But the actual or potential alcoholic, with hardly an exception, will be absolutely unable to stop drinking on the basis of self-knowledge" and "any life run on self-will can hardly be a success." On the one hand, this can be taken to refer to the self-views (*ditthi*) that in Buddhism stand in the front line in the defense of our ignorance and delusion. Ego, conceit, self-importance: these are some of the most formidable obstacles to our awakening. On the other hand, Buddhism insists that it is self-knowledge acquired correctly and self-will that learns to be effective in steering us to wholesome and skillful states that conduct us to success. Self is not the enemy: it merely needs to be understood correctly, put in its proper place as an emergent phenomenon, and then fine-tuned to better effect. It is delusional to think that we can flee the self in becoming the servant of a higher power.

# Alternative Recovery Programs

## The Recovery Approach

The programs and groups supporting recovery from addictive disorders vary widely, but the best try to offer 1) a sanctuary where problems may be freely discussed and stories told, in the absence of both triggers and enablers, 2) communication with people across a wider range of recovery stages, all sharing a history with similar problems, but with opportunities to both give help and be helped, 3) the opportunity to practice social skills with the goal of some degree of social re-assimilation, 4) cognitive tools for constructing a more robust and functional sense of self, with effective behavioral self-control and improved coping skills, and 5) help with the reevaluation of life's worth, meaning, values, and purpose, including newer scripts and narratives and better role models.

Many of these recovery systems are built around the victim and disease models of addictive disorders, and this may in fact be exactly what many in recovery will need the most, if we face the fact that most people won't accomplish much of significance in their lives, and indeed do not care to. A majority of people might be just fine doing little more than escaping their addiction and avoiding a relapse. The programs should vary widely because people differ. The specific Buddhist approach outlined here is almost certainly not for everybody: it is for those who wish to travel a much longer road and recover the potential for a rich and meaningful life with addiction nearly forgotten. This is too much work for most people. And there are also, no doubt, more watered down and abbreviated forms of a Buddhist approach that might be made available to those who still want to work, but not as much, and awaken, but not too much.

Two of the better known alternatives to 12-Step programs are Rational Recovery and Smart Recovery. Neither have adopted a victim or disease mentality, and neither require the adoption of any religious or spiritual principles.

## Rational Recovery

Rational Recovery has borrowed some elements of CBT or Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, discussed a little later. In its earlier incarnations, support groups had more of a place in the program, but these have since fallen away. RR's handbooks are *Rational Recovery: The New Cure for Substance Addiction* and *The Small Book: A Revolutionary Alternative for Overcoming Alcohol and Drug Dependence*, both by Jack Trimpey. The books are well worth reading, although there are some baby-out-with-the-bathwater repudiations of competing ideas that warrant reading with a critical eye.

To regard ourselves as rational beings is of course a little pretentious and wrong. It has been a handful of philosophers and propagandists, not farmers and merchants and laborers, who defined the human being as a rational being. In fact, human is as human does, and only a few of us are rational in practice. We are more of a stew that may include some reason, but even this is more often than not *reasons*, especially reasons to try to get away with this or that bit of misbehavior. Still, the addict has also given himself reasons to put his life back together, and giving rationality a stronger role to play is a useful way to do this.

Central to Rational Recovery is a method called AVRT, or Addictive Voice Recognition Technique. In brief, this consists of taking all of the urges, drives, motivations and obsessions that call for participation in the addictive behavior and giving them one voice, but one that is not your own, or the voice of a friend. The addictive voice disguises itself as you, but it doesn't care about you or anything that you value. "It can

use your name, has access to everything you know, and remembers only the good times drinking and drugging" (RR p. 36). It has full access to all of your cognitive abilities and tricks. With this program this voice becomes an "it" trying to talk to you, trying to get your attention. Your first job is to systematically deprive this voice of any use of first and second person pronouns. It is no longer "I want this" or "you want this." This is not me talking, this is not you talking. *It* wants this. *It* wants another drink. *It* wants to gamble away another paycheck. *It* wants another divorce. *It* is trying to get you to do that sick thing again. And it's not going to work this time. Reasons to drink are externalized, made into things subject to better judgment, not into the subject doing the judgment. This relegates the unwholesome processes to peripheral realms, as mere possessions and inanimate objects. With this you identify, learn to recognize, objectify and devalue those parts of you that try to speak on behalf of your habit. You deprive the addictive voice of power and authority. If this seems familiar in a Buddhist context, it should: *N'etam mama, n'eso'ham asmi, na me so atta*, "This is not mine, I am not this, this is not my essence." This is the practice of escaping the three conceits (*mana*) and grasping (*gaha*).

Another important aspect of RR is a negation of the one-day-at-a-time approach used in the 12-Steps. This is thought to be disingenuous. Either you want to quit for good or you don't. The one who parrots the one-day-at-a-time mantra is countered with: "what is your plan for the future use of alcohol?" In the words of Master Yoda: "Try not. Do or do not. There is no try." Telling ourselves that we are clean, sober or free just for today still leaves the door open for a relapse tomorrow, almost as though we secretly want this. Always and never are words that usually accompany strong emotional states and never again is a scary thing to say, but it may help to take a more honest look at what we really want. Part of you wants to drink and, to be perfectly honest, part of you wants to die (*vibhava tanha*). Do you also want something better than that, even more than you want that? There is still much to be said for doing things in steps: it is merely that our degree of commitment should not be one of them. We can take things in steps by changing first things first, and leaving some of our flaws and personality defects for later.

In RR it is important to recognize our ambivalence with honesty. Part of the addict still believes that his precious substance or behavior still has the power to make the problems go away, to dull the pain, to settle the anxiety. That part needs to be acknowledged and then put in its place, as some third-person thing, and the part that wants to plan a life around a permanent abstinence needs to be allowed a stronger, more personal voice. Yes, that behavior made being sociable easier. Yes, the buzz was pretty pleasant sometimes. Yes, this activity allowed me to feel more spontaneous. But no, it wasn't worth the costs. This conclusion then needs the help of some good cognitive tools to turn it into a real commitment, a real plan to live a sober life. Without the commitment you never really recover from being a sad, deprived, drunken person whose nature is to be a slave. However, a part of being honest is understanding that you will also be grieving the loss of the things you enjoyed about the addictive behavior. This will need to run its course, in stages, like any other grieving process. But it is permissible to simultaneously grieve the losses and costs incurred by the addictive behavior itself.

RR also acknowledges an exhilarating feeling following withdrawal, and calls it the Abstinence Commitment Effect or ACE. But it doesn't disparage this as an ephemeral pink cloud. It identifies the feeling as the Real You. Here at least, Buddhism is in disagreement. In Buddhism this exhilaration is *piti*. It is ephemeral. It may be enjoyed, but not counted upon, and although it is good information to process, offers hope, and

rewards self-control, it certainly is not the real you, since there is no such thing as a real you.

In RR you can still accept the things you cannot change, but addiction doesn't have to be one of them. It need not be regarded as something that hangs just inches over your head for life. Having the courage to change the things we can is too often neglected within the disease and victim mindsets. Buddhism, of course, is all about finding the wisdom to know the difference. So is RR.

### **Smart Recovery**

Smart is an acronym for Self-Management And Recovery Training. Its manual is the SMART Recovery Handbook, available at a modest cost from ([here](#)). This site also has free information and introductory material. Smart Recovery makes use of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), and especially Rational-Emotive Behavioral Therapy (REBT). The emphasis is on self-empowerment or self-efficacy. SR has groups and meetings, and training programs for facilitators.

SR has a 4-Point Program for the process of recovery: 1) building and maintaining a motivation to abstain; 2) coping with urges and cravings, which are not as powerful as they seem when regarded as manageable, short-term discomforts; 3) problem-solving skills, using rational means for managing and retraining thoughts, feelings and behaviors, exposing irrational scripts and increasing frustration tolerance; and 4) lifestyle balance, balancing short and long-term pleasures and satisfactions, and learning to appreciate the actual significance of emotions.

Some of the tools that SR identifies are 1) ABC, a mnemonic used for noting the Adversive or the Activating event > evaluative Beliefs about the activating event > the Consequences, three basic REBT principles regarding the functional relationships of thoughts, beliefs, feelings and behaviors; 2) DEFG a mnemonic for four subsequent steps, > Disputing irrational beliefs > new Effective beliefs > new Feelings > new Goals; 3) CBA or cost-benefit analysis, especially including long-term analysis; and 4) VACI or Vital Absorbing Creative Interest, a self-made tool which may be either a personal purpose or a higher purpose.

The program identifies seven stages of change: 1) pre-contemplation, where the participant may not even realize that they have a problem, a fair parallel to *avidya* and *moha*; 2) contemplation, where the participant evaluates the advantages and disadvantages of the addiction by performing a cost/benefit analysis; 3) determination and preparation, where the participant completes a Change Plan Worksheet; 4) action, where the participant seeks out new ways of handling their addictive behavior, including self-help, the support of addiction help groups or professional guidance; 5) maintenance, where the participant seeks to maintain the gains of altered behavior; 6) relapse, not inevitable, but a normal part of the change cycle and a potential learning experience; and 7) termination, the choice to move on and graduate from the program.

The fundamental element in behavioral change is a decision to change, followed by sensible action towards identified goals. The acronym "Smart" is also used as a mnemonic in business management theory, recalling key performance indicators in the setting of objectives. This was first seen in the November 1981 issue of *Management Review* by George T. Doran. The most viable goals are: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-specific. The acronym fits with the goal setting in Smart Recovery as well.

# Psychology's Concepts and Therapies

## Clinical Addiction, Abuse and Dependence

Traditional clinical psychology has its own methods for dealing with addictive disorders, which now include saying there is no such thing. They are now called "substance abuse" and "substance dependence." The American Psychiatric Association's 1994 *DSM-IV* or *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* identifies these conditions as follows:

### \* DSM-IV Substance Abuse Criteria

Substance abuse is defined as a maladaptive pattern of substance use leading to clinically significant impairment or distress as manifested by one (or more) of the following, occurring within a 12-month period:

1. Recurrent substance use resulting in a failure to fulfill major role obligations at work, school, or home (such as repeated absences or poor work performance related to substance use; substance-related absences, suspensions, or expulsions from school; or neglect of children or household).
2. Recurrent substance use in situations in which it is physically hazardous (such as driving an automobile or operating a machine when impaired by substance use).
3. Recurrent substance-related legal problems (such as arrests for substance related disorderly conduct).
4. Continued substance use despite having persistent or recurrent social or interpersonal problems caused or exacerbated by the effects of the substance (for example, arguments with spouse about consequences of intoxication and physical fights).

Note: The symptoms for abuse have never met the criteria for dependence for this class of substance. According to the DSM-IV, a person can be abusing a substance or dependent on a substance but not both at the same time.

### \* DSM-IV Substance Dependence Criteria

Substance dependence is defined as a maladaptive pattern of substance use leading to clinically significant impairment or distress, as manifested by three (or more) of the following, occurring any time in the same 12-month period:

1. Tolerance, as defined by either of the following: (a) A need for markedly increased amounts of the substance to achieve intoxication or the desired effect or (b) Markedly diminished effect with continued use of the same amount of the substance.
2. Withdrawal, as manifested by either of the following: (a) The characteristic withdrawal syndrome for the substance or (b) The same (or closely related) substance is taken to relieve or avoid withdrawal symptoms.
3. The substance is often taken in larger amounts or over a longer period than intended.
4. There is a persistent desire or unsuccessful efforts to cut down or control substance use.
5. A great deal of time is spent in activities necessary to obtain the substance, use the substance, or recover from its effects.

6. Important social, occupational, or recreational activities are given up or reduced because of substance use.

7. The substance use is continued despite knowledge of having a persistent physical or psychological problem that is likely to have been caused or exacerbated by the substance (for example, current cocaine use despite recognition of cocaine-induced depression or continued drinking despite recognition that an ulcer was made worse by alcohol).

The most interesting feature of the above is how little information it contains about root causes and prescribed treatments. There is no science, no biology, no medicine. It sounds more like a combination of industry and government speak. The best that they can seem to do is describe some symptoms. It seems as though the *DSM* has two real functions: 1) to assist the mental health professional in correctly filling out insurance forms, and 2) to assist the mental health professional in associating a specific diagnosed condition with the approved prescription medication protocols for liability purposes. It doesn't seem directly related to helping patients recover mental health. As I write this, the APA has just released its long-awaited *DSM-5* to bad reviews. The quality of the information is not getting better and many groups, such as the NIMH, are talking about walking away from this altogether. Arrogance can't sustain itself forever. And meanwhile, we have real problems to solve.

Still, even this has to be regarded as a step more enlightened than the slightly older thinking of 1962, as shown by Harris Hill in *The Social Deviant and Initial Addiction to Narcotics and Alcohol*: "Alcoholics and narcotic addicts in general are social deviants prior to the initial addiction. This does not imply that all such individuals are aggressive and antisocial. The social deviant is deficient in reactions of self-criticism, counter-anxiety, or "guilt" which might deter unusual behavior. The deviant appears to be more accepting of short-term satisfactions, or at least less able to defer short-term gains for long-range satisfaction. They are deficient in daily pursuits which are reinforced by and bring satisfaction to the larger society." Ah, dipsomania.

For those of us who would still use the word addiction, we have a fair working definition proposed by Nils Bejerot in *Theories on Drug Abuse, Selected Contemporary Perspectives*, pp. 246-255, NIDA: "An emotional fixation (sentiment) acquired through learning, which intermittently or continually expresses itself in purposeful, stereotyped behavior with the character and force of a natural drive, aiming at a specific pleasure or the avoidance of a specific discomfort."

We do from time to time get more useful information, but this is more often from outside the field of psychiatry: "Acute (or recreational) use of most psychoactive drugs causes the release and prolonged action of dopamine and serotonin within the reward circuit. The reward circuit, also referred to as the mesolimbic system, is characterized by the inter-action of several areas of the brain (see "Reward Circuit"). As a person continues to overstimulate the "reward circuit", the brain adapts to the overwhelming surges in dopamine by producing less of the hormones or by reducing the number of receptors in the reward circuit. As a result, the chemical's impact on the reward circuit is lessened, reducing the drug-abuser's ability to enjoy the things that previously brought pleasure. This decrease compels those addicted to the dopaminergic-effect of the drug, to increase the drug consumption in order to re-create the earlier or initial experiences and to bring their "feel-good" hormone level back to normal - an effect known as tolerance" ([Wiki](#)).

One of the problems with conventional therapy that deserves at least a brief mention is that the therapist does not normally have a great deal of first-hand experience with the problem of addiction. The patient may sense this, and sometimes rightfully be

dismissive of the therapist's level of understanding, empathy or depth of comprehension. This is at least one area where the support group can have a decided advantage, or where concentration on the greater problem of the human condition might be better shared in the *sangha*.

Another problem is a sort of built-in obliqueness of the treatment's approach to the treatment's objectives. We go to the orthopedist to get our legs fixed because we don't like how our legs feels when they are broken and it hampers our getting around. We seek treatment for our schizophrenia because it's embarrassing to be caught talking to people who aren't there. But we don't seek treatment for drug addiction because we hate getting high. The therapist is challenged to uncover the subtler dimensions of the problems at hand, and then to apply equally subtle solutions, sometimes even needing to sneak these past the a patient's formidable array of defenses. This can be a lot to ask of human intelligence, even when these brains have gone to college.

Therapy, of course, looks to a disorder model, when not to a disease model. This disorder tends to be either inherited or socially or culturally contagious. Therapy can find pre-existing dispositional problems that may even be specific enough to predict the drug or behavior of choice. There are people more prone than others to addictive forms of behavior, even though no set of consistent pre- or proto-addictive set of genes or personality traits has yet been identified. Certainly, any biological mechanisms or susceptibilities need to be overridden. We shouldn't discount medications if they can help stabilize endocrine-based problems that cannot be corrected behaviorally. But even for the prone, addiction is a learned behavior, and recovery is in the unlearning, or the reconditioning. We need to be open to what our inquiry tells us, and some of our preconceptions about addictive personality types can really get in the way. We can't always generalize here.

Progress is the measure of success, and progress is usually gradual, and often too gradual for the therapy budget. We can also take on too much when we take on multiple problems. Few succeed who give up drinking and smoking at the same time, and perhaps fewer still, smoking and overeating.

### **Psychology as Taxonomic Behavior**

The maturation of the young field of psychology has been hampered by a number of problems, some of its own making.

1) It has wasted a lot of time in the pursuit of several fads, none more embarrassing than its extended, headlong plunge into behaviorism. With this mindset, the entire realm of subjective experience, and indeed, all of the emergent qualia of the human experience, needed to be dismissed as irrelevant. In effect, psychology had to let go of the very psyche that it was supposed to be -ologizing. Very little was thought to be happening in the objectified subject in the tight little crack between the stimulus and the response.

2) The success of the professional in the treatment of his patients is financially punished rather than rewarded. When a patient is successfully treated, the therapist's checks stop coming in. This is not to say that professionals lack an ethic, only that it helps to have better-rounded motivations in a money-driven society. Success is better encouraged when it is rewarded.

3) The discipline's database, the environment to which it must refer in formulating its theories and drawing its conclusions, is constituted largely of disappointing examples of human behavior, of complaints and squeaky wheels, of pathologies, of failures to successfully adapt, of unfitness. Far more study is done of sub-normal and maladaptive behavior than is done of successful, creative and self-actualizing behavior. This both

skews the curve and ignores models of superior-to-normal mental health that might be useful in therapy.

4) Even in its behaviorist phase, but perhaps just as much now, this so-called science of behavior seems to have forgotten that science itself is also a form of behavior, complete with its preconceived ideas, feelings, beliefs, reactions, denials, motives, fears and competitions, all of which need to be held in some due amount of suspicion if the ultimate objective is any sort of truth. And of the many kinds of behavior involved, possibly none is as important as languaging behavior. The discipline does, after all, have its life, its longevity, and its reproductive success located in cultural endeavor. It must be communicated, to peers of course, but to ourselves as well. Psychology tends to do this languaging naively.

It is vital to get the words of psychology to describe experience and refer to real phenomenon in a useful way, whether these phenomena are biologically based or the emergent subjective functions of qualia. Take the example of Jung's archetypes. While Jung himself insisted that these were inheritable cognitive functions, which most likely implied both genetic and neurological foundations, he knew too little of neuroscience and other new disciplines to point to any mechanism. All he could do is list those he could identify and arrange them in some sort of ideological order. Now there is new material coming from neuroscience, evolutionary psychology and primatology suggesting that we have evolved specific cognitive modules in the brain, enabling us to recognize and sort our perceptions of the specific behaviors that are most relevant to our survival and reproduction. This suggests a mechanism of inheritability that Jung's ideological approach lacks, and it also has us looking at the behavior of the great apes for clues, finally. Archetypes are about to get grounded in more reality and shed the conceptual ideology and some of the various geometrical arrangements that have been superimposed, even though some of the geometry may survive. This will not, of course, prevent the new-agers from continuing to mistake the collective unconscious for universal consciousness and continuing to pluck archetypes from Plato's etherial world of ideas.

We are still awaiting a grander synthesis that will tie together the whole of "mind science" from the most objective, reductionist, third-person accounts of neuroscience and endocrinology to the most careful, first-person neuro-phenomenology of our bravest psychonauts, who are frequently Buddhists, Yogis and scientifically-bent shamans taking the lead. And the in-between belongs as well, the somewhat more macro modules, the traits and scripts discovered by neuroscience and evolutionary psychology. Psychology will have its most useful role in the taxonomy of emergent qualia and the development of new cognitive software specifically to work with our brains as they have evolved, as distinct from how we have imagined them.

### **Classifying and Enumerating Mental States and Processes**

The taxonomy of psychology will be a collection of groups of ideas within groups of ideas, hopefully with groupings that make some sense all the way down into neurons and glandular activity, and all the way up into the cognitively artificial, emergent control functions that allow an individual true self control and self-efficacy. The progress that the field is finally starting to make today is due largely to contributions from outside the field, especially neuroscience, evolutionary psychology, primatology and biology. Much of this progress is linguistic. We are still naming these creatures from the id. There will be problems, of course, largely from believing in things too soon. Many of us grew up thinking we had four taste buds, sweet, sour, salty and bitter. Now we have a fifth, umami. And now we have a lot more than the old five senses. The Buddhist doctrine has similar problems. The fact that Buddha seemed content with

naming four *Brahmaviharas* should not hold me back from naming four more. Do infants really only have the three emotions of interest, distress and disgust available at birth? Do they add no more than social pleasure, anger, fear, sadness and surprise in the first few months of life? Is this an oversimplification? Is there a geometry to their neurochemistry? Is any one state really the opposite of another?

In Buddhism, and particularly Buddhist *Abhidhamma*, the first-person or phenomenological side of psycho-ology is far more articulated than any one form of psychology. This is not to say that it is always more precise in terms of verifiable criteria, or that it has nothing to learn from psychology's attempts to map the mental functions. There is much to be said for using both as our sources for further development. The goal is articulating meaningful sets of processes and states, getting them in detail and into the right categories, and getting the complete sets. We can start with lists of affective states like happiness, sadness, fear, anger, surprise, disgust, love, sorrow, confusion, excitement, awe, trust, security, grief, exhilaration, jealousy, passion, self-possession, agony, beauty, vengeance, longing, loneliness, gratitude, relief, betrayal, astonishment, indignation, guilt, resignation, sulkiness, shyness, jealousy, *ennui*, *angst*, trepidation, satisfaction, trust and suspicion. We would also be well-advised to reach into other cultures and languages, adding *wabi*, *sabi*, *aware*, *yugen*, *amok*, *naches*, *deja vu*, *jamais vu*, *presque vu*, *schadenfreude*, and *frisson*. We should start with the most comprehensive lists that we can make before we start designing a "wheel of the eight primary emotions," and claiming which is the opposite of what. How is this symmetry reflected in the neuronal and endocrinological activity way down below? People have suggested that we only have five basic, universal human emotions: fear, sadness, happiness, anger, and disgust. I doubt the results are in for that.

Consider the five stages of grief of Elisabeth Kubler-Ross: shock and denial, anger or intense concern, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. Are these universals? No, they are not. Is the sequence wired? No. Is the sequence consistent? No. This is merely something somebody said that is sometimes helpful, but it's something that gets used a lot and mistaken for verified, with an assumption of some sort of structural underpinning. The gods of ancient Greece, who each had their well-defined dominions over the various aspects of human existence, survived not because they were immortal, but because of the unusual clarity of this domain definition and the resonance of this with the mortals who kept them alive. The relevant spectrum here was the broader range of human experience, with each slice of the spectrum having a different deity, just as the colors of the rainbow have names. The discipline of psychology tries to accomplish a similar scaling with its terminologies, to cover the ranges of human behaviors, emotions, defense mechanisms, intelligences and so forth. It hasn't done this with anything akin to patience, but that may be just as well, because there is a lot of data still coming in. Falling short is not the big error here: the big error would be in pretending that we are anywhere close to understanding the mind. And then testifying in court as experts.

Anyway, we have the goal: connecting the talk to the walk, connecting our subjective mental states to their neurological and endocrinological correlates, integrating the phenomenologically true with the biologically true, with the rather straightforward end of being able to make a statement about changing a mental state, while at the same time making it so. As long as our ideas are so disconnected from the deeper coding, the software, the wetware, the electricity and the chemistry down below, all of our fancy talk about the mind and its many functions is just *avidya* and *moha*, ignorance and delusion.

The gist of this discussion is that therapies practiced within the field of psychology are going to be limited by their vocabularies, as these reflect an articulated understanding of effective processes. As things stand now, for all of its limitations, Dhamma-Vinaya is better articulated and more effective in the development of self-efficacy. The forms of therapy that are most often recognized as useful in the treatment of addictive disorders are usually versions of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy or CBT. It is not an accident that these forms usually acknowledge an explicit debt to the Buddha's teaching, even though this is sometimes only to the utility of a mindfulness practice. These will be the subject of the next Appendix. For now, I would like to offer a few other ideas as items of vocabulary from the field of psychology which might be of some use or service to the reader. There are a lot more ideas suggested for further research in the Links section. It could be that some of today's cloistered Buddhists might be permitted some use of Google and Wikipedia before setting forth on their first-hand investigation of mental states.

### **Narcissism**

Narcissism can be broadly and fairly neutrally regarded as the spectrum from a useful kind of self-love to an unhealthy obsession with self. While Buddhism recognizes a healthy utility to certain constructs that we can develop about who we are in the world, most narcissism exceeds this, and so does the majority of Western culture. For now we can use Robert Stolorow's functional definition of narcissism as mental activity that functions to 'maintain the structural cohesiveness, temporal stability and positive affective coloring of the self-representation' ("Toward a Functional Definition of Narcissism," *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 56-2 (1975) p. 179. Our self-images, like all mental images, can become subject, through conditioned or dependent arising, to craving, aversion, ill-will, delusion and attachment. We need vigilance and wise-attention (*yoniso manasikara*) in making better use of our self-images. When self-concerns begin costing us such treasures as conscience and ethics (*hiri-otappa*), or gratitude, or empathy, we know the time has come to renounce them.

It is unlikely that we will make much progress in either recovery or Buddhism without cultivating a mature sense of self, a healthy ego, a way to organize all of the voices of all of the people that we are composed of. This is, paradoxically, prerequisite to the realization of selflessness. Even the religious sometimes get this insight: love your neighbor AS you love yourself, forgive us our trespasses AS we forgive those who trespass against us. Physician, heal thyself. The first moves have to be self-ish. Even a little pride, self-esteem and dignity help. With Buddhism, the self is the ever-shifting content of the experience as it learns to self-organize, instead of being the witness above it all. But this does not make it any more difficult to change or correct, since the overself is often constructed without much regard for the realities below.

### **Conditioned Behavior**

Classical Conditioning is best known by the story of how Pavlov's dog trained his master to take notes simply by salivating when a bell rang. This is "a learning process that occurs when two stimuli are repeatedly paired; a response that is at first elicited by the second stimulus is eventually elicited by the first stimulus alone." (*New Oxford American Dict.*). Behavior conditioned thus is not maintained by consequences. It simply appears with experience.

Operant or instrumental conditioning is the modification of behavior pursuant to its consequences. As a technique it modifies behavior through positive or negative reinforcement and positive and negative punishment. Here, positive and negative refer to the addition or removal of a stimulus, not to degrees of pleasantness. Operant

conditioning is the modification of voluntary behavior or intentional action (the Buddhist *kamma*).

Evaluative conditioning is a development of likes and dislikes towards something or someone by association with a simultaneous experience or memory recalled. This can include the conditioning of both craving and aversion.

Fear conditioning is the association of a normally neutral stimulus with an aversive stimulus, whereby the recurrence of the neutral stimulus will elicit an anticipatory fear of the aversive. This can include the conditioning of aversion. This can make a grown man fear bunnies.

These forms of conditioning do not require or presuppose conscious involvement in the conditioning process, although the behaviors and states they elicit can later be felt and perceived. Both forms create elements of action and reaction that can form component elements in larger constructions, reaction patterns, behavioral scripts, etc.

Aversion therapy is used frequently in the treatment of addictive disorders. The patient is first given a stimulus, if not alcohol, drugs or the problem behavior itself, then some close association, or anticipation of their use. This is then paired with some noxious, painful or otherwise unpleasant experience. One would think in the case of alcohol that a few particularly nasty hangovers would be enough, but perhaps this comes too long after the target behavior. And even a drunken night spent getting bugged in a drunk tank doesn't seem to work. The drug Antabuse, which alters the assimilation of alcohol into something particularly unpleasant, is an often-used example.

Exposure therapy is often used with anxiety disorders and phobias, but it can also be used in calming an addict's response to emotional triggers for addictive behavior. We have spoken of this process already in the context of mindfulness and dynamic memory, wherein a sensitive issue is given a new associations with the more positive states of serenity and equilibrium. About all psychology has done here is to claim a connection between mindfulness meditation and the release of negative emotions and habits. This mechanism of dynamic memory and neuroplasticity is not cited.

Extinction, as used in psychology, is another word for deconditioning a response created through classical or operant conditioning. Deconditioning, in turn, is really reconditioning, or relearning, using some form of classical or operant conditioning to rewrite older patterns of response. The challenge is that the new stimulus needs to be either quantitatively stronger or qualitatively superior or both to overcome old patterns which are entrenched, fortified and defended enough to be causing the serious problems that defy merely rational solutions. Plain insight therapies have a fairly poor track record: the whole being needs to get involved. Clearly, the first step is to get the actual problem behavior temporarily out of the way with some sort of enforced withdrawal, allowing the symptoms of withdrawal, such as anxiety, stress, insecurity, irritability, physical pain and craving, to dim and dull a little.

### **Other Ideas for Study**

Therapy has given us a list of traits and symptoms to look for, and the fact that these terms are different from those found in Dhamma-Vinaya should be regarded as helpful. We cover more ground. This book has already recommended a thoroughgoing study of the four arrays of our mechanisms of self-defense and self-deception at Right Mindfulness, to wit: cognitive biases, coping strategies, defense mechanisms and logical fallacies. Denial, deceit, covering up, and passing blame are some of the biggest problems we have to deal with here, and these lists can expose the mechanisms. We might also consider training our vigilance and wise-attention (*yoniso manasikara*) on such further phenomena and processes as:

behavioral or process addiction  
compulsive behavior  
core self-evaluations  
cost-benefit analysis  
deferred gratification  
dispositional affect  
hedonic treadmill  
impulse control disorder  
locus of control  
reward systems or circuits  
time horizon

This is only a partial list. Many more subjects can be found in the Links, Psychology sections, which are largely a collection of links to Wikipedia pages. While this is not the final authority on any subject, the links and references there typically offer the best launching point for further study, while the page itself has a useful vocabulary for further searching.

## Cognitive Behavioral Therapies

Once again, it is not an accident that treatments in Western psychology most commonly cited as effective against addictive disorders are those which cite Buddhism and mindfulness practice as significant inspirations. Generally, this is the category known as Cognitive Behavioral Therapies. Unable to do justice to these practices in the short space allotted here, I only hope to provide a thumbnail sketch and enough items of vocabulary as a starting point for further research.

### Cognitive Psychology

Cognitive psychology is a sub-discipline of psychology that explores internal mental processes. The APA defines this as "the study of higher mental processes such as attention, language, decision making, judging, reasoning, knowing, memory, perception, problem solving, and thinking." Cognition is the processing of information in the brain and mind, and how the results of that processing are applied in behavior and selection between behavioral preferences. CP looks at a full range of our cognitive behaviors from the most pre-conscious, intuitive, emotional, habitual and automatic to the most conscious, judgmental, rational, deliberative and creative. It accepts the scientific method as useful and generally rejects introspection as being productive of objective data. Individuals develop complex cognitive schemata which intervene between stimulus and response and so alter behavior. Changing the schemata changes behavioral response, but most of these schemata inhabit what is called the adaptive unconscious, in which most mental processes, including most of the so-called higher order functions like making decisions and setting intentions, are unavailable to introspection.

It isn't until we reach this last point dismissing introspection that we depart radically from Buddhism. It is certainly true that using the term introspection as a conceptual metaphor for eyesight turned inward instead of outward has severe limitations, especially if we are going to think of what we see within as objective evidence. But Buddhist introspection is somewhat more akin to seeing outward from deeper within. We can't see our eyes from our eyes, and no amount of ogling from them will suggest to us what rods and cones are, let alone an optic nerve. We can still pay a great deal more attention to what is deeper within and thus get to know ourselves better in there, leading to improved cognitive self-management, and leading to superior intelligence for processing feedback and making better inferences about what goes on within us. Whatever it takes to get those eyeballs exploring. Because we have reasons to be suspicious of the objectivity of knowledge gained by introspection and phenomenology, we are once again deep into the problem of rejecting our subjective states as unscientific, unmeasurable and therefore irrelevant to such a pure science as this. What is lost is all of those processes that are found in the mind but not really found in the brain. In other words, strong emergence is lost, the synergies of the whole that cannot be found in the parts, the functions that reductionism will always be blind to. It is not so easy to guess the chariot from a big, unlabeled box of chariot parts, but it's more difficult still to guess where those parts can take you. What matters here is whether an idea gleaned from introspection can be used to predictable effect. The fact that nobody can yet explain how this higher-order cognition works to real-world effect is not an indictment of introspection.

Much of the adaptive unconscious is made of evolutionary adaptations. Our cognitive systems have adapted to our needs to perform functions rapidly and almost automatically, to evaluate situations and make snap decisions, to jump to conclusions, to make leaps of faith, giving us a dynamic, hasty, broad-brush sketch of the world to

live in. We frequently need another whole set of reasons to go more slowly and thoroughly than this. This requires energy that we are not always willing to allocate, and so much of the world that we live in is one given to us by unconscious reactions to sensory input and other pre-conscious processes. Further, what we call the product of introspection is often merely an after-the-fact rationalization of states that have already been created unconsciously. And often these are states that have been driven by our various mechanisms of self-deception such as cognitive bias.

In theory there should be no conflict between cognitive psychology and the studies of embodied cognition and evolutionary psychology. But then every time you have disciplines you get their border guards and pissing contests. For cognitive psychology to be effective it should not draw too tight a circle around itself. It should not pretend to be the same sort of science as physics or math. A sensation in the tricep is information to be processed, and it has a place in the physicist's idea of force. Blue, love, goals and sunsets are all information available to cognitive processing. The seat of will is not found in any one pattern of neural circuitry, and even if it was, that of the next person to be examined would have one seated elsewhere. That it has no fixed locus in the brain does not mean a will cannot be exercised, and in scientifically predictable ways. Of course, this is assuming that the subject has even developed a will.

### **Cognitive Behavioral Therapies (CBT)**

Cognitive Behavioral Therapies are a collection of various therapeutic techniques that interpose our cognitive schemata into the space between stimulus and response. In some places the cognitive schemata are called evaluative beliefs, which implies, as it should, that more than a simple intellect is at work here. The world that we respond to with our behavior is not the world itself as sensed, but the one that comes to us largely pre-interpreted by our vast array of cognitive processes, which includes sensory illusions, inaccurate memories, cognitive errors, dysfunctional emotions and maladaptive behavioral scripts, a big portion of which are unconscious. The term belief also implies a degree of entrenchment or resistance to change. As the initials CB suggest, CBT is dually-oriented to both cognition and behavior. Successful therapy relies on our ability to alter or adapt the way our reality is constructed in our minds, thus altering the perceived world to which we respond. As the systems develop, the focus on fine-tuning our rational thinking will likely broaden further to incorporate better understanding of what thinking really is, particularly its sensory and affective and generally messier and bloodier neurological and neurochemical components.

The CBT therapeutic process is oriented to achieving specific goals, and this is normally transparent to the patient, meaning that he is told how the process works and required to participate or collaborate consciously. With the exception of a specific doctor or therapist-to-patient relationship as the basis for guidance, the similarity to Buddhist practice is obvious, and shows a likely influence of Buddhism. The specific procedures will vary, with CBT being considerably more streamlined and abbreviated. Skipping steps that the Buddhists still take is not necessarily an improvement, however. One version, found ([here](#)), identifies seven steps to the process: 1) Identifying thoughts, feelings & behaviors; 2) Understanding the links between thoughts, feelings & behaviors; 3) Making changes in behaviors or acquiring skills; 4) Making changes in thoughts; 5) Challenging our thoughts; 6) Distancing or defusing from thoughts; and then 7) Practice. There are other versions.

In addition therapy, the challenge is to construct new schemata that override the dysfunctional target schemata, displacing these with greater salience, relevance, value, immediacy, and, if possible, pleasantness, at least in the long term. This overriding will

be more effective if our rational reconstruction can be sensitized or alerted to the powers of all four of our categories of self-deception, all of them seemingly in place to reinforce and defend our long-standing and entrenched set of evaluative beliefs.

### **Cognitive Reframing and Restructuring**

The broadest definition of cognitive reframing can refer to nearly any alteration in a person's cognitive perspective or point of view. This can be a shift to a more erroneous, ineffective or maladaptive point of view. It often occurs without conscious effort. It simply describes the shiftings of our attitudes, contexts, standpoints, and scales of time and distance that change our images of the world. But this is not itself a reason to not use the same term in the narrower sense of intentionally moving our frames of reference around to see both our problems and the world at large from different points of vantage, and within different contexts, using different lenses and filters, to use a photography metaphor.

Using such "found" frames is different from actively or mechanically reconstructing our cognitive schemata and points of view. Cognitive restructuring is a more technical term used in the cognitive therapies to refer to actively altering one's mindset to achieve specified goals. It may be called a subset of reframing, although this ignores some useful differences between found frames and constructed frames, where the latter might imply a process of demolition and remodeling pursuant to a plan or design. It is not a reconstruction to simply back up into a bigger-picture perspective, to try out someone else's idea or to count to ten.

The process of restructuring involves identifying problem sensations, memories, thoughts, emotions, behaviors, and core beliefs, dysfunctional constructs of ourselves, the world, or future probabilities: "I'm not worthy of love. I can't do anything right. I need approval or encouragement first. I'm entitled to that. I'm so special that I'm exempt from most rules. I have better things to do than wait." Core beliefs like these examples are often accompanied and reinforced by longer-term dispositional affect, or ruts. The shorthand for these is automatic thoughts or AT's. Here we identify the AT's, uncover how they distort our view of things, dispute them with such tricks as Socratic questioning, and then develop our more rational rebuttals and replacements. Socratic questioning involves challenging the evaluative beliefs: "What are the disadvantages of continuing to believe that? What are some alternative beliefs? What are the limits of that belief? Where is that not true? What is your evidence for that belief? What are the consequences of holding that to be true?" It is a little naive to think that simply changing our minds or our thinking is enough to change either our emotions or our behavior, or much of the inertial mass and momentum of the adaptive unconscious. Simple changes in our interpretations are not guaranteed to yield specified changes in emotionality. And it is no less work to realize these changes in therapy as it is in Buddhism, even though the hours involved are far fewer and far more expensive.

### **Rational-Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT)**

Rational-Emotive Behavior Therapy began as Cognitive Therapy and Rational Emotive Therapy (RET). It was founded by Robert Ellis in the mid-1950's. Ellis explicitly claimed significant inspiration from ancient Asian, Greek and Roman sources. He quotes Stoicism's Epictetus: "Men are disturbed not by things, but by the views which they take of them" (*Enchiridion*). The claim is that we are affected emotionally not by the outside world directly, but by our "perceptions, attitudes, or internalized sentences about outside things and events." In other words, people's perceptions, motivations, emotions, feelings, reactions and behavioral responses are

more closely based on their beliefs about the world than on an undistorted perception of an objective reality.

REBT is an important part of both Rational and Smart Recovery, and we reviewed a little of this earlier. We looked at the ABC and DEFG templates: the Activating (or Adversive) event > evaluative Beliefs about the activating event > Consequences; and then > Disputing irrational beliefs > new Effective beliefs > new Feelings > new Goals. The real work begins with the evaluative belief, or our cognitive schemata. There are several kinds of beliefs associated with a decision to engage in an addictive behavior. To identify only a few: 1) this is going to feel good, 2) this is going to take bad feelings away, 3) I can do this simply because I can, 4) I can do this because I'm clever enough to skip ahead straight to rewards, 5) I can do this because nothing gives me more kicks for the amount of money I spend, 6) I can pack more rewards into my life in this way, 7) I don't need a doctor to medicate myself because they don't know me like I know myself, 8) my circumstances have been cruel to me, so I deserve a little relief, 9) this predisposition runs in my family, so it's genetic, 10) what I have is a disease, not a choice, and 11) this will get rid of today's guilt and shame about yesterday, so all I will have to deal with tomorrow is today's. All of these beliefs are supported structurally by the adaptive unconscious, and these structures (formations or *sankharas*) can consist of many moving parts. Things are just not as they seem to be, especially when things are going wrong. Importantly, the fact that bad consequences do not follow necessarily or immediately from the activating events can mean that continuing to see them as doing helps to perpetuate self-defeating or irrational evaluative beliefs. We have avoided the feedback needed for self-correction.

A useful synonym for evaluative belief is apperception or apperceptive mass. The Oxford American dictionary defines apperception "the mental process by which a person makes sense of an idea by assimilating it to the body of ideas he or she already possesses." This can also be thought of as conditioned perception. The Buddhist term *sanna*, one of the 5 *khandas*, and often translated perception, is closer in meaning to apperception. In psychology it can be defined as "the process by which new experience is assimilated to and transformed by the residuum of past experience of an individual to form a new whole." As is often said, "we do not see things as they are, we see things as we are." While this is not completely true, our perceptions are not pure, and they have an inertia about them which is our own personal resistance to change. This is the things we already think we know getting in the way of the things we need to learn. The correction of evaluative belief in Buddhism is with Right View and Right Intention.

REBT asserts that we can replace "illogical and unrealistic ideas with more realistic and adaptive ones through direct intervention and confrontation by the therapist." But rational analysis or insight is seldom enough to correct these beliefs. Reconstruction also requires persistent emotional and behavioral involvement. And we should remember that emotions are not always sourced in ideas and beliefs, but often in more bodily states. The rational approach can still begin with such strategies as long-term CBA or Cost-Benefit Analysis to help us envision and intend the eventual results of self-correction. Other rational analyses may be used, such as a Life-Cycle Assessment (factoring the cost of a liver transplant into the cost of a bottle of wine) or reevaluating our Future Discounting (thinking that ten dollars next week is far less valuable than ten dollars today). Any study we do of our four sets of mechanisms of self-deception would fit in here as well. Higher order goals, on levels above the problem, are useful here too, such as personal purpose, higher purpose, or Smart Recovery's VACI: Vital Absorbing Creative Interest.

Ellis, in *Anger: How to Live With and Without It* (1997) describes an REBT process he calls "emotional training" with this example: "Think of an intensely pleasant

experience you have had with the person with whom you now feel angry. When you have fantasized such a pleasant experience and have actually given yourself unusually good, intensely warm feelings toward that person as a result of this remembrance, continue the process. Recall pleasant experiences and good feelings, and try to make these feelings paramount over your feelings of hostility." This is nothing more than a restatement of the Buddhist technique or exercise of substitution (*tadanga*) that we discussed under Right Intention. In this example, we are doing the prescribed exercise of substituting *metta* for *abyapada*. Again, we are working with dynamic memory, making new associative connections that are likely to come along with the memory the next time we recall it, calming us, reducing our stress, adding perspective. We are thus altering the affective charge of this particular component of the adaptive unconscious.

The processes of evaluation are fundamental to the evolved human organism, and they work on both biological and cultural levels. They are generally inertial, self-sustaining or conservative within feedback loops, maintaining evaluative parameters using the cognitive biases that favor those behavioral responses which tend to confirm the older evaluative parameters. REBT practitioners work intimately with patients to help uncover their individual set of beliefs, prejudices, attitudes, expectations and personal rules and the various defensive structures that support them. Although the emphasis is on presently-held beliefs, background personal history may be explored to examine their development.

### **Acceptance and Commitment Therapy**

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, or ACT, was originally called Comprehensive Distancing. Stepping back, getting less immersed in the details, experiencing the world within, without our evaluations, accepting ourselves and the conditions that we find ourselves in, is the first part of learning what it is we may want to change. It's hard to do this with our noses down in it. Thus it makes use of both acceptance and mindfulness, which are also typical of Buddhist exercises. The name ACT is also used as another acronym for its three practical principles of Accepting your reactions and being present, Choosing a valued direction and then Taking action. This therapy also uses the acronym FEAR as a mnemonic for its version of four problems leading to suffering: Fusion with your thoughts, Evaluation of experience, Avoidance of your experience and Reason-giving (or rationalization) for your behavior. Rather than focusing on self-control, ACT works on noticing and embracing first, on the theory that healthier choices will follow from having better information. It uses a model of a transcendent sense of self called "self-as-context," an ever-observing self that is independent of and above other mental phenomena. Identity is shifted here, up out of the details and the individual components of the psyche. In Buddhism, of course, this transcendent self doesn't exist, but all that we need to do to reconcile the two is to strip the idea of reality from self-as-context and simply call it a process or even a trick of mindfulness.

The six core parts of the process are identified as 1) Contact with the present moment (avoiding distraction of thoughts, emotions, memories and expectations), 2) Self-as-context (getting in touch with the transcendent, observing self), 3) Defusion (reducing a tendency to reify thoughts, images, emotions, and memories), 4) Acceptance (specifically, not the same as approval, but allowing experience to come and go without struggling), 5) Values (finding out what is really important and wanted) and 6) Committed action (setting goals pursuant to what is learned about true values and following this through responsibly). Psychological suffering is usually caused by experiential avoidance (Buddhist *vyapada*), cognitive entanglement (Buddhist *ditthi*), and a resulting psychological rigidity (Buddhist *moha*, *upadana* and many others) that

leads to a failure to take the needed behavioral steps in accord with core values. The goal is a clarification of values, knowing what we want, which leads, draws, drives or motivates us into intentional and effective behavior.

A similar practice known as Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) is a group intervention program that is more often used to treat depressive disorders. Mindfulness is used to increase our awareness of incoming thoughts and feelings from what is called a metacognitive perspective, an ability to perceive negative thoughts and feelings as phenomena which simply pass through the mind and are not a part of a self. Metacognitive awareness is in a "being" mode rather than a "doing" mode which is "decentered" away from immediate involvement and so can perceive thoughts and feelings more objectively as transient mental events. This state of detachment is akin to Buddhist states of equanimity (*upekkha*) and detachment (*viveka*).

### **Motivational Interviewing and Self-Efficacy**

Motivational Interviewing, or Motivational Enhancement Therapy, is an active counseling approach to therapy, in many ways the opposite of the stereotypical "mmhmm ... mmhmm ... and how does that make you feel?" It is called a "client-centered counseling style for eliciting behavior change by helping clients to explore and resolve ambivalence" wherein the counselor is intentionally directive, something more like a life coach. The therapist attempts to influence the client and assist in the direction of future behavior, rather than simply assist a client in exploring himself and drawing his own conclusions. However, the conclusions must still be the client's own.

Four counseling skills are identified: 1) an ability to ask open-ended questions, 2) an ability to provide affirmations, 3) a capacity for reflective listening (let me see if I understood what you said ...), and 4) an ability to periodically provide summary statements to the client. Counseling is conducted in a non-confrontational manner. The client is simply exposed to more and better information about problems, consequences, risks and options. The key, as the name implies, is to arouse motivation to change, do the right thing, or act more effectively.

There are four general principles for the therapist: 1) Expressing Empathy, trying to sense, think and feel from the client's point of view, encouraging the client to open up further; 2) Developing Discrepancy, exposing, highlighting or articulating the gaps between what is viable or real and what is desired or claimed; 3) Rolling with Resistance, using an Aikido or Jujitsu, if you will, to avoid confrontation and defensiveness while gently guiding the interview's momentum around and into desired directions; and 4) Supporting Self-Efficacy, helping the client to develop a sense of autonomy or self-direction, maintain motivation, make practical choices and overcome frustrations creatively.

The identified goals of the therapy are to: 1) establish rapport, 2) elicit talk of change, and 3) establish commitment language. All motivation must ultimately be that of the client, who must speak his own words and set his own goals. This brings us back to the management version of the SMART acronym: the viable goals are: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-specific.

The practice also uses the word Frames as a mnemonic acronym, for a quick checklist in reviewing the therapy as a collaborative process. Here the steps are 1) Feedback, such as reflective listening and summarizing; 2) Responsibility, as shared in a collaborative partnership; 3) Advice or counsel, 4) Menu of options, 5) Empathy, and 6) Self-efficacy.

Finally, ten processes are highlighted: 1) consciousness raising, with improved information, feedback and mindfulness; 2) dramatic relief, an affective sense of the difference between how things are and how much better they might be; 3) self-

reevaluation, coming to terms with changes needed to achieve more wholesome behavior patterns; 4) environmental reevaluation, or realizing how self-improvement might also improve life for others; 5) social liberation, or seeing the utility of more positive social feedback loops; 6) self-liberation or coming to see that real change is a viable option; 7) helping relationships, or actively seeking more supportive social circumstances; 8) counter-conditioning or substituting the old patterns for new; 9) reinforcement management, or minimizing rewards for unwholesome behavior while maximizing rewards for the wholesome; and 10) stimulus control, attending to encouraging reminders and turning aside from problematic triggers.

The development of self-efficacy goes beyond the getting of sufficient informational input. Simply getting in touch with our feelings or building our self-esteem will not take us there, particularly if we learn to identify those feelings, even the bad ones, as "the real me," or if self-esteem is encouraged even in response to a failure or a maladaptive response. Self-efficacy requires selection, figuring out which behaviors do not warrant feeling any self-esteem whatsoever. Skillfulness and competence are the watchwords here, not an unconditional acceptance that leaves us without any drive to change things.

Albert Bandura identifies four main factors involved in self-efficacy: 1) Experience, enactive attainment or a developed sense of mastery reinforced by successes and diminished by failure, which in turn recommends that only attainable goals be set; 2) Modeling, "vicarious experience" or "learning in other heads," including proper use of inspiring role models as well as inferior examples; 3) Social persuasion, the encouragement or discouragement from others, where social discouragement often has the greater impact; and 4) Physiological factors, such as experiencing symptoms of stress or distress like anxiety and fear, then conflating these with the tasks at hand in ways which are allowed to affect performance.

# Greek Philosophy

Albert Ellis, in *Reason and Emotion in Psychotherapy* (1962), credits some of his principles of REBT to Stoicism: "This principle, which I have inducted from many psychotherapeutic sessions with scores of patients during the last several years, was originally discovered and stated by the ancient Stoic philosophers, especially Zeno of Citium (the founder of the school), Chrysippus (his most influential disciple), Panaetius of Rhodes (who introduced Stoicism into Rome), Cicero, Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius." The truths of Stoicism were perhaps best set forth by Epictetus, who in the first century A.D. wrote in the *Enchiridion*: "Men are disturbed not by things, but by the views which they take of them." This point, I think, warrants a brief Appendix just to look at some of the ethical and psychological aspects of couple of Greek schools of thought in relation to both addiction and Buddhism. Aristotle showed some initial wisdom here by arguing that happiness is best achieved in a roundabout way, simply as a byproduct or consequence of other pursuits.

## Stoicism

Stoicism, founded in the 3rd century BCE, is likely to be the first school to come to mind here. It argued that a person of sufficient virtue, moral character and intellectual development would be far less prone to errors in judgment, and bad feelings or suffering that followed in consequence. Wisdom consists largely in bringing our will (*prohairesis*) into better accord with nature. We are at our best living agreeably with nature, and finding the rationally appropriate position. Nature has an order (*logos*) that is knowable if we use our reason, so that reason or rational living is ultimately the key to right living. In bringing ourselves into such an accord we can gain a degree of freedom in an otherwise deterministic universe. Without this our souls are completely subject to fate.

We must also set ourselves free from such destructive emotions as envy and anger. In modern usage, the word stoic often mean numb, indifferent or apathetic, or "enduring pain or hardship without showing feelings or complaining." This fails to cover the original ground. It is true that apathy (*apatheia*), or being without passion (*pathos*), was a state of mind to be sought, but passion usually meant suffering from being passively dragged into less than wholesome conditions, or at best, our emotional reaction to things undergone. Apathy was the sense that we do not need to submit to undergoing or going under: we want to stay above. *Pathos* did not fully describe the range of feelings that were available to the sage. There were also *eupatheia*, the higher-order feelings such as joy, inner peace, calm, mindfulness and intention, in addition to a still loftier equanimity. They did not, therefore, seek to extinguish all feeling and emotion. Our highest attainment in life is happiness or flourishing (*eudaimonia*).

Stoicism is a way of life requiring ascetic practice or training (*askesis*), as well as the exercise of logic, Socratic questioning, the contemplation of death, the training of our attention or mindfulness, and self-reminding. Beyond tranquility, there were four more cardinal virtues in the school: 1) *Sophia* or wisdom, 2) *Andreia* or courage, 3) *Dikaiosyne* or justice and 4) *Sophrosyne* or temperance. Since most of the universe is deterministic, the most useful application of our reason is in reasoning out how best to adapt, understanding the processes of both nature and our own nature and working with them rather than against them. If we want to minimize our suffering we must first track down its causes in what tends to be our own malformed attitudes and irrational thinking, or in our clinging to things that are fated to pass. "Permit nothing to cleave to you that is not your own; nothing to grow to you that may give you agony when it is torn away" advised Epictetus in the *Enchiridion*. The Stoic Roman emperor Marcus

Aurelius advised "Get rid of the judgment, get rid of the 'I am hurt,' and you are rid of the hurt itself."

Stoicism is a surrender to a world in which self means nothing. Again from the Roman Marcus Aurelius: "Is it your reputation that is bothering you? But look at how soon we're all forgotten. The abyss of endless time that swallows it all. The emptiness of those applauding hands." Of course, Marcus Aurelius was a famous Roman Emperor, and is still well-known today, but he did say endless time and our sun has not yet exploded.

### **Epicurean Hedonism**

While a general kindredness of Buddhism to Stoicism is fairly obvious, its affinity with the school of Epicurean Hedonism may be a little more counterintuitive. Hedonism alone, when it is considered separately from the philosophical school of Epicurus, is the conviction that pleasure is the highest good and that the surest guide to right behavior is the maximization of net pleasure, or the amount by which the pleasantness of life exceeds the unpleasantness. The school was founded in part by Aristippus of Cyrene (c 435-356 BCE), to whom the point of our lives was to adapt circumstances to our advantage, control adversity and optimize our prosperity. The Cyrenaic school he founded advocated increasing one's desires and even inventing new ones, so new and better pleasures could be explored. But the elder Democritus (c 460-370 BCE) is the better known and perhaps the more deserving cofounder. To him our highest good, or *summum bonum*, is in contentment or cheerfulness; our joys and sorrows are our most reliable guides to the beneficial and the harmful.

Democritus and his heirs were materialists and naturalists, best known for spreading such ideas as atomic theory, cultural evolution, and a round Earth. They thought to dispense altogether with ideas of transcendent and spiritual entities. It is interesting that they intuited the pleasure principle from their early version of natural science and observation of nature. This anticipated the theory that our reward circuits and our nociception were evolved adaptive processes conducive to our biology's two highest goods, survival and reproduction. This would not be anywhere near central to any scientific thought for more than two millennia. In fact, another great leader of the school, the Roman poet Lucretius, gives a pretty prophetic description of both evolution and natural selection in his poem *De Rerum Natura* (v. 820-875).

Parts of Hedonism, and most of Democritus' thought, were taken up by Epicurus (341-270 BCE). To him, happiness is tranquility and the absence of pain and mental disturbance. Sensations, pleasure and pain are reliable guides to the life we should be living. Misunderstanding has its roots in the irrational inferences that we draw from sensation. His assertion that sensations, including pain and pleasure, presented us with an objective view of the world, was perhaps where he went furthest astray, although Lucretius stuck his neck out still further when he claimed that women moved around too much and made too much noise during sex. But while the Epicurean philosophy made pleasure a primary point of focus, he was clear that there was a world of qualitative difference between higher and lower pleasures. You might call his a long-range hedonism which extolled the virtues of good taste, the refinement of our desires and the deferral of shortsighted self-gratification. "The greatest wealth is to live content with little, for there is never want where the mind is satisfied."

Like the Buddha, Epicurus was not what you would call an optimist. He even referred to life as "the bitter gift." The highest pleasures are found in the minimization of suffering, in freedom from pain (*aponia*), in enjoyment without craving, in having a sense of value, in being grateful, in prudence, in modest living (even to the point of living anonymously), in learning how this world works, in finding the optimal limits

for our desires, and in good friendship. Right living leads to a state of tranquility (*ataraxia*). Pleasures are our guide to the fitness of our lives, pain and suffering are the signs of unfitness, and excesses in the pursuit of pleasure and happiness only lead to pain and suffering. We follow our necessary desires and forgo the unnecessary and artificial ones. We seek knowledge to be rid of unfounded fears, and humankind's two worst, most adversely productive fears are the fear of gods and the fear of death. Our anxieties about divinities and our mortality are the source of some of our worst errors and suffering. To Epicurus, if there are any gods or souls, they too are made of atoms and material and ultimately have no relevance to our final outcomes. "Death is nothing; for that which is dissolved is without sensation, and that which lacks sensation is nothing to us." His attitude towards learning and civilization had something in common with that of Diogenes and Laozi. He felt that to the extent that they aroused desires that were impossible to satisfy, desires that led to endless dissatisfaction, we ought to consider that they may not be worth the trouble. "Natural wealth is limited and easily obtained; the wealth defined by vain fancies is always beyond reach."

Also like the Buddha, Epicurus lived a celibate life, although he did not ask this of his students and followers. Given the above, and particularly that fidelity to a principle of pleasure is actually the best teacher that we could have of moderation and restraint, it is difficult to understand the tongue and finger wagging directed against Epicureanism by religions without concluding that instilling fear, guilt and shame were fundamental to the persistence of religion. But here it was, the first comprehensive ethic that was based on natural history, and also accounted for in terms of what would later be called evolutionary adaptations and reward circuits. The thought extended to the law, which was viewed, not as divine order, but as a social contract for the conservation of pleasure and happiness.

"When we say ... that pleasure is the end and aim, we do not mean the pleasures of the prodigal or the pleasures of sensuality, as we are understood to do by some through ignorance, prejudice or willful misrepresentation. By pleasure we mean the absence of pain in the body and of trouble in the soul. It is not by an unbroken succession of drinking bouts and of revelry, nor by sexual lust, nor the enjoyment of fish and other delicacies of a luxurious table, which produce a pleasant life; it is sober reasoning, searching out the grounds of every choice and avoidance, and banishing the beliefs through which the greatest tumults take possession of the soul" (Epicurus, Letter to Menoeceus). The highest and most pleasant states of affect were identified as joy (*khara*) to distinguish them from our more typical sense of pleasure (*hedone*). And despite what was quoted just above, true happiness (*eudaimonia*) was not simply a neutral, anhedonic or apathetic state, but a positive form of pleasure.

# Evolutionary Psychology

We are not here concerned with hopes and fears, only with truth as far as our reason permits us to discover it. Charles Darwin

## Human Nature

When I was in grade school, a big part of the standard narrative about humankind was that we were fundamentally different from those lower animals. The animals had their instincts, while we had consciousness, intelligence, culture and language. We made ourselves into who we are using culture. To make room for this, we had to be pretty much born as blank slates, or *tabula rasa*. Human nature was something we left behind long ago, even before we were cave men. It was a lot more obvious then that we had not descended from the apes. Yet in spite of our specialness, behaviorism ruled psychology, because our wondrous minds were, at bottom, going to be comprehensible from without as learnable patterns. Who we became derived from how we were given our nurture, and the relationship of nurture to nature was termed *versus*. And the word versus here has remained in the narrative as one of our more persistent bits of stupidity.

Evolutionary Psychology (EP) is a relatively new, still-forming template or conceptual model, and still existing partially outside of the field of psychology. It is the study of our psychological traits as evolved adaptations, products of mutation, natural selection and sexual selection. Some say it's the study of "human psychological traits," but some people are missing the point in pulling us out of our biological, zoological and primatological contexts. EP does ultimately ask the questions "What is human nature?" and "How has the human mind evolved?" but much of this mind came about even before there were primates. What sort of natural history would result in our brains and minds functioning the way that they do now? Such a question requires much conjecture about our ancestral environments, and the kinds of survival-challenging problems that tended to recur there, and of course there is a circularity problem in inferring this environment from the way our brains work. Carl Sagan wrote some pretty good introductory reads here in *The Dragons of Eden* and *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*, although now there is much more to the feast than these two works.

## Social Functions

The social functions form a large part of our evolved cognitive array. Many of the cognitive and behavioral traits that we see in ourselves we can also observe in primates, suggesting that much of this behavior lies beneath our much-vaunted human neocortex, and much of this is well down into our limbic system. Only recently are the researchers stepping forward to announce that we have an inherited, if rudimentary, morality arising from down in there, and intimately wired to our social functions. What Jung called archetypes arise there as well, universal, unconscious and inherited predilections to sort and organize our social experience into behavioral types that are pertinent to survival and reproduction within the social environment: fathers, mothers, heroes, role models, allies, enemies, losers, tricksters, strangers, sexual conquests, etc. This is a subset of what EP calls cognitive modules. In places they are called innate neurognostic structures, basic ways of knowing that precede learning. Different social modules help us to absorb the ambient language, or learn which foods are edible by watching others not die, or copy a basic craft or technological skill. Still older modules will enable us to read another's emotions, avoid committing incest, tell relatives from strangers by scent, assess the likely genetic health of our potential mates, and intuit the value of reciprocal altruism. Finally, many of these modules seem to come equipped with stock affective and endocrinological responses, as the sight of a known betrayer

triggering hostility or the touch of a baby triggering oxytocin and "awwwww." The more universal these cognitive traits are, the more likely they are to be much deeper than cultural.

EP has given us much new perspective on social cognition. There are hereditary grounds for anger at betrayal or defiance, shame from damaged reputes, confidence gained in conformity, kindheartedness in reciprocity, suspicion towards known cheaters. We track and remember the giving and taking of resources as do the great apes. There is a social economy as well as a social environment and its gold standard is trust or confidence.

The web of our social functions permit what is known as distributed cognition, or hive mind as it is called on lower cognitive orders. This is not to say that such a mind is self-aware or sentient, although it may behave as though it were self aware and fool a lot of people into thinking that there is such a thing as a group mind, potentially having a conscience and somehow deserving of rights. There are social circuits of information processing and sharing and even intricate, distributed mechanisms of self-deception. EP suggests that the mind is made up of a large number of interacting sensory, cognitive, affective, and motivational adaptations in cognitive modules. Buddhism might suggest that there may be a useful analogy here, since our individual cognition is a group activity as well, without a central mind or soul.

### **That No Man is Created or Equal**

Because of its focus on selection, EP is ideally not beholden to the idea that all men are created, equal, or created equal. There will be varying degrees of fitness within every population. This is of course an argument against the Mahayana assumption that all beings have Buddha nature and all are destined one day for the very highest states of enlightenment or salvation, but a Theravada should have no problem with this as long as compassion and other *Brahmavijharas* are preserved. Herbert Spencer's famous phrase "survival of the fittest" is much misunderstood. This is not a question of might making right, or of the victor writing history, but of fitting in, or adapting, to the social and environmental niches. As niches themselves change and evolve over time, fitness might be continually challenged and adaptability stressed or emphasized. The niches that we humans occupy have been changing at dizzying speeds for some time now, and many of us in the most-altered environments are finding some of our old adaptations to be dangerously maladapted to the new. Sixty-thousand years back, fats and sugars were usually rare enough that our organisms learned to over-consume them whenever available. Today this is causing us big problems. In the good old days we might chance upon a natural cache of fermenting fruit, or an herb or fungus that enhanced our experience. We never once stumbled onto a moonshine still or big bag of processed cocaine. Today, this too is causing us problems. We usually got enough of an adrenaline rush in bringing down the occasional great beast to feed the tribe. Now, to get that rush we sometimes need to prey on each other. We also very rarely encountered humans in groups of more than a hundred, while many of us today now live among millions. This entails hormonal stresses that we do not come pre-adapted to.

While we are slowly delineating a broad idea of human nature, which by definition would indicate universal characteristics, we humans are not uniform. Evolution diverges, and there are better and worse human beings along every axis that we can imagine or measure. The idea of evolution is gradually gaining in popularity against the stream of creationism, but this is still poorly understood, especially among so-called scientists who profess to *believe in* evolution. The very idea of and necessity for selection is a particularly sensitive subject that triggers a great deal of denial and

hostility. Just try mentioning eugenics these days, whether positive or negative. This runs contrary to the widely accepted notion that sentient beings, in their essence, are spiritual beings come down to earth from elsewhere, to be cloaked in matter, wrapped up in meat, in order to learn to be spirit again. In this model, every being is either essentially or potentially pure and capable of the highest success, salvation or redemption. Even Jeffrey Dahmer could find Jesus and be forgiven at the last moment of life. There are billions who would decline the opportunity to go back in time and strangle the baby Hitler. EP might suggest instead that it is a good thing that so many lives end with an early death, some by lethal injection, and that some entire species are just not competent enough to carry on, with humans, perhaps, about to become one of these. Many would claim that the only real problem is that our civilization is set up such that the wrong people are dying young. At a minimum, some of our human traits and modules could use some editing with prejudice. If we could somehow cultivate a healthier understanding of selection, or at least stop fleeing the subject, we might collectively come up with ways to put it to healthier use. The Buddha taught for those "with little dust over their eyes" and knew that most of humanity wasn't really ready to wake up. He thought and spoke in terms of thousands and millions of years for that to evolve. Any honest look at evolution must be courageous, and absolutely requires us to adopt such geological time horizons.

### **The Mind-Made Body**

We have evolved the ability to make cognitive models of who we are, including a very complicated model called a self-schema which at least attempts to hold each of us all together and even to account for the wide discrepancies and conflicts between the various cognitive components like head and heart, or the ways we are so very different in situations A versus B. We can put this schema into a sort of mental flesh with mental senses and send it out to run errands, to test our bright ideas in theory and imaginary contexts before they get tested in practice. This is a beginning of what Buddha called the mind-made body and what the Hindus call the astral body. With such a vehicle we can do vicarious trial-and-error. The vicious bites that this body sustains from imaginary tigers hardly bleed at all, but the kind of information that they provide has an anciently proven value.

Buddhists would tend to regard this sense of the self as a useful but temporary illusion, even if it was a little delusional to reify a process into a thing. Emergentists would call this constructed self an emergent entity, conditioned upon its causes and thus non-existent without them. We could suggest that if a function is emergent and not innate it would not be all that inauthentic or un-spontaneous to bring it under control. We have a license to say of anything that occurs to our egos: "that's not me" and then make it not me. Emergent functions like self-schemas or similar personal constructs don't have bodies, even though neuroscience might one day soon identify certain patterns of neural processes that accompany their appearance in awareness. Yet they are still subjects for a science with slightly fuzzy edges if we look at their value in predicting behavior. We just need to keep putting this mind-made body of ours through its trials and paces.

### **Problem Solving**

Some would say that consciousness evolved out of its utility in finding novel responses to challenges to survival and reproductive success, out of its ability to reorganize or reframe a given perceptual field, out of its ability to acknowledge and compare more than one option or alternative, out of its ability to run alternative scenarios with vicarious trial-and-error. And all of these functions are performed with

the intent to correctly anticipate events and predict their outcomes. The "being-here-now" part of consciousness has only a small slice of this. Our human consciousness evolved a number of shortcuts for information processing, quick and dirty heuristics that can be done on the fly, and whilst in flight from hungry beasts with snapping jaws. One such set includes our magical solutions and the conjuring of meaning out of more-or-less random stimulations with apophenia and pareidolia. This is a conscious form of creative dreaming that has likely produced a lot of ideas and insights that contributed to our survival. We have reflexive cognitive and behavioral responses that have fairly high probabilities of error, but which give us an ability to react quickly to mere suggestions of threats. We carry around large sets of available, readily adoptable dispositions or attitudes to pick and choose from whenever the need arises. Of course, since our emotions tend to lock us into specific behavioral scripts, the greater our facility for emotional self-control, the freer will be our access to our alternative dispositions. Survival in complex environments requires such a diversity for resilience. Adaptive fitness is depth, analogous to having alternative players on our sports teams, with different talents and plays. Simple organisms in friendly environments have a more limited stock of these dispositions, which is usually fine until the environment turns hostile.

One of our most useful cognitive shortcuts, although scientifically and cognitively problematic, is our analogical problem-solving behavior, or correlative thought. This requires an ability to see or uncover patterns where they exist, complete patterns that may only be hinted at, and to completely fabricate patterns wherever we can get away with it. We needed the ability to map two apparently analogous sets of conditions onto each other and allow the blank positions in the patterns to be filled in by implication or correspondence. Of course arguing from analogy, claiming that conclusions derived in this way must be true, is a common logical fallacy. The talent is not often enough recognized for what it is: an evolved heuristic for creating hypotheses, not for testing or proving them right. Now, since most of our experience is that of ourselves acting upon the world or acting upon other humans, we predictably have the tendency to over-analogize and project these analogies onto the world and others: I make things. Things that are not made by man look made. Therefore something analogous to me made them. I have proven the existence of God. I mess up my room when I am angry. Sometimes nature messes things up. Nature is God's expression. Therefore God is angry. The majority of human beings do much of their thinking this way, and of course claim to reject evolution, and especially selection.

# Cognitive Neuroscience

The act of knowing and self went from being inside a little brain person to being nowhere. Antonio Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens*

## The Field

When you get to the outer edges of the mid-eastern religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) and you want to explore a little beyond, you'll be looking into archaeology, anthropology and the history of myth. When you get to the same edges with Theravada Buddhism you're pretty much stuck with cognitive neuroscience, and not the out-of-date, ten-year-old, primitive stuff either. Cognitive neuroscience is an interdisciplinary field that explores one step deeper than cognitive psychology into the living unconscious, the structure of the brain, the processing and recalling of sensations, the ones and zeros of information processing, the pluses and minuses of neuro-chemical states, and the synergies between these. It's the study of how psychological and cognitive events emerge out of neural structures and functions. It is a little unfortunate that such a large portion of the information that is easiest to collect comes from patients who have neurological damage, but now the study of healthy subjects with various means of neural imaging is growing rapidly. The study of these images is even making some room for the self-reported descriptions of subjective states. Buddhists are coming in handy here, since they have long been mindful of these states from the other side and have also developed an extensive vocabulary to articulate them.

When we speak of brains today, we should be thinking it a mistake to locate the brain entirely in the head or to think that its sole function is the processing of data by neural nets in zeros and ones. The brain goes out to the fingertips, to pick up all of our sensory neurons, and its functions include all the complexities of the organism's blood-borne chemistry that have their effects on our mental states. Western psychology is only now starting to de-marginalize the fundamental roles of the sensory world and affect in our cognition. Of course fifty years ago it wouldn't even look at subjective states, so there's some progress. Given these errors, by people who fancy themselves scientific, maybe "inquiring within" isn't all that unscientific. At the very least, people who are paying attention to how their minds seem to work might now be consulted more often.

We have come a long way from phrenology, the old attempt to locate mental functions in specific spots in the brain and expressed on the scalp. The spots tended to grow into areas, and the areas into lobes, and then people started to see that most mental functions arose from networks of processes happening in different parts of the brain. Eventually it may be better understood that brain is the noun and mind is the verb and verbs must deal in dynamic processes. And emergent verbs still will not reduce entirely to the reductionist's nouns.

## The Computational Model

The computer or cybernetic analog models are used a lot in theoretical neuroscience, but they carry with them some of the more problematic pitfalls of argument from analogy. There is more to mind than the ones and the zeros and the programs that move them around. There remains a quite-common vision of an artificial intelligence or AI one day becoming large and complex enough to reach a tipping point and awaken as a sentient being. Sometimes the scientists will think as much too highly of information as others think too highly of consciousness. Certainly the AI devices will grow ever more proficient at crunching data and solving problems, according to design parameters that might even be inventions and output of previous AI devices. And one

of the persistent design goals here will be to create devices that perform increasingly better in Turing tests, tests of a device's ability to convince its observers that it is intelligent and even self-aware. Of course if you look around carefully, you may notice that human observers can be convinced of just about anything, especially if it conforms to their hopes or expectations.

It's probably even too reductionist to expand the computational concept of mind outwards to embrace our sensations, sense memories, feelings, emotions and imaginings as being further forms of digital information, even if we allow that they are of a different quality. As horrifying as it may be to science, we are probably still looking at synergy and strong emergence as the best terms to name the arising of sentience. This is horrifying because the theory really explains nothing: it merely gives a name to the process and announces the arrival of a new set of rules. Beware of rabbit hole. If this is the case, then ultimately neuroscience will not be able to tell us all that we would like to hear about who and what we are. We may have to go on making up names for experiences that we may not be able to measure or locate in the physical being. But this is alright. This is how Buddhism and neuroscience can work together. The important thing is that we keep getting better at cognizing in ways that respect the way the brain operates, so that we develop a healthier relationship between the ideal and the real, a relationship that diminishes delusion and increases self-efficacy.

### **Neurochemistry**

Neurochemistry studies how our neurotransmitters, pharmaceuticals, hormones, entheogens, and other chemicals can affect the functioning of neurons. The most obvious effects from the subjective perspective are on qualia such as the feeling of our feelings and emotions, the levels of our attentional arousal, and the maintenance of moods and other affective states of even longer duration. In studying addictive behavior we are especially concerned with such reward-system chemicals as dopamine, serotonin, oxytocin, noradrenaline and cortisol. More objectively, neural chemicals also direct a large range of processes such as the outgrowth of axons and dendrites, the rewiring of the brain, neuromodulation, sensory threshold modulation, the growth of new brain tissue and connections, memory regulation and the specialization of neurons. Clearly there is too much of sentience in the activities of chemicals in the brain to reduce it all to digital ones and zeros, even without going down the rabbit hole of strong emergence.

Thanks are due to neuroscience for bringing the importance of these, our sacred juices, to light, particularly the neuroscientists who emerged out of the psychedelic drug culture with their big new sets of chemistry questions. Our sentience is all about dynamic interaction, not a passive, contemplative recording of ideas on some equally ethereal medium. It is probably not even all digital until you get all the way down to the electron shells of atoms.

### **Neuroplasticity**

Irritability and plasticity are two of the characteristics distinguishing neurons from other cells. Neurons are subject to changes in ways that do not signal injury. These changes occur on both cellular and macro levels. By birth we have developed a vastly over-connected neural network, with many more possibilities and combinations than we can ever use. This over-connectedness is subsequently pruned back by a combination of use and neglect. Gross neural development was once considered pretty much a done deal by age five or so, but this thinking failed to account for a growing body of evidence that the brain would continue to change, or at least retained the potential to change. The most compelling examples are in the redeployment of neural

tissues to new functions following brain injuries, but there are other intriguing examples such as the intentional development of echolocation by the blind, brain-to-machine interfaces, chip implantation and the technological development of artificial senses.

Data from experiments with meditation and neuroimaging suggests that physical reconfigurations of brain tissue can occur in ways that modify our levels of stress and anxiety, attention, levels of confidence and other processes. Obviously, with each and every recallable memory, something has changed in the brain, however small that change may be. Given this, any old claims that neuroplasticity was an exceptional phenomenon had to refer to larger-scale changes in neural architecture. I have touched upon this in a few places earlier, suggesting dynamic memory as a descriptive term for the process: bringing memories, desires and aversions fully into awareness can augment, alter or diminish the affective charges they carry by adding new associations such as equanimity or forgiveness. As long as we are practicing mindfulness, the memory or other mental object that we are still attending has yet to be fully experienced. The neural outcome of past events can still be changed.

### **Embodied Cognition**

A *lebenswelt* or life-world is the world that is subjectively experienced as the given. For closely-related, sentient entities, especially in similar environments, multiple life-worlds can lead us to a sort of aggregated consensual world that approaches what some might call objective truth or reality. But there are a lot of conditions and assumptions here. And they do not really help me out one bit if I am trying to communicate with a bottlenose dolphin. This dolphin's brain runs ten times the auditory data that mine does, but only a fifth of the visual data. On the whole, his neocortex has about twice the surface area of mine, and is more fissured, but less deeply, and processes about double the overall data. We are worlds apart. He lives in his body in a way that is sensed much differently: it is simpler, and needs less computation, despite his extra dimension of movement. If I try giving him a human IQ test he might score at the kindergarden level, or maybe a chimpanzee. But if he were to give me a dolphin intelligence test, I would likely score below squid, and not the clever kind. We build our cognitive worlds partly out of original neural structures (neurogenesis) but mostly out of experience that is originally sensual and sensory.

Embodied cognition is the view that any creature's mental experience is conditioned on its material form, which represents a cluster of limitations on the way an environment might be experienced given additional forms. Bat and cetacean echolocation, shark and platypus electroreception, and cephalopod communication with chromatophores, are but three examples beyond the bounds of our own embodied cognition. There are creatures who see much farther into the infrared and ultraviolet, although no life form comes even close to sensing the fuller range of the E-M spectrum that our technological sensory extensions investigate. But even the data from our cleverest extrasensory devices needs to be translated back into data that lies within what is sensible to us. In other words, the fact that something makes no sense does not make it untrue.

Our conceptual metaphors, constructed largely of our sense memories or sensorimotor schemas, are the building blocks of much of our thought. Sensory and conceptual metaphors, together with our reasoning from analogies based on configurations presented to us by our senses, form the *dramatis personae*, stage, set and theater of much of our cognitive world. And importantly, neuroscience is gradually teaching us with some greater conviction that this is not the whole of the world.

# Positive Psychology

It is no measure of health to be well-adjusted to a profoundly sick society.  
Jiddu Krishnamurti.

As I've lamented earlier, much of psychology's database is founded on damaged brains and disappointing human behavior. It's more of a science of squeaky wheels, and not one of impressively balanced and frictionless wheels. Mental health in psychology tends to be regarded in terms of the normal condition, the center of the bell curve. It has little to say to the gifted, creative, or self-actualizing human being except to wish us well, and good luck trying to fit in.

Positive psychology attempts to address this missing part of the field. The term positive means to posit, put forward, propose, advance or assert. The word suggests creativity. While even the best of us needs work, and at least some repair, this positive branch of the field spends far less time in crying out for healing, in looking backwards into what caused us, or what caused us to go astray, or in wringing our hands and rending our garments. Someone who is getting therapy in positive psychology might be receiving life coaching, or skydiving lessons, or vocational guidance, or mindfulness training, or philosophical counseling.

This discipline was first named in the late 1990's by founders Martin Seligman and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi ([more](#)) who offered this definition in 1998: "We believe that a psychology of positive human functioning will arise, which achieves a scientific understanding and effective interventions to build thriving individuals, families, and communities. Positive psychologists seek to find and nurture genius and talent, and to make normal life more fulfilling, not simply to treat mental illness. The field is intended to complement, not to replace traditional psychology. It does not seek to deny the importance of studying how things go wrong, but rather to emphasize the importance of using the scientific method to determine how things go right."

We run into a problem here right away: what is exceptional will almost necessarily be anecdotal. It is oxymoronic to study the exceptional as a group. This of course has the critics wagging their fingers and questioning whether this can ever be any sort of objective science, capable of reliable measurements. Of course the normal therapies are subject to objective measurement and statistical analysis, as long as individual differences in both patients and their therapists can be either averaged or ignored. How can you study exceptional, or even simple success, except anecdotally? We just need a lot more anecdotes, or anecdata.

## The Problem of Happiness

Despite the best intentions of p-psych's founders, a significant number of enthusiasts are in danger of missing the point by misunderstanding the meaning of the word positive, as defined above. A lot of the preliminary research seems to be using happiness as the first measure of a person's psychological well-being, or more specifically, conflating positive with happy and negative with critical. The new age is creeping onto that lovely new lawn like crabgrass. There is much more to what Abraham Maslow called the "farther reaches of human nature" than our self-satisfied and narcissistic emotional states, even though this misunderstanding does sit quite well with modern culture. As Nietzsche put it: "My suffering and my fellow-suffering: what matter about them! Do I then strive after my happiness? I strive after my work!" (TSZ80). We have better and more important things to do than dwell on ourselves. If our happiness wants to come along, that's cool - but it rides in the back.

Those near the core of this promising discipline are not completely at fault for this confusion. It is primarily an error of omission. But they might do well to distance themselves from this misunderstanding of the term positive and the enthronement of happiness as the primary measure of our higher states. Among the first criticisms of p-psych, it was noted just how happy the Nazis were to have their strong, new leader. Positivity without due self-regulation is like evolution without selection, a condition that has only just begun to plague our species. In Buddhism, the word for wisdom is *spanna*. It is often spoken of as a jewel, but it's not for show: this wisdom is discriminating wisdom, and the jewel is a cutting tool. In the higher development of the human mind, critical thinking skills are indispensable. Negativity, as the negation of ignorance and delusion, of nonsense and crap, is essential to wisdom. Being correct often requires being corrected. That makes the too-positive people unhappy and hurts their feelings, but they will never get out of their ridiculous rut otherwise.

There are other problems with the measure of happiness, some already discussed elsewhere. For someone in a creative mode, acting in flow, or in service to a higher purpose, or simply enjoying their engagement, or their exercise of competence, perceptions of happiness might be little more than distractions, if not actual nuisances. Also, any expectations of happiness as a reward for higher purpose or endeavor seem to miss the whole point of higher purpose as something beyond ourselves.

Research appears to indicate that individuals, with wide variations, will normally return to a "set point" level of self-assessed happiness following their temporary swings of positive and negative affect. The set point is thought to be inherited first, developmental second and learned last. However, even learning can have lasting effects, even if they are not overwhelming. Adjustments are sometimes referred to as hedonic adaptations, which were discussed earlier under Suffering's Causes. We are more in tune with our changes than with steady states, so we ourselves adapt when a feeling starts to get old. The final insult is the poor correlation between happiness and what might be called merit. Neither a good education nor a high IQ can be shown to increase happiness. At least quantitatively, one who is robbing the poor might easily be capable of a greater happiness than one who is feeding the poor. In short, Joy does not answer to Justice. In fact, she is a bit of a whore, sleeping with the witches one night and saints the next. And of course everything will go straight to hell when the unearned shortcuts to perceived happiness are available for just a few shekels, as is well known to addicts.

### **Individuation and the Temporary Self**

We've spoken quite a bit of the mind as it is known from within, as a process of strong emergence conditioned on factors, as arising out of the organization of our biological systems, while presenting "something new under the sun," something unpredictable from merely knowing the laws of biological systems. Most of the phenomena of the inner world appear to us as qualia, qualities or properties as sensed, perceived or experienced by our being. Strongly emergent qualia, such as the experience of blue, are unpredictable from even perfect knowledge of the antecedents. Weak emergence is also the arising of the new, but in ways that might have been predictable: for example, the elements we know in the periodic table and the laws of chemistry that describe their behavior were nonexistent for some time after the suspected big bang. But it is conceivable that one might extrapolate the science of chemistry from a perfect knowledge of sub-atomic physics and quantum mechanics. Chemistry, with its so-called laws, simply had not yet emerged into any reality.

The most significant elements of emergent mind concern self-control, agency, or self-efficacy, the ability to decide and change behavior. While it is asserted by many, if not

most, human beings that man has been given free will, whether by design or by evolution, this assertion is not at all in evidence in looking at the bulk of humankind or in studying behavioral norms. The will of the people is far from free. Most behave precisely as they are told or are pressured to behave. The only possible measure of the reality of agency is in its effect on the world. If it is utterly ineffective then it is most likely a delusion. It is real only insofar as it works. If I claim that I am going to exercise my free will to quit drinking today, and then find myself drinking again tonight, then in fact my will is not free at all. Human is as human does. The rest is delusion. Agency is a practice. When it isn't practicing, it ceases to exist, just as your lap ceases to exist when you stand up.

Nearly all of us have developed our own examples of self-schema or egos, central organizing clusters of perceptions and ideas about who and what we are. This is admitted even in Buddhism, although the Buddhists are the first to claim the self as merely a conditionally useful artifice and illusion. The first person is not a thing, but a process, not a noun, but a verb. This does not make it less than real, but it also does not make it fixed or permanent. There is for each of us a process of individuation, a learning of what boundaries there may be between us and the world, or us and the others. This can be a useful and healthy process, even on the road to *nibbana*, or it can be a degenerate and neurotic process with a mess of problematic boundaries. Self-control or agency must emerge out of this self-schema or ego. An imaginary self-control or agency emerges out of imaginary processes: it just floats above, unconnected to what we are below. An authentic self-control or agency is known by its efficacy, which requires a connection to the inner biological processes that are able to enact those commands from on high in the head. It is learned by experiencing the above along with the below, and integrating the two in practice. This is a construction, even an art form. It's a positing, a putting forward.

### **First Things First**

Abraham Maslow (1908-1970) has a founding father status here. In his theories there are certain basic needs that we need to take care of first before we can be fully-functioning individuals. These needs are usually portrayed on a pyramid of five tiers, each tier being a category of needs. In the original pyramid, the lowest is for Biological or Physiological needs: air, food, drink, shelter, warmth, sex, sleep, etc., things we can't survive without. The second is for Safety needs: protection, security, order, law, limits, stability, etc. The third is for Belongingness or Love needs: family, work group, relationships, affection, etc. The fourth is for Esteem needs: achievement, reputation, responsibility, status, etc. The fifth is for Self-actualization, towards our personal fulfillment and growth. Partially as an illustration of just how fuzzy and agenda-laden the psychology is, but also to cover more ground, we can list these again using someone else's version: The first tier is for Physiological needs: breathing, food, water, sex, sleep, homeostasis and excretion. The second tier is for Safety need: security of body, employment, morality, resources, the family, property and health. The third tier is for Love and Belonging, friendship, family and sexual intimacy. The fourth tier is for Esteem, self-esteem, confidence, achievement, respect of others and respect by others. The fifth and last tier is for Self-actualization, morality, creativity, spontaneity, problem solving, lack of prejudice and the acceptance of facts. The enculturation agenda really pops in a few of these later tiers.

There is nothing set in concrete here. Clayton Alderfer expanded on Maslow's hierarchy with what he called the ERG theory, making three core groups of needs instead of five: Existence, Relatedness, and Growth. In subsuming the five tiers into three, an evolutionary psychologist might describe the lower two tiers in terms of

adaptive fitness in natural selection, the next two in terms of sexual selection, and then open a discussion of the fifth tier, asking what is it about our evolved nature that drives us even beyond biological and reproductive success. Nietzsche might have suggested a will to power here, regarding man as something to be surpassed. For Maslow it was called Being motivation, as distinct from our Deficiency motivations, and a purely positive drive. Someone could call this analogous to exuberance, imagination and play in the young of the species, a grown-up reason for living.

The theory is that these tiers represent a hierarchy of priority for needs and their satisfaction, with the lowest being the most pressing or urgent. Once these lower needs have been met, we can get on with meeting our next-higher needs with less distraction. Implied in all this is a recipe for self-cultivation. We take care of first things first, meet needs and move on. It then behooves us, if we ever want to catch the view from the top, to be a little more careful about wasting energy in meeting needs that don't really belong to us, or needs that are only given to us by the advertising industry, or needs defined by our political and religious leaders. It is our own responsibility to optimize our expenditures here. Another part of the theory holds that people get stuck on lower levels of needs satisfaction, where the continued thwarting and frustration of needs cultures neurotic and stereotypical behaviors that further tie us to our lower levels.

I, for one, am not convinced that the above is the best explanation for the top tier being so sparsely populated. It is true that many people show "inherent growth tendencies," or what appears to be a dominant inner motivation and drive for self-actualization, to experience our most exalted experiences, to practice our most beneficent behaviors, and to establish foundations for the further cultural evolution of humankind. It is just not obvious that this is what they are driven to do next after their lower drives have been met. It is possible that the great bulk of humanity remains on the lower tiers and treadmills because the majority of human beings do not possess these higher order motives and drives in any innate sense. It is also possible that such character or virtue is only given to a few, to what Thomas Jefferson called the Natural Aristocracy. Because human is as human does, I would suggest that it should be up to the equalitarians to demonstrate otherwise. What else explains well-fed people not seeming to want better, or not wanting to be better? Or even seeming to want to make their lives even worse?

### **Self-optimization**

I will use the term self-optimization here instead of self-actualization, since the self isn't actually actual. A lot of affective states and behavioral traits, and strengths, and virtues, get named in charting the dimensions of these innate, intrinsic or internal drives to self-optimization. P-psych sorts these into positive emotions, positive traits, and positive institutions. All concern nurturing the best that's within us, not just patching the cracks. Of the best states, all of the Buddha's *Brahmaviharas* belong here: loving kindness (*metta*), compassion (*karuna*), empathetic joy (*mudita*) and equanimity (*upekkha*). So do the states that I have made so bold to add to this list: forgiveness (*khama*), gratitude (*katannuta*), reverence (*garava*) and patience (*khanti*), with the qualifications that I have offered for these that make reverence and gratitude available to atheists. Subjectively we also have states like flourishing, engagement, transcendence, courage, salience, belonging, humor, playfulness, connectedness, absorption, interest, meaningfulness, and *brio*. Behaviorally we have such values as conscientiousness, competence, authenticity, conscience, commitment, self-efficacy, leadership, spontaneity, integrity, mindfulness, nurturing, justice, influence, autonomy, creativity, tolerance, and flow.

Finally, I would submit that relative to the extinguishing of addictive behavior, and its cognitive and emotional support structures, the self-optimizing state most usefully attained is *samvega*, the simultaneous experience of the life that you no longer want to want, held up against the life that brings you to to your potential. The old life pales in comparison. You no longer have time for the nonsense, or any good reason for self-destruction. Whether self-ish of purpose or in service to a higher purpose, you have better things to do now.

# An Outline of the Buddha's Teachings And Glossary of Buddhism's Basic Concepts

This outline is organized around doctrines from the Theravada branch of Buddhism. This branch is more textually, ethically and philosophically conservative than the other three schools (Mahayana, Vajrayana and Chan/Zen). And it's more challenging intellectually. This web page is intended to serve as a comprehensive introductory outline, or crib sheet, and as an organized glossary. Pali is the *lingua franca* of Theravada, as Sanskrit is of the Mahayana schools. I have given the Sanskrit equivalents to the Pali wherever I could find them, but lack the resources to be thorough here. I welcome contributions to this ongoing effort. Throughout, the Pali will be given in bold type, and the Sanskrit, where I have any, in italics, thus:

Pali → **Dhamma**, *Dharma* ← Sanskrit

I have tried to give a range of glosses for each of the concepts, rather than a single definition or word substitution. This should give a fuller or more rounded understanding of the terms than translations permit. It should also make searching for terms easier, for those who only have English translations. Many of the terms occur multiple times here, for which the "find" command on your browser will prove useful.

Several major aspects of the doctrine as found in the Tipitaka or classical Buddhist scriptures are being intentionally left out. For example, I don't see much use for the multitude of heavens and hells, and the **devas** and **asuras**, their appeal to the Jungian mythologists notwithstanding. Lists like "the thirty-two marks of the great man" did not make any sense here. Neither have I included many of the flowery and hyperbolic terms for the ultimate mental states and meditative achievements. In short I have tried to strip the glamor off.

Most of the major headings and categories and many of the individual items have their own Wikipedia pages, which will often point to other resources, expand further on the subject and shed further light on the topics from the Mahayana, Vajrayana and Chan points of view. I have provided links to many of these pages - just click ([Wiki](#)) (Outline of Buddhism). And sometimes there is a second page ([Wiki](#)) (Glossary of Buddhism) and sometimes there is a link to somewhere else ([More](#)) (Buddhist Publication Society free downloads). Certain references such as DN 3 refer to the Pali Canon, the Theravada Buddhist scriptures. Most of these scriptures are available online at no cost, see Bibliography and Links.

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## I. The Four Noble Truths

**Ariya Sacca**, *Arya Satya*; **cattari ariya-saccani**, *catvariarya-satyani* ([Wiki](#))

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**1. Dukkhe Nanam**, Knowledge of suffering. The most pressing fact of existence, in a word, is **Dukkha**, *Duhkha*, unsatisfactoriness, imperfection, inability to satisfy, frustration, vulnerability, unease, stress, pain, hardship, discomfort, what is hard to endure, usually rendered as suffering. ([Wiki](#))

□ In three words, the Three Marks or Characteristics of Existence: **Tilakkhana**, *Trilakshana*, the three common characteristics of compound things. ([Wiki](#))

- **Anicca**, *Anitya*, impermanence, transitoriness, inconstancy, transience, conditionedness, ephemerality, *panta rhei*. All things pass. Nothing is perfect or everlasting. Whatever you want to have last forever is certain to disappoint. "Whatever things have an origin must come to cessation" DN 3. ([Wiki](#))

- **Dukkha**, *Duhka*, unsatisfactoriness, frustration, suffering; the insurmountable incompleteness of existence. Happiness as asymptote. Pursuit has ends, but no end. To seek the pleasant and avoid the unpleasant is the nature of life but a doomed endeavor, unless a solution can be found on a level above the problem. ([Wiki](#))

- **Anatta**, *Anatman*, no self, no real or lasting identity, no inner core, no soul, no spirit, insubstantiality, non-independence, the utter and complete impersonality of existence. What appears to be self is a compounded thing, or more correctly, a process. It has a conventional reality, not a substantive one. There is no doer apart from things getting done, no thinker thinking. ([Wiki](#))

**Sammasana-nana** is the exploration and contemplation of individual phenomena in terms of these three marks. See the Three Liberations or Gates (**Vimokkha**, *Vimoksha*) below. Signlessness (**animitta**) desirelessness (**appanihita**) and emptiness (**sunnata**) are doors through these three difficulties.

□ The Five Aggregates (**Panca khandas**, *Panca Skandhas*) are groups of factors comprising the perceived individual identity of living beings. Collectively the five are also called the Existing Person (**Sakkaya**) or body, the current assemblage or identity, the shifting components of the sense of self. They are also called the five aggregates affected by clinging, grasping or holding (**panca-upadana-kkhandha**). These are the parts of our empirical personalities. ([Wiki](#))

- **Rupa**, *Rupa*, matter, material qualities, physical form, shape, corporeality, what makes phenomena sensible, the basis for figure-ground perception, boundaries where qualities change ([Wiki](#)). **Rupa** is constituted from the four elements. ([Wiki](#))

- **Vedana**, *Vedana*, sensation, feeling, reception, sense reaction to contact. Largely understood in terms of pleasantness (**sukha**, *sukha*), unpleasantness (**dukkha**, *duhka*), or neutrality, neither painful nor pleasant (**adukkhamasukha**). This is the beginning of wanting more and wanting less. ([Wiki](#))

- **Sanna**, *Samjna*, perception, conception, label, allusion; discerning, interpretation or recognition; act of memory or recognition, assimilation of experience, what gets remembered, matching mental to sensible boundaries, "distinguishing a thing by its marks" SN 22.79. These are discussed in six classes, by sense organ, including mind. ([Wiki](#))

- **Sankhara**, *Samskara*, mental formations, coefficients of consciousness, ideas, methods, models, determinations, constructions, functioning of mind, discriminations, fabrications, fashionings. Conditioned phenomena. In a broader sense, **sankhara** refers to any formation, compound or fabrication, and so can refer to the **khandas** themselves. Here boundaries have been drawn around the perceived and this is placed in a context in functional relationships with others. Motivations, "the volitional, emotive and intellective aspects of mental life" (B. Nanamoli). These too are discussed in six classes, by sense, including mental objects or formations. ([Wiki](#))

• **Vinnana**, *Vijnana*, consciousness, awareness, cognizance, cognition. Also in six classes. Unlike in some religions, consciousness is not some otherworldly or spiritual substrate of existence, nor is it what creates existence. It is merely another process of existence. "**Annatra paccaya natthi vinnanassa sambhavo**: there is no arising of consciousness without reference to a condition" MN 38. ([Wiki](#))

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**2. Dukkha samudaye nanam.** Knowledge of suffering's origin. Suffering arises or originates (**samudaya**, *samudaya*) out of a network of causes, the Chain of Dependent or Conditioned Arising or Origination (**Paticca Samuppada**, *Pratiya Samutpada*). This chain is frequently represented by the eighth link in the chain, Desire, Craving or Thirst (**Tanha**, *Trisna*), selfish motives of the illusory self (**Atta**, *Atman*) that lead to endless becoming or journeying (**samsara**, *samsara*).

□ **Tanha** is the standard representative for the second truth and, used broadly, encompasses both craving and aversion, wanting what is not to be and wanting what is to not be. Where two representatives from the Chain are used, these are usually **avijja** and **tanha**. ([Wiki](#))

• **Kama-tanha**, There is craving for sensual pleasure and enjoyment of sense objects, *eros*

• **Bhava-tanha**, And craving for being, continued existence, to be and be more, for all eternity, *ontos*

• **Vibhava-tanha**, And craving not to be, for non-being, extermination, extinction, fugue, denial, aversion, to be separated from pain and unpleasantness, *thanatos*

**Chanda** is another Pali word for desire or zeal, but often this carries the meaning of want for higher and more wholesome states.

□ Suffering is conditioned by the three Unwholesome Roots (**Akusala-mulas**, *Akushala-mula*) or the Three Poisons (**Tivisa**, *Trivisa*). These three are also called the makers of measurement (**pamanakarana**) perhaps because they divide the world into pieces for apportionment. Wise attention (**yoniso manasikara**) is required to cut off these roots. ([Wiki](#))

• **Lobha**, *Lobha*, or **Raga**, *Raga*, craving, covetousness, thirst, desire, passion, lust, greed, attachment, unskillful desire, self-centered desire for more. **Raga** is closer to simple passion (that complicates things). This term is more common in Mahayana. ([Wiki](#))

• **Dosa**, *Dvesha*, aversion, hatred, anger, aggression, fear of getting what we don't want or not getting what we want, avoidance, rejection, a will to be separate, from unwise contemplation of repulsive objects. Covers a wide range of hostile feelings. Synonyms **vyapada** and **patigha**. ([Wiki](#))

• **Moha**, *Moha*, delusion, mental dullness or darkness, infatuation, stupidity, bewilderment, confusion, ignorance, folly, sentimentality. ([Wiki](#))

□ With only one item changed, suffering is also said to arise out of three Defilements (**Kilesas**, *Kleshas*), impurities, inclinations to vice expanded in other places to ten ([Wiki](#))

• **Avijja**, *Avidya*, ignorance, nescience, unawareness, not knowing, blindness, delusion, misunderstanding. Ignorance is the first in the chain of causation and the last of the fetters. ([Wiki](#))

• **Lobha**, *Lobha*, or **Raga**, *Raga*, craving, thirst, desire, passion, lust, greed, attachment, unskillful desire, self-centered desire for more

• **Dosa**, *Dvesha*, aversion, hatred, anger, aggression, fear of getting what we don't want or not getting what we want, avoidance, rejection, a will to be separate, from unwise contemplation of repulsive objects. Covers a wide range of hostile feelings. Synonyms **vyapada** and **patigha**.

□ Conditioned or Dependent Arising (**Paticca-samuppada**, *Pratiya-samutpada*). ([Wiki](#)) and ([Wiki](#)). One thing leads to another as suffering is created out of a chain of twelve Causes (**Nidanas**, *Nidanas*), sources or foundations. The twelve links begin with ignorance. In another part of the doctrine the chain is continued beyond suffering to condition Liberation (**vimutti**). See Eleven Supporting Conditions or Proximate Causes (**Upanisa**). The chain of conditioned or dependent arising:

• **Avijja**, *Avidya*, ignorance, nescience, unawareness, not knowing, blindness, delusion, misunderstanding. Driven blindly forward, subject to being made into this and that. ([Wiki](#))

• **Sankhara**, *Samskara*, mental reactions, coefficients of consciousness, kamma formations, determinations, constructions, impressions, consequences, functioning of mind, discriminations, mental activities. What the past has made and brings to the present. ([Wiki](#))

• **Vinnana**, *Vijnana*, consciousness, awareness, cognizance, cognition. In six classes according to the five senses and mind. Being alerted by irritants and inconsistencies. Not regarded as a fundamental property of existence even if it is central to experience. ([Wiki](#))

• **Nama-rupa**, *Namarupa*, mind-and-body, mentality-materiality, both cognitive and physical sides of individual existence, phenomena as experienced. Literally name-and-form. This is not the spirit vs. matter dualism found in Hinduism. They are interdependent. ([Wiki](#))

• **Salayatana**, *Shadayatana*, the six senses, a sixfold base (**ayatana**) sense medium, extents, or spheres. See Six Sense Bases (**Sadayatana**, *Sadayatana*) below ([Wiki](#))

• **Phassa**, *Sparsha*, contact, sensory and mental contact, sense with object and awareness, what reaches us. Being touched, moved, gotten to, impressed or impinged upon, connecting, tuning in, but prior to our reaction to this. ([Wiki](#))

• **Vedana**, *Vedana*, feeling or sensation; Sense reaction to contact, raw experiences as positive, negative and neutral, not yet as articulated and meaningful. Hedonic tone. This is the beginning of wanting more and wanting less, the value of acceptance or rejection. ([Wiki](#))

• **Tanha**, *Trishna*, desire, craving or thirst, but including the desire to be separated from noxious stimuli. The actual wanting more and wanting less. ([Wiki](#))

• **Upadana**, *Upadana*, clinging, grasping, holding or attachment; intake or uptake, as of fuel, like oil for a lamp, or nutriment, for good or ill. Adding to your weight or gravitas. ([Wiki](#))

- **Bhava**, *Bhava*, (process of) becoming or be-ing as a verb, existence as standing out, growth for its own sake, maturation ([Wiki](#))
- **Jati**, *Jati*, future birth or rebirth, arising of new living entities, birth from eggs, wombs, moisture and transformations. ([Wiki](#))
- **Jaramarana**, *Jaramaranam*, old age and death; aging or decay (**jara**), illness (**byadhi**) and death (**marana**), sorrow, sullenness or mental suffering (**domanassa**), lamentation (**parideva**), pain (**dukkha**), grief or sorrow (**soka**) and despair (**upayasa**). ([Wiki](#))

The chain is most readily broken between **vedana** and **tanha**, unless **phassa** is avoided altogether.

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**3. Dukkha nirodhe nanam.** Knowledge of suffering's cessation or eradication. Suffering Ceases (**Nirodha**, *Nirodha*) or is extinguished not by more craving and aversion but by breaking the chain of causes and extinguishing the passionate illusion of self. The extinction of craving (**tanhakkhaya**) is **Nibbana** SN 3:190 ([Wiki](#))

Buddha strung these five words into one sentence about **nirodha** SN 1:39:

**Nirodha** complete cessation, eradication, extinction  
**Caga** selflessness, relinquishment, giving up; generosity, liberality,  
**Patinissagga** abandoning, relinquishment, renouncement, forsaking  
**Mutti** release, deliverance, escape, liberation  
**Analayo** detachment, freedom from desire

Eradication is a good gloss for **nirodha** since the word carries the old word for root - one extinguishes suffering here by pulling out causes by the root, or cutting them off at the source. This freedom, in its highest form, is known as **nibbana**, *nirvana*, extinguishing, extinction or unbinding. The dissolution (**bhanga**, *bhanga*) of the false will not take the seeker to a better elsewhere or heaven but to reality-as-it-is, in reality, **yathabhuta**, *yathabhutam*, the correct, or to the here-and-now, suchness, **tathata**, *tathata*. It's a long journey and a lot of work to arrive here. The knowledge and vision of things as they really are is **yatha-bhuta nana-dassana**.

Conditionality is specific (**idappaccayata**), this/that conditionality. As to arising itself, when there is a chain of causes: "When this exists, that comes to be; with the arising of this, that arises. When this does not exist, that does not come to be; with the cessation of this, that ceases." MN115. Phenomena remain only as long as their causes or conditions remain. Consequently they may be undone by breaking the chain and undoing the causes.

Just as suffering is brought about by a chain of causes in Conditioned or Dependent Arising, described above in the Second Noble Truth, so too does liberation have its own causal sequences by which it emerges. There are Twelve Supporting Conditions or Proximate Causes (**Upanisa**), also termed Transcendental Dependent Arising (**lokuttara-paticcasamuppada**) in the Nettipakarana, a later Pali text. This is an eleven-step extension of the chain of dependent arising, charting steps upward from suffering to emancipation, a further conditional structure. SN 12:23 / S II 29 Upanisa Sutta, See also MN 74. This sutta has not received the attention it deserves, particularly with respect to the progress of recovery from states of suffering. Bhikkhu Bodhi has written a must-read translation and exposition of this ([More](#)). There is one notable

difference, though, between the two chains. In the chain of Conditioned Arising we see suffering and its preconditions as emergent properties. In the chain of Transcendental Arising, the end state is an abiding in reality-as-it-is, that which does not still have to come to be. "What is new under the sun" here, the emergent quality, is the gradual awakening to reality, which is marked by the gradual disappearance of the emergent phenomena that stood in the way of this.

- **Dukkha**, *Duhkha*, suffering. Some regard this step as a substitution for **jaramarana**, old age and death. showing the need for a way out. This may be equivalent to "hitting bottom," seeing with horror and urgency where life until now has led (**samvega**)
- **Saddha**, *Sraddha*, faith, conviction or confidence, knowing that there is a way out. As such, suffering is its supporting condition. Repeatedly arising or tentative faith (**aparaparam uppajjana-saddha**), to be confirmed.
- **Pamojja**, *Pramudita*, joy, gladness, relief
- **Piti**, *Priti*, exhilaration, elation, ecstasy, rapture, joy, bliss, delight, zest, refreshment, enthusiasm. See glossary for five stages.
- **Passaddhi**, *Prasada*, tranquility, serenity, a detumescence of rapture, a need for no greater intensity. ([Wiki](#))
- **Sukha**, *Sukha*, happiness, pleasantness, pleasure, ease, satisfaction, happiness, blessedness, well-being, "the happiness of access (upacara) to absorption," a knowing that the solutions to suffering are at hand
- **Samadhi**, *Samadhi*, mental concentration or concentrative absorption. Distractions of the hindrances are further out of the way
- **Yathabhuta nanadassana**, *Yathabhutam jnanadarsana*, knowledge & vision of what actually is, of things as they are, the development of insight (**vipassana bhavana**)
- **Nibbida**, *Nirvedh*, disenchantment, more serene here than disgust, revulsion or aversion but often translated this way, more of a choice that the more common and familiar states are no longer worth the trouble. Knowing better now, having found out. Releases the charge, hence discharge, leading to dispassion
- **Viraga**, *Vairagya*, dispassion, fading of passions, no-raga, cessation of affectively toned action and re-action, stepping into the supramundane life (**lokuttara**)
- **Vimutti**, *Mukti* or *Vyamokh*, liberation, emancipation, release. See liberation in glossary
- **Asavakkhaya-nana**, *Asravakshaya-jnana*, knowledge of the ending or destruction of the defilements, taints, cankers or stains, the defilements of sensation and lust, becoming and ego, false view and misguided belief, and ignorance and delusion.

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**4. Dukkha nirodha-gamini-patipadaya nanam.** Knowledge of the path to suffering's cessation. There is an ancient path (**purana-magga**, *purana-maggam*) to the cessation or extinction of suffering. It is known as the Noble Eightfold Path (**Ariya Atthangika Magga**, *Arya Ashtangika Marga*). It is also called the Middle Way (**Majjhima patipada**, *Madhyama pratipad*) as it is said to lie between the extremes of self-mortification and sensual gratification, or between nihilism (**natthikavada**, **uccheda-ditthi** or annihilation view) and eternalism (**sassata-ditthi** or eternal view). ([Wiki](#))



good intention that the road to hell is paved with: it is the intention is to self-correct, not yet to fix the world. There are three primary practices here:

- **Nekkhamma**, *Nishkama*, renunciation of craving and desire (as distinct from need), resisting the draw of desire and sensuality, no-kama. This requires deep, systematic attention (**yoniso-manasikara**) to the unwholesome root of desire. This is the opposite of and substitution for sense craving or sense passion (**kama-tanha** or **kama-raga**). ([Wiki](#))

- **Abyapada**, absence of aversion, ill will, anger and animosity; intention of good will, resisting the draw of anger. It is loving-kindness (**metta**), to get the **kamma** moving in the right direction. **Metta**, of course, needs to begin with self-acceptance and self-love, the non-existence of self notwithstanding. This is the opposite of and substitution for aversion, ill will, anger and animosity (**vyapada**, **patigha** or **dosa**). ([Wiki](#)) ([Wiki](#))

- **Avihimsa**, *Ahimsa*, intention of harmlessness, resisting the draw to violence, cruelty and harm. This is compassion (**karuna**). This is the opposite of and substitution for harmfulness, cruelty, violence, injury (**vhimsa**). ([Wiki](#))

Mental intent, will or volition (**cetana**, *cetana*) propels the mind forward into wholesome (**kusala**) or unwholesome (**akusala**) states. The acts of **cetana** are **kamma**, which implies directed action. ([Wiki](#))

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3. **Samma Vaca**, *Samyag Vak*, Right Speech. Abstentions (**Veramani** or **Virati**) from various types of speech ([More](#)) ([Wiki](#))

- **Musavada veramani** avoids falsehood, lying or deceit and speaks truth, reliably and worthy of confidence
- **Pisunaya vacaya veramani** avoids tale bearing, slander, backbiting, calumny, malicious or divisive talk or speech and speaks to reconciliation, friendship, concord or harmony
- **Pharusaya vacaya veramani** avoids harsh, abusive, impolite, hurtful, insulting, sarcastic, offensive talk or speech and speaks to benefit, refinement or courtesy
- **Samphappalapa veramani** avoids gossip, useless, frivolous, pointless, fruitless, senseless, shallow, silly, vain, idle talk or speech, chatter and foolish babble and "speaks at the right time, what is correct and to the point (**atthavadi**)" DN 1

One speaks well-spoken words (**subhasitasutta**) at the right time, in accord with facts, what is useful and profitable, gently, with a kind heart. See MN 27, 38, 51; wise words, words to be treasured, words in season DN 28; timely, affectionate and honest

Low or animal conversations (**tiracchanakatha**) are described at AN 10.69

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4. **Samma Kammanta**, *Samyak Karmanta*, Right Action, conduct or doing, observation of the precepts or abstentions not as commandments (there is no moral authority in Buddhism) but as an ethic adopted to end suffering. Right Action recognizes that all action or doing (**kamma**, *karma*) has consequences which may be escaped in advance by not doing wrong action. **Kammanta** is the same root word as **Kamma**, so in a way Right Action could also be translated "good karma." If there were

a self, such an ethic could be called self-serving - the results of unwholesome actions impede one's progress towards the end of suffering.

□ The simplest formulation of Right Action is in the Five Precepts (**Panca Silani**, *Panca Silani*). The word **sil** means moral discipline or virtuous conduct, with the connotations of practice and habit. ([Wiki](#))

• **Panatapata veramani** (or **virati**), restraint from injuring or killing living or sentient creatures or taking life or destruction of life, being desirous of the welfare of all sentient beings or creatures (**pani** or **satta**). This is closely related to harmlessness (**avihimsa**).

• **Adinnadana veramani**, restraint from taking what is not given, by theft or deceit. Replace with satisfaction and generosity.

• **Kamesu micchacara veramani**, restraint from misconduct in sensual pleasures. Elsewhere this is specified as sexual misconduct, ignoble practice or unchastity (**abrahmacariya**, *abrahmacarya*) and primarily refers (for the laity) to adultery, rape and relations with women who are married or betrothed or have not come of age. Monks are enjoined from any sexual activity.

□ In places, e.g. DN 5, two more **sila** are added to make the Five Precepts (**Panca sikkhapada**)

• **Musavada veramani** lying, deceit, speaking falsehood, false or incorrect talk or speech

• **Surameraya-majja-pamadatthana veramani**, restraint from using wine, liquor or intoxicants which result in heedlessness or negligence (**pamada**, *pramada*) of the mind or emotions. This qualification is interesting in that it leaves open a question about intoxicants that do not cause heedlessness. Grammatically, the line does not say that all intoxicants lead to heedlessness, as is often implied by translators.

Further moral discipline continues with the assumption of Ten Precepts (**Dasa-sila**, *Dasa-sila*), aversions to or abstentions from (**Veramani-sikkhapadam samadiyami**) further unwholesome behavioral missteps: ([Wiki](#))

□ For the laity, the list goes on to round out the Ten requisites of good behavior (**Dasa-sila**) with six more abstinences (**Veramani**)

• **Pisuna-vacaya** from tale bearing, slander, backbiting, calumny, malicious, divisive talk or speech

• **Pharusa-vacaya** from harsh, abusive, impolite, hurtful, insulting, sarcastic, offensive talk or speech

• **Samphalalapa-vacaya** from gossip, useless, frivolous, pointless, fruitless, senseless, shallow, silly, vain, idle talk or speech, chatter and foolish babble

• **Abhijjhaya** from covetousness, envy, unrighteous greed

• **Vyapada**, *Vairam* (or **byapada**), aversion, ill will, animosity, malice, anger, hatred, malevolence, hostility, resistance, irritation. Vyapada has synonyms at **patigha**, *pratigha*, **dosa**, *dvesha* and others.

• **Micchaditthiya**, *Mithyadrishti*, wrong views, misbelief, misunderstanding

□ While for the monks and nuns (**bhikku, bhikkuni**) the **Dasa-sikkhapadani** continue thus:

- **Surameraya-majja-pamadatthana veramani**, using wine, liquor and intoxicants which result in heedlessness or negligence.
- **Vikala-bhojana**, solid food after noon
- **Nacca-gita-vadita-visuka-dassana**, a litany is given of various sensual entertainments
- **Mala-gandha-vilepana-dharana-mandana-vibhusana-tthana**, various bodily decorations
- **Ucca-sayana-maha-sayana**, high and luxurious beds
- **Jatarupa-rajata-patiggahana** (monks only) gold and silver

While the precepts are not commandments, rules for the behavior of monks are taken seriously, and some violations entail suspension for life.

Normal, natural, genuine or without-crisis morality is **pakati-sila** (good natured). To the extent that **sila** requires initial concentration and effort, it is also initial training in mindfulness (**sati**) and concentration (**samadhi**).

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5. **Samma Ajiva**, *Samyag Ajiva*, Right Livelihood or Occupation abandons ways of living which bring harm and suffering to other living beings. "These are the five types of business that a lay follower should not engage in." Vanijja Sutta, AN 5.177:

- **Satthavanijja**, trafficking in weapons, or lethal arms
- **Sattavanijja**, trafficking in human beings, slave trading, prostitution, children
- **Mamsavanijja**, trafficking in meat or flesh, raising animals for slaughter and butchery
- **Majjavanijja**, trafficking in intoxicants (drinks and drugs)
- **Visavinijja**, trafficking in poisons or toxic products

□ The householder or layman may help himself to four kinds of happiness (**sukha**) or satisfactoriness AN 62:A ii:69:

- **Atthi-sukha**, economic security, sufficient means, ownership, wealth righteously gained
- **Bhoga-sukha**, happiness from wise expenditure of lawful wealth to make merit
- **Anana-sukha**, happiness of not being in debt, of not owing others
- **Anavajja-sukha**, happiness of blamelessness in body, speech and mind

□ In the Majimha Nikaya Sutta 117, and in the Vsm I:61-65, five more ideas are set forth for the monks about wrong livelihood by deceit (**Kuhanadi micchajiva**):

- **Kuhana**, scheming, pretending, deceit, trickery, fraud, especially by means of working wonders

- **Lapana**, flattery, muttering, talking to please donors with a view to acquiring gain, honor and renown
- **Nemittikata**, innuendo, hinting, semblances, inviting offerings by giving all kinds of hints
- **Nippesikata**, belittling, disparaging, backbiting, harassing so as to induce offerings
- **Labhena labhau nijiginsabata**, enticements of getting goods with goods, gain from invested money

Monks are also enjoined from using the base arts of reading signs and omens (**tiracchana vikka micchajiva virati**)

- In the Vyagghapajja Sutta, economic stability and well-being comes by way of:
  - **Utthana sampada**, production of wealth through skilled and earnest endeavor.
  - **Arakkha sampada**, its protection and savings.
  - **Samajivikata**, living within one's means, balanced livelihood

As with **sila**, this is not simply moralizing. Right Livelihood frees the disciple from distraction, remorse, regret, misgivings, guilt and shame, from the **kamma** and consequences or ripenings (**vipaka**) or fruit (**phala**) of unwholesome action.

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6. **Samma Vayama**, *Samyag Vyayama*, Right Effort, endeavor or exertion is the cultivation of diligence and persistence to the Four Right Efforts, strivings, exertions or endeavors (**Sammappadana**, *Samyak-pradhana*), carried out without any unwillingness, with zealous energy (**atapaviraya**). Energy (**viriya**) is the mental factor (**cetasika**) for effort and this wants good sources of fuel or what Buddha called "wholesome nutriment." The larger problems with appetite notwithstanding, one needs a healthy appetite, just not in the sense of big appetite. The disciple needs to sustain both energy and enthusiasm. Often great energy can be obtained more simply by plugging energy leaks. A **bhikkhu** awakens zeal, makes effort, arouses energy, exerts his mind and strives (MN 77) to: ([Wiki](#))

- Prevent the arising (**anuppadaya**) of unwholesome (**akusala**) thoughts or states (**dhamma**).
- Set aside, abandon, discard or dispel (**pahanaya**) the arisen unwholesome thoughts or states.
- Create, develop or nurture (**uppadaya**) the wholesome (**kusala**) thoughts or states (**dhamma**).
- Support, promote or maintain (**thitiya**) the arisen wholesome thoughts or states
- Respectively, these are the Four Right Exertions or Strivings (**Cattaro Sammappadhana**, *Prahanani*) used to accomplish this: ([Wiki](#))

• **Samvara padhana**, restraining the senses. Also called **indriyesu guttadvavata**, the faculty of guarding the "sense doors."

• **Pahana padhana**, abandoning or overcoming the defilements. Some of the recommended methods are: thought substitution, hiri-ottappa, diversion or redirection

of attention, confrontation and investigation, and forcible suppression. This is the Removal of Distracting Thoughts, MN 20. Removal of the defilements is also referred to as effacement (**sallekha**)

- **Bhavana padhana**, cultivating or developing Seven Enlightenment Factors (**Satta Bojjhanga**)

- **Anurakkhana padhana**, preserving or maintaining concentration, vigilance, heedfulness

There is a "tirelessness in wholesome states" (**appamado kusalesu dhammesu**) DN 34. The unwholesome thoughts or states (**akusala dhamma**) are often characterized by the five Hindrances or Obstructions (**Nivaranana**) and the ten Defilements (**Kilesa**, *Klesha*), enumerated later. Right Effort in general is aided by the five Mental Powers (**Balani**) and Faculties or roots (**Indriya**), also enumerated later. The effort to develop wholesome thoughts or states is aided by the Seven Factors or Limbs of Enlightenment (**Satta Bojjhanga**), also enumerated later.

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7. **Samma Sati**, *Samyak Smriti*, Right Mindfulness, attentiveness, attention, awareness or inspection is the contemplation of and attention to the Four Foundations or Establishments of Mindfulness (**CattaroSatipatthana**, *Catvari-smrtyupasthana*). Also called Four Frames of Reference. The word **sati** also means memory or recollection. The phrase "keeping in mind" may be a common link, but here it would carry the charge to not keep by clinging. **Upatthana** (foundations) means sustaining, establishing, upholding. This requires the energy developed in right effort: "Arise! Sit up! Train yourselves strenuously for peace of mind. This doctrine, monks, is for the energetic, strong and firm in purpose, and not for the indolent." AN iv 234. The suffix **-anupassana** means "contemplation of ..." ([Wiki](#))

- **Kayanupassana**, activities of the body; mindfulness immersed in body (**kayagata-sati**)

Of special usefulness and importance is mindfulness of breathing (**anapana-sati**, *anapanasmriti*) which does not involve control of the breath. The discipline continues through the four "usual" postures (**iriyapatha**): standing (**caram**), walking (**nissinova**), sitting (**sayano**) and lying down (**yavata**), all of which are suitable for mindfulness meditation, assuming no sloth or sleepiness. After this is prescribed contemplation of various repulsive aspects of corporeality and meditation on the material elements as they enter and leave experience.

- **Vedananupassana**, feelings or sensations, "affective tone or hedonic quality of experience" (B. Bodhi). Observing where it tries to go from contact (**phassa**) onward through the chain of conditioned arising, learning not-grasping or clinging. **Vedana** is simpler and more basic than emotion with it's overlays of value, volition, etc. **Vedayita** is feeling what is felt, as it comes and goes, the mindfulness of feeling.

- **Cittanupassana**, activities of the mind, mental processes, including thoughts associated with passions, and the processes that produce craving and aversion. See Mind in Glossary, especially **citta** and **cetasika**. All states are to be recognized as **anicca**, **dukkha** and **anatta** and observed in relation to their involvement in craving, aversion and delusion (**lobha**, **dosa** and **moha**).

• **Dhammanupassana**, objects of thought, mind-objects, thoughts, phenomena. The Five Hindrances (**Nivarana**), the Five Aggregates of Clinging, the Six Sense Bases, the Seven Enlightenment Factors and the Four Noble Truths are specifically suggested as subjects for examination.

One "abides contemplating \_\_\_ as \_\_\_, ardent, clearly comprehending, mindful, having removed coveting and worrying in regard to the world." Meditation on the plusses and minuses and the comings and goings.

"And what is right mindfulness? There is the case where a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself — ardent, alert, & mindful — putting aside greed & distress with reference to the world. He remains focused on feelings in & of themselves... the mind in & of itself... mental qualities in & of themselves — ardent, alert, & mindful — putting aside greed & distress with reference to the world. This is called right mindfulness... This is the direct path for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow & lamentation, for the disappearance of pain & distress, for the attainment of the right method and for the realization of Unbinding — in other words, the four frames of reference." DN 22. Diligent, ardent, and resolute abiding.

"The state of mind in meditation is one of sufficient attention, relaxed alertness, presence, an unattached involvement or observation, un-interpretive, non-judgmental, a readiness to observe what comes and goes. While we mind or attend the various objects of mindfulness, we merely notice them as they come and go, like frames in a film, "not allowing them to stimulate the mind into thought-chains of reactions to them." (Goleman p. 9)

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8. **Samma Samadhi**, *Samyak Samadhi*, Right Concentration or Absorption. Mental concentration or concentrative absorption. The mind is fixed here on a single object. This is called one-pointedness of mind (**cittekeggata**). Just about any state can be the object of concentration, especially in insight meditation (**vipassana**), but of particular importance are the expansive states (paradoxically, since the work is one-pointed concentration). Regardless of the object, the initial stage is called preliminary concentration (**parikkamma-samadhi**) and the object is the preliminary sign (**parikkamma-nimitta**). The approach to absorption is called neighborhood concentration (**upacara samadhi**) being on the threshold, still examining, not yet one-pointed. Full absorption is called **appana samadhi** ([Wiki](#))

□ **Jhanas** are states of concentration wherein the mind is absorbed in its object. Throughout the doctrine, **Jhana** meditation proceeds through four levels or stages of Meditative Absorption or trance (**Jhana**, *Dhyana*). They are often called the Four Fine-Material Absorptions (**Jhanas**, *Dhyanas*) (**Rupa Jhanas**). They are epistemic realities, not metaphysical ones, and training grounds for the development of insight. These four are progressive, as are the four still-more-mystical states to follow ([Wiki](#))

• **Patthamajhana samadhi** (concentration on the First **Jhana**):

Secluded from the sense desires and unwholesome states (**nivarana**)

Accompanied by applied thought and examination (**vitakka-vicara**, *vitarka-vichara*)

Filled with exhilaration (**piti**) and happiness (**sukha**) born of detachment (**viveka**)

With **ekaggata** (one-pointedness of mind)

• **Dutiyajjhana samadhi** (concentration on the Second **Jhana**):

Detached from applied and sustained thought (**vitakka-vicara**)

Filled with exhilaration and happiness (**piti** and **sukha**) born of concentration (**samadhi**)

With internal confidence (**ajjhatai sampasadana**) and mental one-pointedness (**cetaso ekodibhavai**)

• **Tatiyajjhana samadhi** (concentration on the Third **Jhana**):

Abiding beyond pleasure and pain in rapture and joy

Still with happiness (**sukha**) but **piti** is now surmounted

Abiding in equanimity (**upekkha**)

With mindfulness (**sati**) and clear comprehension (**sampajanna**)

• **Cuttthajjhana samadhi** (concentration on the Fourth **Jhana**):

Abiding beyond rapture and joy in mindful equanimity

With the abandoning of happiness (**sukha**) and pain

And the previous disappearance of **piti** and grief

With purified mind consciousness (**parisuddha manovinnana**) due to equanimity (**upekkha**)

□ There are Five Mental Factors mentioned and developed here, which are said to counter the Five Hindrances.

• **Vitakka**, *Vitarka*, applied thought, directed thought, conceptualization, mentation

• **Vicara**, *Vichara*, examination, analysis, sustained thought, reasoning, discursive thought, allows examination from different points of view, moving reflection, movement of perspective.

• **Piti**, *Priti*, exhilaration, elation, ecstasy, rapture, joy, bliss, delight, zest, refreshment, enthusiasm. This can often be an anticipatory state as **sukha**, below, can refer to the relishing of states already attained.

• **Sukha**, *Sukha*, happiness, pleasantness, pleasure, ease, satisfaction, happiness, blessedness, well-being. See note at **piti**, above.

• **Ekagatta**, *Ekagrata*, one-pointedness of mind, singleness of preoccupation

□ Only the Fourth Jhana can be called imperturbable (**anenja**), but four higher pleasures do remain in the **jhanasMN 66**, respectively:

• **Nekkhamma-sukha** happiness of renunciation

• **Paviveka-sukha** happiness of seclusion

• **Upasama-sukha** happiness of peace

• **Sambodha-sukha** happiness of enlightenment



### III. Value-Neutral Enumerated Factors

In the forty-five years of the Buddha's teaching many lists of vices and virtues, problems and solutions, warnings and encouragements were enumerated, and perhaps registered with more rigidity than was intended. In an oral tradition mnemonics and consistency are important in carrying a teaching through the centuries. One whole section of the Sutta Pitaka is organized around the enumerated dimensions of the **Dhamma**. In the end they suggest that even the simple life is rich with a multitude of things to be done. Aside from the specifically encouraged and discouraged values, listed in the next two sections, there are the following general itemizations:

□ The Threefold Refuge (**Tisarana**, *Trisharana*) or the Three Jewels (**Triratana**, *Triratna*) There are three forms of wealth and refuge in the tradition: **saranam gacchami** ... I go for refuge in the ... ([Wiki](#))

• **Buddha**, *Buddha*, The Awakened or Enlightened One

• **Dhamma**, *Dharma*, The Doctrine or Teaching

• **Sangha**, *Sangha*, The Fellowship or Community

□ The Threefold Training (**Tisso-sikkha**, *Trishiksha*) is one way to organize the the Eightfold Path. The three are known as the **Sila**, **Citta** and **Panna Sampada**, the moral, meditative and wisdom attainments. ([Wiki](#))

• **Sila**, *Shila*, the moral discipline or virtuous conduct of: ([Wiki](#))

**Samma Vaca**, *Samyag Vak*, Right Speech

**Samma Kammanta**, *Samyak Karmanta*, Right Action

**Samma Ajiva**, *Samyag Ajiva*, Right Livelihood

**Sila** also has the connotation of habit or regular practice. It does not have the connotation of commandment. This is ethical organization and practice for the abnormal conditions of life.

• **Samadhi**, *Samadhi*, mental concentration or concentrative absorption, the training of: ([Wiki](#))

**Samma Vayama**, *Samyag Vyayama*, Right Effort

**Samma Sati**, *Samyak-smriti*, Right Mindfulness

**Samma Samadhi**, *Samyak Samadhi*, Right Concentration

• **Panna**, *Prajna*, wisdom, discernment, intelligence, intellectual acumen, appreciative analytical understanding; also used for common sense, ingenuity. Understanding is a little weak for a gloss, being overly tolerant, not sharp enough. **Panna** makes clear-cut decisions. ([Wiki](#))

**Samma Ditthi**, *Samyag dristhi*, Right View, Understanding

**Samma Sankappa**, *Samyak Samkalpa*, Right Intention, Thought

□ Three Liberations or Gates (**Vimokkha**, *Vimoksha*). Progressing beyond the Three Marks or Characteristics of Existence (**Tilakkhana**, *Trilakshana*). ([More](#))

• **Sunnata**, *Sunyata*, emptiness; understanding that all formations are without self, with no individuality beyond the conditions that brought them about

• **Animitta**, *Animitta*, formlessness, signlessness; understanding that all forms are impermanent and all things are transitory

• **Apanihita**, *Apranihita*, passionlessness, desirelessness; understanding that all formations are unsatisfactory, unable to attain or provide lasting happiness

□ The four kinds of Nutriment (**Ahara**) nourishment (MN 1:48), the grasping and rejecting, assimilating and excreting, adopting and disowning, required for maintaining oneself, needing perpetual replenishment. All beings are maintained by nutriment (**aharatthitika**). This can be for wholesome or unwholesome states, the wholesome fed, the unwholesome starved. (See Wisdom Pub's SN 5:46 p. 1569)

Do not ask who consumes a nutriment, but for what is the nutriment a condition. SN II 12:11

This has come to be ... It's origination occurs with that as a nutriment SN II 12:31

What matters is no lust for the nutriment. "With the cessation of that nutriment, what has come to be is subject to cessation." SN II 12:31

Both the Hindrances and the Enlightenment Factors subsist in dependence on nutriment and do not subsist without nutriment. These are the Wholesome and Unwholesome States. SN V 46:1 / 2:2 and 46:Vi / 51:1. See SN pp. 1907-1909, notes 84-97.

The texts offer the idea of de-nourishment to denote starving of the unwholesome and wholesome states. ([More](#))

• **Kabalikahara** edible food, gross or subtle

• **Phassahara** contact, sense impressions or objects

• **Manosancetanahara** mental volitions, intentions, basic wants, struggle and aspiration

• **Vinnanahara** consciousness, hunger for expanding experience

"All beings are maintained by nutriment." DN 33; AN 10:27, 28; Khp 2

"What is nutriment? There are these four kinds of nutriment for the maintenance of beings that

already are, and for the assistance of those seeking renewal of being: they are physical food as

nutriment, gross or subtle, contact as the second, choice as the third, and consciousness as the

fourth." SN 12:63; MN 38

□ The four sets of constituents of compound things (from and fairly central to the **Abhidhamma Pitaka**). This suggests that the Five Khandhas are merely the components of sentient beings, while other aspects of reality are compounded by their own sets of rules. ([More](#)) and ([More](#))



reached, but all are advocated at one time or another for one walking the path. The seeker is still warned about attachment to any of them, and of thinking that they might be the "eternal salvation of the soul," the perfect reversal of **annica-dukkha-anatta**. Many items are repeated in several different lists, others represented again by synonyms. It may be safe to assume for now that this repetition suggests their relative importance to the doctrine. At a minimum, these are lists of practices and states that the Buddha at least generally encouraged, even those which expressed a persistent desire for self-improvement.

□ The four Bases for Spiritual Power (**Iddhipada**, *Riddhipada*). Each of these four combines with "volitional formations of striving," mental constructs for the purpose of endeavor (**padhana-sankhara**), artifices to enable greater effort, striving, exertion, endeavor (**padhana**, a synonym for **vayama**) ([Wiki](#))

- **Samadhi-chanda**, *Chanda*, concentration with desire, zeal, intention, want or purpose

- **Samadhi-viriya**, *Virya*, concentration with energy, diligence, persistence

- **Samadhi-citta**, *Chitta*, concentration with mind or consciousness

- **Samadhi-vimamsa**, *Mimamsa*, concentration with investigation or discrimination

And enthusiasm (**Samadhi-ussolhi**) can be regarded as a fifth, making the foundation for the five kinds of direct or higher knowledge (**abhinna**) see MN 16

□ The four Foundations or Higher Standings (**Adhitthana**), also understood as decisions or resolutions. **Adhitthana**, when taken as a single virtue of resolution or resolve, is one of the ten Perfections (**paramitas**), listed below. The words vows and avowals may also be appropriate. ([Wiki](#))

- **Pannadhitthana** wisdom or discernment

- **Saccadhitthana** truthfulness or being true

- **Cagadhitthana** relinquishment or detachment

- **Upasamadhitthana** peace or tranquility

□ The four Sublime States or Attitudes (**Brahmaviharas**), the abodes of Brahma. They represent the proper approach, attitude and conduct towards other living beings. They are also called the four Immeasurables or Boundless States (**Appamanna**, *Apramana*). ([Wiki](#))

- **Metta**, *Maitri*, loving-kindness, love, goodwill, friendship, fraternal love, bestowing happiness, amity, or benevolence, without desire to possess. To know the good in others. ([Wiki](#))

- **Karuna**, *Karuna*, compassion, sympathy or mercy, gentle affection, aspiration to be truly helpful. With eyes and ears open to the cries (*Guan Yin* in Chinese). Not simply pity or sentimentality, a bleeding heart or fellow suffering, but willing to bear the pain of others and not turn away, shut down or flee. ([Wiki](#))

- **Mudita**, *Mudita*, appreciative, altruistic, sympathetic or empathetic joy, gladness or joy in another's success, well-being or happiness; rejoicing in another's skillful action, merits and attainments. The complement to **karuna**. ([Wiki](#))

• **Upekkha**, *Upeksa*, equanimity, dispassion, detachment, serenity, impartiality, tolerance, evenness, equipoise, balance of mind, even-mindedness, onlooking (not the same as apathy or indifference). To understand that problems must work themselves out, and that sentient beings must work themselves out of their own problems. ([Wiki](#))

□ The Five Mental Powers or Strengths (**Panca Balani**) or the Five Faculties (controlling principles or roots) (**Panc' Indriyani**). For **Panca Balani** see ([Wiki](#)) and ([More](#))

• **Saddha**, **Saddhindriya**, *Shraddhabala*, faith, conviction or confidence, certitude, reverence, respect, overcoming doubt. This does not mean the dismissal of the necessary empirical verification in Buddhism, merely the assurance that something is known to be effective against problems at hand. ([Wiki](#))

• **Viriya**, **Viriyindriya**, *Viryabala*, energy, diligence, vigor, effort, zeal, persistence, exertion, perseverance, overcoming remissness. ([Wiki](#))

• **Sati**, **Satindriya**, *Smrtribala*, mindfulness, attentive recollection, awareness. ([Wiki](#))

• **Samadhi**, **Samadhindriya**, *Samadhibala*, mental concentration or concentrative absorption, focus, vigilance, concern, overcoming wandering mind. ([Wiki](#))

• **Panna**, **Pannindriya**, *Prajnabala*, wisdom, comprehension, discernment, overcoming ignorance. ([Wiki](#))

It is important that faith and wisdom balance each other. The same is true for energy and concentration. AN 7.6:A iv:5 drops energy or diligence (**virīya**) from this list and adds listening or learning (**suta**) and generosity (**dana**) to make up the seven Treasures (**Dhanas**). There is also a list of 22 Faculties, not shared here. ([Wiki](#)).

□ The seven Qualities or Attributes of Virtuous people (**Satta Saddhammas**), the practical conduct (**carana**) of good people.

• **Saddha**, *Sraddha*, faith, conviction or confidence, overcoming doubt.

• **Sati**, *Smriti*, mindfulness, attentive recollection, awareness, overcoming falsity.

• **Hiri**, *Hri*, moral shame, disgust with evil; dominated by self-respect, dignity, conscience. ([Wiki](#))

• **Ottappa**, *Apatrapya*, ethical wariness, moral dread, fear of wrongdoing, regard for consequence, prudence, decorum, propriety, concern. ([Wiki](#))

• **Bahusacca**, *Bahusmrti*, erudition, sagacity, learnedness, great learning (elsewhere called **bahusutta**, *bahusutta*, and simply **suta** or learned).

• **Viriya**, *Virya*, energy, diligence vigor, effort, zeal, persistence, perseverance, exertion, overcoming remissness (elsewhere called **araddhaviriya**).

• **Panna**, *Prajna*, (transcendental) wisdom, discrimination, discernment, intelligence, intellectual acumen (**abhinna**), appreciative analytical understanding; (elsewhere called **upatthitassati**)

□ Mahayana Buddhism adds a few more to this list from among its Eleven Wholesome or Virtuous States (*Ekadasa kusala*)

- *Prasrabdhi*, **Kammanata**, flexibility, pliancy, suppleness, adaptability
- *Apramada*, **Appamada**, heedfulness, diligence, conscientiousness, care
- *Advesa*, **Adosa**, nonaggression, non-malevolence, non-antipathy
- And the negatives of greed, delusion and violence: *Alobha*, *Amoha*, *Avihimsa*
  - Seven Factors or Limbs of Enlightenment (**Satta Bojjhanga**, *Sapta Bodhyanga*) "which are supported by seclusion, dispassion and cessation and ripen in relinquishment." Several of these states are shared with the Eleven Supporting Conditions, below. ([Wiki](#))
- **Sati**, *Smriti*, mindfulness, attentive recollection, inspection, awareness **samma sati**
- **Dhammavicaya**, *Dharmapracicaya* or *Dharmavicharana*, investigation of states or mental phenomena, discrimination of entities regarding their intrinsic value, scrutiny of the dhamma, distinguishing, examination of the arising, existing (still in a state of continuous change) and ceasing of dhammas (**uppada**, **thiti**, **bhanga**). ([Wiki](#))
- **Viriya**, *Virya*, energy (activated by investigation), exertion, assiduous striving, , **samma vayama**. Calling for initial enthusiasm, perseverance and indominability or invincibility.
- **Piti**, *Priti*, exhilaration, elation, ecstasy, rapture, joy, bliss, delight, zest, refreshment, enthusiasm. See Pleasant Staes, below for five levels. ([Wiki](#))
- **Passaddhi**, *Prasada* or *Prasrabdhi*, tranquility, calm or relaxation, absence of strain, rest, release of tension, arising from enthusiasm, confidence, brightness, serenity of mind. ([Wiki](#))
- **Samadhi**, *Samadhi*, mental concentration or concentrative absorption, **samma samadhi**
- **Upekkha**, *Upeksha*, equanimity, dispassion, detachment, serenity, impartiality, tolerance, evenness, even-mindedness, onlooking. The word has a sense of not taking notice, disregard, apathy.
  - The ten Perfections (**Paramitas**, *Parimitas*). ([Wiki](#))
- **Dana**, *Dana*, generosity, liberality, giving of oneself; charity, offering, alms, gifts. ([Wiki](#))
- **Sila**, *Shila*, ethicality, morality, virtue, discipline, proper conduct, observance of precepts. ([Wiki](#))
- **Nekkhamma**, *Nishkama*, renunciation, turning from pleasure involvement., relinquishment, blowing ballast, **nekkhama-sankappo** in 2nd truth. ([Wiki](#))
- **Panna**, *Prajna*, (transcendental) wisdom, discrimination, discernment. Skillful, refined, blameless mental quality. Learned through observing, evaluating, correcting, improving. To foster appropriate attention SN 48:10. ([Wiki](#))
- **Viriya**, *Virya*, energy, diligence, vigor, effort, zeal, persistence, perseverance, exertion, overcoming remissness. ([Wiki](#))
- **Khanti**, *Kshanti*, patience, tolerance, forbearance, acceptance, acquiescence, endurance, Also means choice. Forgiveness is not the best gloss for this: what we



one of the Four Kinds of Clinging, grasping or holding. ([More](#))

- **Mamankara**, mine-making, craving, mine
- **Ahankara**, *Ahamkara*, I-making, conceit, I am, empirical egoism
- **Sakkayaditthi**, identity or personality views, self-views, my self, individuality
- These will condition the misguided views that:
- **Etam mama** this is mine, idea of possession, arises through craving
- **Eho 'ham asmi** I am this, the idea of identity, arises through conceit
- **Esso me atta** this is my self, the idea of reification, arises through view

It may be said of all forms, feelings, perceptions and mental formations, and of consciousness, of all **Khandas**: **N'etam mama, n'eso'ham asmi, na me so atta**, "This is not mine, I am not this, this is not my self." Where this is a practice in meditation, where this is said of mind-objects, it somewhat parallels the Vedic "Not this, Not this" (*Neti, Neti*). This teaching is also an answer to the Vedic "I am That" (**eso 'ham asmi**, the 1st person Pali of the Sanskrit *tat tvam asi*, That Thou Art). Right view confers freedom from microcosmic self (**Jivatma**) and macrocosmic self (**Paramatma**). Conceit (**mana**) does not simply refer to overestimation (**adhimana**), excessive conceit or conceitedness, but to all levels of self-evaluation: I am superior (**Seyyo 'ham asmi**), I am inferior (**Hino 'ham asmi**) and We are equal (**Sadiso 'ham asmi**).

□ The four Taints or Corruptions (**Asavas, Asravas**), mental effluents, pollutants, defilements, taints, cankers or stains. These also appear with the suffix forms for Flood (**-ogha**) or Bond (**-yogha**) ([Wiki](#))

- **Kamasava**, taints of sense, addictions to senses, lust, longing
- **Bhavasava**, taints of being and becoming, lust for life, existence infatuation
- **Ditthasava**, taints of view, speculative mentality, false view, wrong belief
- **Avijjasava**, taints of ignorance, unawareness, nescience, blindness, delusion (**moha**)

The knowledge of the ending or destruction of the taints is **asavanam khayanana**

□ The four types of Clinging (**Upadana, Upadana**), grasping, holding or attachment. This also carries the meaning of intake or uptake, as of fuel, like oil for a lamp, or nutriment, for good or ill. It is adding to your weight or gravitas. ([Wiki](#))

- **Kamupadana**, clinging to senses, craving worldly things
- **Ditthupadana**, clinging to wrong views, opinions, beliefs, or philosophies
- **Silabbatupadana**, clinging to rules and rituals; wrong practice, believing these things "will take you there."
- **Attavadupadana**, clinging to self-doctrine, personal identification, ideas of selfhood

□ The four Bodily Ties or Bonds (**Kayaganthas**). These four are also found among the **Akusala Cetasikas**. ([More](#))

- **Abhijja kayagantha**, *Abhidya*, craving, greed, covetousness

• **Vyapada**, *Vairiam*, (or **Byapada**) **kayagantha**, aversion, ill will, animosity, malice, anger, hatred, malevolence, hostility, resistance, irritation

• **Silabatta paramasa katyagantha**, clinging to rules and rituals; wrong practice. Insecurity.

• **Idam-saccabhinivesa kayagantha**, dogmatism, adherence, insistence

□ The five Hindrances (**Nivarana**, *Nivarana*), or obstructions, especially to Right Effort (**Samma Vayama**) and to Right Mindfulness (**Samma Sati**) or to meditation in general. Sometimes ignorance (**avijja**) is added as a sixth Hindrance. ([Wiki](#))

• **Kamacchanda**, *Kamachanda*, (sometimes **Abhijja**, *Abhidya*) sensual desire, covetousness, craving or seeking pleasure. ([More](#))

• **Vyapada** (or **Byapada**), *Vairam* or *Dvesha* (**dosa**), aversion, ill-will, animosity, malice, anger, hatred, malevolence, hostility, resistance, irritation. Synonyms **patigha**, *pratigha*, **dosa**, *dvesha*

• **Thina-middha**, *Styana-middha*, sloth, lethargy, dullness, laxity, laziness, indolence and mental torpor, drowsiness, fading out, sluggishness. Generally mental inertia.

• **Uddhacca-kukkucca**, *Auddhatya-kaukritya*, restlessness, distractedness, agitation, excitement, ebullience, frivolity, flurry; and remorse, regret, worry, anxiety, fretfulness, compunction, or brooding. Generally disquietude.

• **Vicikiccha**, *Vichikitsa*, skeptical doubt, uncertainty, indecision, perplexity, lack of conviction or trust. This does not refer to critical or discriminating intelligence, which is encouraged in Buddhism.

The five hindrances are overcome respectively by one-pointedness (**ekaggata**), exhilaration (**piti**), applied thought, (**vitakka**), happiness (**sukha**) and sustained thought (**vicara**).

□ The seven Latent Tendencies (**Anusayas**, *Anushayas*), underlying or inherent dispositions, conditioning, proclivities, tendencies, obsessions; unconscious mind, dormant mental impurities; inclinations (as potential energy). Creatures from the id. Some of these are shared with the fetters (**samyojanas**), just below. ([Wiki](#)) and ([More](#))

• **Kamaraga** or **Kamatanha**, *Kamaraga*, sensual passion, desire, thirst, lust, greed, attachment, unskillful desire.

• **Paṭigha**, *Pratigha*, aversion, anger, hostile attitude, repugnance, resistance, aggressive urges

• **Ditthi**, *Drishiti*, **Ditthi**, *Drishiti*, view, point of view, perspective. outlook, opinion, belief, understanding. The default value of this word is negative: misinterpretation, prejudice, prejudgment, speculative views, dogma (or **Micchaditthi**, wrong views, misunderstanding)

• **Vicikiccha**, *Vicikitsa*, skeptical doubt, uncertainty, indecision, lack of conviction or trust

• **Mana**, *Mana*, conceit, pride, vanity, intrusion of ego, self-evaluation, social comparison, arrogance. The term applies to low self-esteem as well. ([Wiki](#))

• **Bhavaraga** or **Bhavatanha**, *Bhavaraga*, craving or desire to be and be more, egoistic urges, the rage to be

- **Avijja**, *Avidya*, ignorance, nescience, unawareness, not knowing, blindness, delusion, misunderstanding.

- The ten Fetters (**Samyojanas Sannojanas**), bonds or attachments, tying beings to the wheel of existence (**samsara**) and the cycle of rebirth. ([Wiki](#)) and ([More](#))

- **Sakkayaditthi**, *Sat kayadrishti*, identity or personality views or belief, self-illusion, identification of any **kkanda** with self. See the three Conceits (**Mana**) Obsessions or Graspings (**Gaha**) above

- **Vicikiccha**, *Vicikitsa*, skeptical doubt, uncertainty, indecision, lack of conviction or trust; not the same as investigating with discernment and a readiness to dismiss bad ideas.

- **Silabbataparamaso**, *Silavrataparimarsa*, the belief, attachment or wrong grasp in precepts and rules, rituals, habits, practices, ceremonial observances; belief that these will transport you

One who has succeeded in eradicating these first three fetters is regarded a Stream-enterer or Stream-winner (**sotapanna**, *srotapanna*). ([Wiki](#)) The next seven:

- **Kamaraga**, or **Kamacchando**, *Kamaraga*, sensual thirst, passion, desire, lust, greed, attachment, unskillful desire

- **Vyapada** (or **Byapada**), *Vairam* or *Dvesha* (**dosa**), aversion, ill will, animosity, malice, anger, hatred, malevolence, hostility, resistance, irritation. Synonyms **patigha**, *pratigha*, **dosa**, *dvesha*

- **Rupa-raga**, *Ruparaga*, craving or passion for substance and form, rebirth on material planes

- **Arupa-raga**, *Aruparaga*, craving or passion for the insubstantial, immaterial or formless phenomena, rebirth in higher realms

- **Mana**, *Mana*, conceit, pride, vanity, intrusion of ego, self-evaluation, social comparison, arrogance. The term applies to low self-esteem as well.

- **Uddhacca**, *Auddhatya*, restlessness, distractedness, agitation, excitement, ebullience, frivolity, flurry

- **Avijja**, *Avidya*, ignorance, nescience, unawareness, not knowing, blindness, delusion, misunderstanding.

- Elsewhere, in the **Abhidhamma Pitaka**, additional fetters are mentioned while some of the above are omitted, such as:

- **Ditthi**, *Drishti*, view, point of view, perspective. outlook, opinion, belief, understanding. The default value of this word is negative: misinterpretation, prejudice, prejudgment, speculative views, dogma.

- **Patigha**, *Pratigha*, anger, aversion, repugnance, revulsion, repulsion, resentment, resistance; sensory impact or impingement. This is often specifically in reaction to an intense, offensive or aggressive stimulus, maybe subsequent resentment or grudge, giving it a shade of distinction from **dosa**.

- **Bhavaraga**, *Bhavaraga*, passion of becoming, lust for existence, desire for becoming and rebirth

• **Issa**, *Irshya*, jealousy, envy

• **Macchhariya**, *Matsarya*, stinginess, avarice, miserliness, selfishness

There are chains by which these fetters arise, as at DN 21: jealousy and avarice (**issa-macchhariya**) arise from dear and not-dear (**piya-appiya**), this from desire (**chanda**), this from thinking (**vitakka**), this from proliferation (**papanca**)

□ The ten Defilements (**Kilesa**, *Klesha*), impurities, passions, imperfections, corruptions, troubles, beginning with the three poisons (**tivisa**, *trivisa*). ([Wiki](#))

• **Lobha**, *Lobha*, or **Raga**, *Raga*, craving, covetousness, thirst, desire, passion, lust, greed, attachment, unskillful desire, self-centered desire for more.

• **Dosa**, *Dvesha*, aversion, hatred, anger, aggression, fear of getting what we don't want or not getting what we want, avoidance, rejection, a will to be separate, from unwise contemplation of repulsive objects. Covers a wide range of hostile feelings. Synonyms **vyapada** and **patigha**.

• **Moha**, *Moha*, delusion, mental dullness or darkness, infatuation, stupidity, bewilderment, confusion, ignorance, folly, sentimentality.

• **Mana**, *Mana*, conceit, pride, vanity, intrusion of ego, self-evaluation, social comparison, arrogance. The term applies to low self-esteem as well.

• **Ditthi**, *Drishiti*, view, point of view, perspective. outlook, opinion, belief, understanding. The default value of this word is negative: misinterpretation, prejudice, prejudgment, speculative views, dogma (or **micchaditthi**, wrong views, misunderstanding)

• **Vicikiccha**, *Vicikitsa*, skeptical doubt, uncertainty, indecision, lack of conviction or trust ([Wiki](#))

• **Thina**, *Styana*, sloth, lethargy, dullness, laxity, laziness, mental torpor

• **Uddhacca**, *Auddhatya*, restlessness, distractedness, agitation, excitement, ebullience, flurry

• **Ahirika**, *Ahrykya*, shamelessness, lack of conscience or moral shame. ([Wiki](#))

• **Anottappa**, *Anapatrapya*, unconscientiousness, recklessness, disregard for consequence, moral carelessness. ([Wiki](#))

□ Mahayana adds more to the list:

• *Krodha*, **Kodha**, anger, fury, rage (that prepares to do harm)

• *Upanaha*, **Upanaha**, resentment, vengefulness, rancor, withholding forgiveness, intending to harm

• *Mraksa*, **Makkha**, concealment, slyness, hypocrisy; contempt, denigration

• *Pradasa*, **Palasa**, malice, spite, spitefulness; domineering

• *Matsarya*, **Macchhariya**, stinginess, avarice, miserliness, selfishness

• *Sathya*, **Satheyya**, dishonesty, hypocrisy, crookedness

• *Himsa*, **Vihimsa**, harmfulness, cruelty, malice, intent to harm, violence

□ Ten Unwholesome or Disadvantageous Courses of Action (**Akusala Kammapatha**)

Three of Bodily Action (**kayakamma**)

- **Panatipata** destruction life, injuring or killing living beings
- **Adinnadana** taking what is not given, stealing
- **Kamesu-micchacara** misconduct in sensual pleasures

Four of Verbal Action (**vacikamma**)

- **Musavada** lying, deceit, speaking falsehood, false or incorrect talk or speech
- **Pisunavaca** tale bearing, slander, backbiting, calumny, malicious, divisive talk or speech
- **Pharusavaca** harsh, abusive, impolite, hurtful, insulting, sarcastic, offensive talk or speech
- **Samphappalapa** gossip, useless, frivolous, pointless, fruitless, senseless, shallow, silly, vain, idle talk or speech, chatter and foolish babble

Three of Mental action (**manokamma**)

- **Abhijja** craving, greed, covetousness
- **Vyapada**, *Vairiam* (or **Byapada**), aversion, ill will, animosity, malice, anger, hatred, malevolence, hostility, resistance, irritation
- **Micchaditthi**, *Mithyadrishti*, wrong views, misbelief, misunderstanding

□ Eleven Mental Imperfections or Corruptions (**Cittassa Upakkilesa**, *Upaklesa*) MN 128. ([Wiki](#))

- **Vicikiccha**, *Vichikitsa*, skeptical doubt, uncertainty, indecision, lack of conviction or trust
- **Amanasikara**, inattention, inadvertence
- **Thina-Middha**, *Styana-middha*, sloth, lethargy, dullness, laxity, laziness and mental torpor, drowsiness, fading out, sluggishness
- **Chambhitatta**, fear, trepidation
- **Ubbilla**, elation or excitement
- **Dutthulla**, inertia or inaction
- **Accaraddha viriya**, excessive effort or excess of energy
- **Atilina viriya**, weak effort or deficiency of energy
- **Abhijappa**, longing or desire
- **Nanatta sanna**, perception of diversity
- **Atinijjhayitattam rupanam**, excessive meditation upon forms

□ Sixteen Mental Imperfections or Corruptions (**Cittassa Upakkilesa**, *Upaklesa*) MN 3, 7.3, 9.15. A list of unwholesome mental factors (**akusala cetasikas**) in the **Abhidhamma** tradition is given at **Cetasikas**, *Caitasikas*, in the next section. ([Wiki](#))

- **Abhijjha-visamalobha**, covetousness and unrighteous greed
- **Vyapada**, *Vairiam* (or **Byapada**), aversion, ill will, animosity, malice, anger, hatred, malevolence, hostility, resistance, irritation. Synonyms **patigha**, *pratigha*, **dosa**, *dvesha*
- **Kodha**, *Krodha*, anger, fury, rage (that prepares to do harm). ([Wiki](#))
- **Upanaha**, *Upanaha*, resentment, vengefulness, rancor, withholding forgiveness, intending to harm. ([Wiki](#))
- **Makkha**, *Mraksa*, concealment, slyness, hypocrisy; contempt, denigration
- **Palasa**, *Pradasa*, malice, spite, spitefulness; domineering
- **Issa**, *Irshya*, jealousy, envy, not enduring the prosperity of others
- **Macchariya**, *Matsarya*, stinginess, selfishness, avarice
- **Maya**, *Maya*, pretense, deceit, hypocrisy, illusion
- **Satheyya**, *Sathya*, fraud, craftiness
- **Thambha**, obstinacy, obduracy, stubbornness
- **Sarambha**, presumption, impetuousness, precipitousness, rashness
- **Mana**, *Mana*, conceit, pride, vanity, intrusion of ego, self-evaluation, social comparison, arrogance. The term applies to low self-esteem as well.
- **Atimana**, *Atimana*, arrogance, extreme self-regard
- **Mada**, *Mada*, pride, vanity, intoxication
- **Pamada**, *Pramada*, heedlessness, carelessness, unconcern, negligence
- Others from Mahayana
- *Styana*, **Thina**, sloth, lethargy, dullness, laxity, laziness
- *Auddhatya*, **Uddhacca**, restlessness, distractedness, agitation, excitement, ebullience, flurry
- *Asraddhya*, **Assadha**, lack of faith, lack of trust
- *Kausidya*, **Kosajja**, laziness, slothfulness
- *Musitasmrta*, **Mutthasacca**, forgetfulness, absence of mindfulness
- *Asamprajanya*, **Avivekita** (or **Vicarahinata**), inattentiveness, disregard, thoughtlessness
- *Vikshepa*, **Vikkhepa**, distraction, confusion, desultoriness
- *Kaukritya*, **Kukkucca**, remorse, regret, worry, anxiety, fretfulness, compunction, or brooding

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## VI. Glossary of Terms in Categories

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Arising and Passing Away (**Anicca**)

Attachment (**Upadana**)

Aversion, Ill Will and Denial (**Vyapada** or **Byapada**)

Concentration (**Samadhi**)

Conduct (**Kammanta, Sila**)

Craving, Desire and Addiction (**Tanha**)

Detachment and Equanimity (**Upekkha**)

Effort (**Vayama**) and Energy (**Viriya**)

Identity and Existence (**Atta**)

Intention (**Sankappa**)

Investigation (**Vicaya**)

Mindfulness (**Sati**)

Mind and Consciousness (**Citta, Mano, Vinnana**)

Mind Functions (**Cetasikas, Caitasikas**)

People on the Path (**Patthetu**)

Pleasant States (**Sukha, Kusala**)

Reality and Illusion (**Yathabhuta, Maya**)

Rebirth (**Punabhava**)

Unpleasant States (**Dukkha, Akusala**)

View (**Ditthi, Drishti**)

Worlds (**Loka, Loka**)

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Arising and Passing Away (**Anicca**)

Four states are represented in this category: being conditioned, arising, existing and passing away.

**abhinibbatti** to become, be reproduced, to result

**abhisankhata** conditioned

**anabhava** obliteration

**anantara paccaya** proximate cause

**antaradhana** disappearance

**aparisesa nirujjhanti** ceasing without remainder

**athangama** annihilation, disappearance, passing away, setting down; opposite **samudaya**, coming into existence

**bhanga** dissolution, apparent solidity arising and passing away, moment of cessation

**cuti** passing away, vanishing, expiration, death

**hetu** cause, origin, reason

**hetu-phala** cause and effect, root and fruit

**hetu, paccaya, phala** causes, conditions and effects

**idappaccayata** specific conditionality, cause related to effect, as in science

**mula** root, source, origin, condition, cause

**nicca, nitya**, constant, perpetual, permanent

**nijjara** attrition, wearing away

**nirodha, nirodha** cessation, eradication, extinction, disbanding, stopping, destruction, dissolution

**nissita** dependent

**pabhava** production, origin, source

**pabhavika** arising from

**paccapattana** manifestation

**paccaya** cause, condition, requisite, relation

**padatthanam**, proximate cause

**paloka** disintegration

**parihana** decline

**parinibburto** extinguished

**pariyadana** exhaustion

**purecarika** precursor

**sammosa** decay

**samudaya** coming into existence, arising; cause, origin

**sankhata, samskrita** formed, conditioned as **sankharas**

**thiti** stability, maintenance, continuation, perpetuation

**udayabbaya** rise and fall

**udaya-vaya** arising and passing away

**upadaya** derived from, clinging to

**uppada, thiti, bhanga** arising, existence or presence and ceasing

**uppada khana, titthi khana, bhanga khana** arising, present and dissolution moments

**uppajjanti** arise

**uppanna** arisen

**vaya** vanishing, going, passing away

**vipayutta-paccaya** dissociation-condition

**vupasama**, subsiding

**vutthana** rising up, emergence

\*\*\*\*\*

Attachment (**Upadana**)

**ajjhosana** holding, see craving

**alaya** adhesion, attachment, indulgence

**anurodha virodha** likes and dislikes

**anurodhavirodham sampanno** attachment and resentment, attraction and repulsion

**avisana** obsession, seizure

**bandha** bond

**bandhana** bondage

**gaha** seizure, grip

**nikanti** attachment, attraction

**pariggaha** possession

**parimasa** grasping

**paritassana** connotes both fear or worry and craving or grasping, agitation, **uddhacca**

**pariyutthana** obsession

**raganusaya patighanusaya** greed and hatred

**rati** delight, attachment

**saraga** attachment, infatuation

**sarajjati byapajjati** attraction and repulsion

**upadana**, *upadana*, clinging, grasping, holding or attachment; intake or uptake, as of fuel, like oil for a lamp, or nutriment, for good or ill. Adding to your weight or gravitas.

**upadhi**, attachments, objects of attachment; also substrate, basis, ground, essentials of existence

**upaya**, *upaya*, one of the *Paramitas* of Mahayana, skillful or right means or method; attracted engagement, which elsewhere carries the negative connotation of attachment or involvement.

\*\*\*\*\*

Aversion, Ill Will and Denial (**Vyapada** or **Byapada**)

**analaya** aversion, free of attachment

**anurodhapativirodha**, attraction and aversion, favoring and opposing

**appiyatta** resentment, invidiousness, envy

**arati**, distaste, dislike, aversion, boredom, discontent

**asahana** resentment, non-endurance, intolerance

**dosa**, *dvesha*, aversion, hatred, anger, aggression, fear of getting what we don't want or not getting what we want, avoidance, rejection, a will to be separate, from unwise contemplation of repulsive objects. Covers a wide range of hostile feelings. Synonyms **vyapada** and **patigha**.

**dukkhapaṭikula** avoidance of suffering

**nibbida** disenchantment, weariness and disgust

**paccakkhana**, contradiction, disavowal, renouncement, repudiation, rejection

**parammukhata** aversion

**patigha**, *pratigha*, anger, aversion, repugnance, revulsion, repulsion, resentment, resistance; sensory impact or impingement. This is often specifically in reaction to an intense, offensive or aggressive stimulus, maybe subsequent resentment or grudge, giving it a shade of distinction from **dosa**.

**paṭikkhepa**, *pratigha*, denigration, impugment, refusal, objection, negation

**upanaha**, *upanaha*, resentment, vengefulness, rancor, withholding forgiveness, intending to harm

**vimukhata** reluctance

**viraga** absence of passion, dispassion, disinterestedness

**vyapada**, *vairam*, (or **byapada**) aversion, ill will, animosity, malice, anger, malevolence, hatred, hostility, resistance, irritation.

Some versions of negative response are used positively:

**asubha** unattractiveness, loathsomeness, foulness, ugliness. This is often used as a meditation to break the spells of **kamaraga**.

**nibbida**, *nirvedh*, disenchantment, weariness, dispassion - frequently to be cultivated without the aversion, revulsion and disgust connotations

\*\*\*\*\*

Concentration (**Samadhi**)

**appana** absorption concentration

**avikheppo** non-distraction

**bhavana** meditation, attentive concentration, includes **samatha** and **vipassana**, mental

culture, making-to-become, self-development, mental development

**ekaggata**, *ekagrata*, unification, oneness of mind and object (**jhana**, *dhyaana*)

**ekaggatta-rammana** one-pointedness of mind, concentration, singleness of preoccupation, focus

**kasina** objects of meditation or meditation device, field

**nimitta**, image, vision, mental sign arising in meditation, mark or sign taken up

**samadhi**, *samadhi*, mental concentration, concentrative absorption.

**samapatti** meditative attainment, sustained deep absorption

**samyama** binding, holding together, fixation <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samyama>

**upacara samadhi**, access concentration, the stage before **jhana**

**upacara**, access

\*\*\*\*\*

Conduct (**Kammanta**, **Sila**)

**accaya** transgression

**adhamma** injustice, unrighteous conduct

**apatti desana** confession of wrongdoing, infractions, offenses or faults

**atthacariya** wise conduct, also good counsel

**carana** by default usually implies good conduct or good behavior

**carita**, character, behavior

**duccarita** misconduct, misbehavior

**sucarita** good conduct

**caritta** performance, practice, observance

**dhamma-vinaya** doctrine and discipline, Buddha's name for Buddhism

**hiri-ottappa** negative conscience, avoidance of shame and censure

**hiriyati** scruples

**kamesu micchacara** sensual/sexual misconduct

**micchacara** misconduct

**micchata** wrongness

**pakati**, *prakriti* nature, behaviorally normal, without crisis, natural, a default state of affairs, inherent morality

**paccha**, *pasca*, contrition, repentance, remorse

**panatipata** destruction of life, injuring or killing living beings

**pamada**, *pramada* heedlessness, carelessness, unconcern, negligence. Intoxicants that

lead to this blunt the senses of **hiri** and **ottappa**, moral shame and dread (AN 2.31-2)

**papasila** wicked or evil behavior

**parajika** defeat. There are four rules that lead to expulsion from the Sangha for life, against sexual conduct, theft, murder and boasting of supernatural powers

**punna**, *punya*, worth, good character, meritorious deeds, well-being from right action

**samacara** conduct, behavior

**samyama** self-control, restraint, temperance, moderation

**sativepullappatta** having attained a clear conscience

**sila** virtue, virtuous behavior; **vuddhasila** mature virtue

**silabatta** rules and vows

**sucarita** good conduct

**varitta** avoidance, restraint

**veyyavacca** service, rendering help

**vijja-carana** knowledge and conduct

**vippatisara** bad conscience, regret, repentance

**vivekabuddhi** conscience, sense of discrimination

\*\*\*\*\*

Craving, Desire and Addiction (**Tanha**)

**abhijja**, *abhidya*, craving, greed, covetousness, particularly for other's property; closest to **lobha** in meaning

**amisa** worldly or carnal happiness, the bait

**anuyoga** pursuit, devotion, given to

**assada** gratification, attraction, savor, relish, esp. of taste; apparent enjoyment, satisfaction

**calamatthena tanha** trembling with desire, craving with respect to the thrill

**chanda** usually regarded as the positive form of desire, want, will, zeal; wish to do, desire to act, see again at intention. Combined with **kama** as **kamacchanda** it becomes cravenness.

**chandamulaka** rooted in desire

**dhammatanha** craving for mind-objects, apt to overspeculate

**eja** passion, stirring

**iccha** wish, desire, longing

**kama**, *kama*, pleasure, sensory or sensual pleasure, longing, lust. **Kama** can mean both sense pleasures and the desire for sense pleasure

**kamachanda** sensual desire, cravenness

**kamaloka** world, realm or plane of desire

**kamaraga** sensual passion

**labha-sakkara-siloka** gain-honor-praise

**lobha**, *lobha*, craving, covetousness, thirst, desire, passion, lust, greed, attachment, unskillful desire, self-centered desire for more.

**mahiccha** discontented, not easily satisfied, having many desires

**nandi** delight as an aspect of **tanha**, opposite of revulsion **nibbida**

**nati** inclination; bending, bent

**nikanti** desire, craving, longing for

**parilaha** fever, burning passion, obscene desire, lust

**paritassana** connotes both fear or worry and craving or grasping, agitation, **uddhacca**

**pariyesana** quest. A diversity of quests follows a diversity of passions

**patthana** longing, hankering

**pema**, *prema* love and affection; as attachment: carnal love, selfish affectionate desire

**raga** passion desire, lust for excitement, rage

**rati**, **abhirati** delight, attachment to pleasure

**saragam cittam** lustful mind

**tanha**, *trishna*, desire, craving or thirst, but including the desire to be separated from noxious stimuli. The actual wanting more and wanting less.

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Detachment and Equanimity (**Upekkha**)

**abyapada** non-aversion, absence of ill will

**adhivasana** endurance, forbearance

**adukkhamasukha** neither painful nor pleasant

**alobha** absence of craving, non-attachment, generosity

**analaya** non-desire, freedom from attachment, unattachment, unadhesion

**anupada vimokkha** liberation through not clinging

**anupaya** unattracted

**appanihita** wishlessness, desirelessness

**arati** unattachment, abstinence; can also mean distaste, revulsion

**atammayata** non-identification, not consisting of that; see **gaha**

**avirodha** non-resistance, non-obstruction, non-opposition, non-antagonism

**cetovimutti** liberation of heart and/or mind

**mokkha**, *moksha*, release, freedom, emancipation

**mutti** freedom

**nibbida**, *nirvedh*, disenchantment, weariness, dispassion, frequently to be cultivated without the aversion, revulsion and disgust connotations

**nissarana**, going out, cessation, escape, salvation, being freed

**paricagga**, give up, renounce; bestow, donate

**patinissagga** relinquishment

**patisallana** seclusion, solitude, retirement for contemplation

**paviveka** seclusion, retirement, solitude

**samatikkama** transcendence

**tatramajjhata** neutrality, specific neutrality, even-mindedness; distinct from indifference, larger frame, big picture

**upekkha** equanimity, equipoise, onlooking

**vimokkha** emancipation, liberation, as progressive

**vimutti**, *mukti* or *vyamokh*, emancipation, freedom, deliverance, salvation, release

**viraga**, *vairagya*, fading of passions, detachment, dispassion, no raga, letting go

**viveka** detachment, seclusion, separation, aloofness, physical and mental modes

**vossagga** detachment, renunciation, abandonment

**yanna** sacrifice, alms-giving

\*\*\*\*\*

Effort (**Vayama**) and Energy (**Viriya**)

**ahara** nutriment, nutrition

**aharatthitika** maintenance or perpetuation by nutriment

**appativani** unremittingness

**atapi**, ardent

**chanda**, usually regarded as a more positive or value-neutral form of desire, wish to do, desire to act, want, will, purpose, zeal. Chanda appears at desire and intention as well.

**dama** self-control, taming, subduing

**dhiti** courage, energy, steadfastness, fortitude, firm character

**nikkama** endeavor, exertion, strength, endurance

**padhana** effort, striving, exertion, endeavor (**vayama**); fundamental, basic, principal

**padahati** striving

**parakkama** exertion, endeavor, effort, bravery, valor

**payatana** striving, effort, endeavor

**samvega**, negative realization, rude awakening, a chastening experience of the wrongness, futility, shallowness, meaninglessness, pointlessness, riskiness and precariousness of common life, one's prior life or phase of life. An anxious sense of urgency to find a better way. Disgust, anxiety, agitation; a religious emotion, spiritual urgency. Being moved to the core of one's being. ([More](#))

**satacca** perseverance

**thama** fortitude

**ussahati** (less informed than padahana)

**vayama** striving, effort

**viriya** vigor, energy, effort, exertion, persistence

\*\*\*\*\*

Identity and Existence (**Atta**)

**asmi** I am

**atta**, *atman* the apparent ultimate individual or spiritual identity

**attabhava** individual existence, individuality, personality, selfhood

**attabhava-patiabha** acquisition of individuality

**attanuditthi** self-view

**atta-patilabha**, acquired self

**attavada** theory of soul, self-doctrine

**ayu** life, lifespan, vitality

**bhava**, *bhava*, (process of) becoming or be-ing as a verb, existence as standing out, growth for its own sake, maturation

**bhuta** entity, being

**itthata** this state of being, individual existence as such

**jiva** (illusion of) soul, individual soul; life, vital principle,

**jivita** life, life force, kinetic energy of life, vitality, coherence

**jivitindriya**, *jivitindriya*, life faculty ([Wiki](#))

**manusa** human

**paja** generation, the whole order of beings, evolution

**pana**, *prana* living being, breathing being

**puggala** individual, personality, person

**sakkaya** person, personality, identity

**santana** continuity, flux, succession, offspring

**santati** continuity

**satta**, *sattva*, sentient beings ([Wiki](#))

\*\*\*\*\*

Intention (**Sankappa**)

**adhimokkha**, *adhyavasayh* or *anumatra*, resolution, determination, firm resolve, volition, decision, decisiveness, conviction, choice of objects of attention

**adhimuccati** to resolve upon, be intent on

**abhinihara** resolution

**adhippaya** purport, intention

**adhithhana** resolution, resolve, determination, aspiration, decision, self-determination

**cetana**, *cetana*, volition, intention, drive, inherent impulse (as opposed to external goals), act of willing

**cetanabala** power of volition

**chanda**, usually regarded as the positive form of desire, wish to do, desire to act, want, will, purpose, zeal

**kattu-kamyatachanda** wish-to-do, gloss of **chanda**

**pahitatta** dedicated intention, resolution, determination

**sancetana** volition

**sankappa**, *sankalpa*, intention, thought, aim, commitment, purpose, aspiration, mindset, plan, motive or resolve

**ussahati**, willing, applying will, compare striving

**vothabbana** decision

\*\*\*\*\*

Investigation (**Vicaya**)

**adhippayasa** disparity

**-anupassana** contemplation of

**anvaya** inference, tracing a course or sequence, following a causal chain

**atappa** focused investigation, ardency, ardor

**atthapatisambhidha** analytical insight

**bhavanamayapanna** wisdom from mental cultivation

**dhamma-tthiti-nana** knowledge of realization of states, knowledge of structure of ideas

**dhammavicaya**, *dharmavicharana*, investigation of states

**esana** searches, value neutral

**nana**, *jnana* knowledge, comprehension, wisdom, insight. Knowledge experienced.

**nanadassana**, knowledge seen; knowledge and vision

**nepakka** discretion, prudence

**nijjhana** pondering, insight

**paccaya-pariggaha** discernment of conditions or conditioned states

**patibhana** ingenuity, ready wit, promptitude, readiness

**patisambhida** analytical knowledge

**sammasana** exploration, comprehension (esp. in terms of **anicca**, **dukkha** and **anatta**)

**sampajanna**, *samprajanya*, clear comprehension, discrimination, full awareness

**takkavithi** reasoning, using logic, can be hair-splitting or sophistry

**thana** logic, reasonableness

**tulana** scrutiny, deliberation, weighing

**ugghatitannu** swift understanding

**vicaya**, *vicharana*, discrimination, discriminating investigation

**vijja**, *vidya* knowledge, science; true, clear and working knowledge, opposite of ignorance (**avijja**)

**vijana**, *vijana* knowing, understanding

**vimamsa** investigation, inquiry, search

**vyattuccarana** articulation

Seventeen Stages of Insight Knowledge (**Vipassana**):

- Knowledge of **namarupa**, distinguishing between mental and physical states (**namarupa pariccheda nana**)
- Knowledge of conditionality, the cause-and-effect relationship between mental and physical states (**paccaya pariggaha nana**)
- Knowledge of mental and physical processes as impermanent, unsatisfactory and non-self (**sammasana nana**)
- Knowledge of the arising and passing away (**udayabbaya nana**)
- Knowledge of the passing away, decay and dissolution of formations (**bhanga nana**)
- Knowledge of the fearsome nature of mental and physical states (**bhaya nana**)
- Knowledge of the danger or disadvantageous nature of mental and physical states (**adinava nana**)
- Knowledge of disenchantment (**nibbida nana**)
- Knowledge of the desire to abandon the worldly state for freedom (**muncitu-kamayata nana**)
- Knowledge of the need for reflection and consideration (**patisankha nana**)

- Knowledge of equanimity towards mental and physical states with (**sankhar-upekkha nana**)
- Knowledge of the insight of emergence or arising (**utthanagamini vipassana nana**)
- Knowledge of adaptation or conforming to the true (**anuloma nana**)
- Knowledge of deliverance from the lineage of conditions (**gotrabhu nana**)
- Knowledge of the path to the end of the defilements (**magga nana**)
- Knowledge of the fruition of the path, with **nibbana** as object (**phala nana**)
- Knowledge which reviews or reflects on the remaining defilements (**paccavekkhana nana**)

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### Mind and Consciousness (**Citta, Mano, Vinnana**)

**Citta**, *Citta*, the mental apprehension of ordinary consciousness, attending and collecting impressions, mindset and state of mind, attitude; that which knows or experiences an object, quality of mental processes as a whole, thought, not itself an entity or process. It is both heart and mind, with emotional and rational elements, the full experience of a conscious state, and so is cognate with the Chinese Xīn. From the Pali word **cinteti**, thinking. A **citta** is a moment in time of mind, a state within a stream of momentary experiences. **Cittas** are always cognizing an object, a dhamma or object arising in the mind, accompanied by one or more of the fifty-two **cetasikas**, *caitasikas*, mental processes or functions, specialized tasks. Certain **cetasikas** can be fundamentally wholesome, others fundamentally unwholesome. **Citta** with its **cetasikas**, are together called **nama**, mentality, with the root meaning of name. ([Wiki](#)) and ([Wiki](#))

**cittavithi** consciousness as an active process

**citta-tthiti** steadiness of consciousness

**citta-sankhara** mental formation

**vithi-citta** active consciousness

**vipaka-citta** resultant consciousness

**kiritya-citta** functional consciousness

**avimutta citta** unliberated mind

**cittecaggata** unification or one-pointedness of mind

**cittakammanata** fitness of the work of the mind

**cittena** mentally; suffix for an attitude or mentality

**adhicitta** higher consciousness

**adhicittasikkha** training higher mind

**cittuppada** thought, thought arising, inclination of mind, mental arising

**ceto** mind, heart, will

**cetokhila**, barrenness of heart

**cetopariya** penetration of minds

**bodhicitta**, *bodhichitta* awakened mind

**Mano**, *Manas*, intellect or mind sense that grasps mental objects, the faculty of thought, mental apprehension or prehensile mind, intelligence, subject with object. ([Wiki](#))

**amanasikara**, inattention, inadvertence

**manasikara**, *manasikara*, attention, advertence ([Wiki](#))

**mannana** conceiving, conception

**mannati** to conceive, often distortion thinking, like concoct

**mannita** conceivings, mental fabrications, products of **papanca**

**manomaya** mind-made, "astral" body, out of body experience

**manopavicara** mental exploration, applied and sustained thought

**manosancetanahara** mental volition as nutriment

**manovinnana** mind consciousness

**Vinnana**, *Vijnana*, consciousness, cognizance, cognition, awareness, conscious discrimination, as figure-ground ([Wiki](#))

**vinnana sotam**, *vijnana srotam*, stream of consciousness

**samvattanika-vinnana**, evolving consciousness

**manovinnana**, mind consciousness, consciousness with phenomena

*Alayavijnanastore* consciousness, containing the suchness of things, a Mahayana doctrine ([Wiki](#))

Miscellaneous

suffix for awareness or knowledge of \_\_\_\_\_ -**nana**

**nama** in **nama rupa**, name, also names the four **khandas** that are not **rupa**; mental phenomena, also used as a collective term for **vedana**, **sanna**, **cetana**, **phassa**, and **manasikara**

**sankhitta** contracted mind

**sampajanna**, *samprajanya*, alertness, presence of mind, full awareness, clear comprehension

**samjanana** recognition, function of perception

**vijanati** to cognize, know, recognize

\*\*\*\*\*

Mindfulness (**Sati**)

**adhimokkha**, *adhyavasayh* or *anumatra*, resolution, determination, firm resolve,

volition, decision, choice of objects of attention

**anapanasati**, *anapanasmriti*, breathing meditation, mindfulness of breath, without control of breath

**anussati** contemplation, recollection, remembrance

**appamada** heedfulness, diligence, conscientiousness, care, similar **to sati**, but also connotes diligence, non-neglect of **sati**, zest

**asati-asampajanna** non-restraint, unmindful without comprehension

**assasa-passasa** in-breathing and out-breathing

**bhavana** meditation, attentive concentration, includes **samatha** and **vipassana**, mental culture, making-to-become, self-development, mental development

**cinta** reflection

**jagariya** wakefulness, awakened state, vigilance

**kammattana** subjects of meditation, working ground, starting point

**kasinas** contemplation devices

**mutthasacca**, *mutthasamrtita*, forgetfulness, absence of mindfulness

**mutthasati** unmindful, forgetful, dizzy

**parivitakka** reflection, consideration

**sati**, *smriti*, mindfulness, attentive recollection, awareness

**satima** watchfulness of mind, vigilance

**satipatthana** attendance on, presence, awareness

**sati-sampajanna** clear comprehension with discernment of impermanence, mindfulness of arising and passing away

**udayattagami panna** discernment of arising and passing away

**yoniso manasikara** careful attention, systematic attention

**ayoniso manasikara** is careless attention)

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Mind Functions (**Cetasikas**, *Caitasikas*) ([Wiki](#))

Mental Factors, discernible activities of the mind, **Citta vithi**

□ The Seven Universal or Omnipresent **cetasikas** or Mental Processes (**sabba citta sadharana**), said to accompany all **cittas**, every waking state of mind.

• **Phassa**, *Sparsha*, contact, initial connection between mind and object, first notice

• **Vedana**, *Vedana*, (**sukha**, **dukkha**, **somanassa**, **domanassa**, **upekkha**) feeling, raw experience

• **Sanna**, *Samjna*, perception, remembrance, noting the most salient features of a sense or mental object, assignment of qualities as tags or handles

- **Cetana**, *Cetana*, volition, stimulus, motive, drive, directing, coordinating, purposiveness, default can be apperceptive inertia, gives direction to **kamma**
- **Ekaggata**, *Ekagrata*, one-pointedness, focus, narrowing, concentration, splitting figure from ground
- **Jivitindriya**, *Jivitindriya*, life-faculty, vitality, vital force of mental factor, psyche's liveliness
- **Manasikara**, *Manasikara*, attention, advertence, bringing to mind, reflection, linking object with mind

**yoniso-manasikara** deep, systematic or thoroughgoing attention MN 43

**ayoniso manasikara** shallow, unsystematic reflection

□ The six Particular or Occasional (**Pakinnaka**) **Cetasikas**

- **Vitakka**, *Vitarka*, applied thought, initial thought, hitting upon, mounting the mind onto its object, thought of \_\_\_\_,
- **Vicara**, *Vichara*, sustained thought, discursive thinking, continues the thought from one moment to the next, examination, contextual placement or anchoring of thought.
- **Adhimokkha**, *Adhyavasayh* or *Anumatra*, resolution, determination, firm resolve, volition, decision, decisiveness, conviction, choice of objects of attention
- **Viriya**, *Virya*, energy, drive, urge, urgency, charge, the function of driving, urging, charging, marshaling, supporting
- **Piti**, *Priti*, exhilaration, elation, ecstasy, rapture, joy, bliss, delight, zest, refreshment, enthusiasm
- **Chanda**, *Chanda*, desire to act, wish-to-do, zeal

□ The fourteen Unwholesome (**Akusala**) **Cetasikas**

- **Moha**, *Moha*, delusion, mental dullness or darkness, infatuation, stupidity, bewilderment, confusion, ignorance, folly, sentimentality
- **Ahirika**, *Ahrykya*, shamelessness, lack of conscience or moral shame
- **Anottappa** recklessness, disregard of blame, disregard of consequence
- **Uddhacca** restlessness, agitation, excitement, mental distraction
- **Lobha**, *Lobha*, craving, covetousness, thirst, desire, passion, lust, greed, attachment, unskillful desire, self-centered desire for more.
- **Ditthi**, *Drishiti*, (wrong) view, point of view, perspective. outlook, opinion, belief, understanding. The default value of this word is negative: misinterpretation, prejudice, prejudgment, speculative views, dogma.
- **Mana**, *Mana*, conceit, pride, vanity, intrusion of ego, self-evaluation, social comparison, arrogance. The term applies to low self-esteem as well.
- **Dosa**, *Dvesha*, aversion, negative response, hatred, anger, ill will, aggression, fear of getting what we don't want or not getting what we want, avoidance, rejection, a will to be separate. Synonyms **vyapada** and **patigha**

- **Issa**, *Irshya*, envy, jealousy, not enduring the prosperity of others, opposite **mudita**.
- **Macchhariya**, *Matsarya*, stinginess, miserliness, avarice, concealing and hoarding, possessiveness, meanness. ([Wiki](#))
- **Kukkucca**, *Kaukritya*, regret, remorse, worry, both of commission and omission, what ifs
- **Thina**, *Syana*, sloth, stolidity, absence of striving, lack of energy, indisposition
- **Middha**, *Middha*, torpor, languor, drowsiness, lethargy, lack of consciousness, inertia
- **Vicikiccha**, *Vichikitsa*, doubt, indecision, uncertainty, vacillation, wavering, paralysis
  - The twenty-five Beautiful (**Sobhana**) **Cetasikas**. Three are roots (**sobhana hetus**): **alobha**, **adosa** and **panna**.
- **Saddha**, *Sraddha*, confidence, faith, confidence and confiding
- **Sati**, *Smriti*, mindfulness, attentive recollection, awareness
- **Hiri**, *Hri*, moral shame, disgust with evil, dominated by self-respect, dignity, conscience, proximate condition of self-respect
- **Ottappa**, *Apatrapya*, fear of evil consequence, moral dread, proximate condition of respect for others
- **Alobha**, *Alobha*, absence of greed, non-attachment, generosity
- **Adosa**, *Advesha*, non-aversion, absence of hatred or antipathy, good will
- **Tatramajjhittata**, balance of mind, equilibration, even-mindedness, impartiality, neutrality of mind, equanimity (**upekkha**)
- **Kayapassaddhi**, tranquility, composure of mental body
- **Cittapassaddhi**, tranquility, composure of consciousness
- **Kayalahuta**, lightness, buoyancy, agility of mental body
- **Cittalahuta**, lightness, buoyancy, agility of consciousness
- **Kayamuduta**, softness, malleability, adaptability, pliancy of mental body
- **Cittamuduta**, softness, malleability, adaptability, pliancy of consciousness
- **Kayakammannata**, readiness, wieldiness, adaptability, efficiency of mental body
- **Cittammannata**, readiness, wieldiness, adaptability, efficiency of consciousness
- **Kayapagunnata**, proficiency, competence, vigor or fitness of mental body
- **Cittapagunnata**, proficiency, competence, vigor or fitness of consciousness
- **Kayujukata**, straightness, uprightness, rectitude of mental body
- **Cittujukata**, straightness, uprightness, rectitude of consciousness
- **Samma Vaca** *Samyag Vak*, right speech, alternately, abstinence from wrong speech
- **Samma Kammanta**, *Samyak Karmanta*, right action, alternately, abstinence from

wrong action

- **Samma Ajiva**, *Samyag Ajiva*, right livelihood, means of subsistence, alternately, or from wrong livelihood

- **Karuna**, *Karuna*, compassion, sympathy or mercy, gentle affection, aspiration to be truly helpful

- **Mudita**, *Mudita*, appreciative, altruistic, sympathetic or empathetic joy, gladness or joy in another's success, well-being or happiness

- **Panna**, *Prajna*, wisdom, discernment, intelligence; also used for common sense, ingenuity; **amoha**

- Thought Process (**Citta vithi**), or the rise and fall of thoughts. **Cittas** involved in the sense door and mind door process. The arising and putting away of sense and mind objects.

"We are confronted with a phenomenon, and through one or more of the senses it is noticed as an object. The mind receives the sense-impression, proceeds to investigate it, and comes to a decision in regard to it which may lead to impulsive non-volitional action, or to deliberate volitional action, and then the incident is registered as a memory and sinks down into the subconscious—and so a concept is born. In future, a word or words will be used to describe the experience." Knight

The stream of **Bhavanga**: mind as the ground of becoming, subconscious, stream, life continuum. **Vithi-citta** is the consciousness of the cognitive series. **Khanika-vado** theory of momentariness, reality in a string of tiny pulses. **Tittihi khana** a moment of mind, the single motion picture frame, different from those before and after. The cognitive series:

- **Atita bhavanga** past bhavanga, past-life continuum

- **Bhavanga calana** vibrating of the **bhavanga**

- **Bhavanga upaccheda** arrest of the **bhavanga**, arising of the sensible or perceptible

- **Panca advaravajjana citta** five sense-door consciousness, advertence, adverting (turning towards) consciousness (**avajjana**) searching for the source (sense) of disturbance of **bhavanga**

- **Panca vinnana citta** the five senses, sense consciousness

- **Sampaticchana citta** receiving consciousness, the mind-door adverting consciousness (**mano-dvarajjana citta**)

- **Santirana citta** investigating consciousness, probes for pleasant-unpleasantness, prior to decision

- **Votthabbana citta** determining consciousness, decision

- **Javana cittas** seven moments of apperception, impulse, on contact, lit. running (see **vedana**)

- **Tadalambana cittas** two moments of retention or registering consciousness

- (Stream of) **Bhavanga**. ([Wiki](#))

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People on the Path (**Patthetu**)

And some of their aspirations

**akinsana** one who owns nothing

**anagariya** homelessness

**arahant**, *Arhat*, worthy one, accomplished one

**ariya**, *arya*, honorable, noble ones

**asamsagga** aloofness from society

**Avalokitesvara**, bodhisattva of compassion, feminized as **Guan Yin** 𑖀𑖡𑖛𑖜 (attends the cries), a bodhisattva conceived as merciful to those in special need.

**bodhi** enlightenment, awakening

**ceto-pariya-nana** intuition and telepathy

**dibba-cakkhu** divine eye, a higher order of seeing

**dibba-sota** divine ear, a higher order of hearing

**iddhi** *ridhi*, *siddhi* powers, potency, accomplishment; psychic or spiritual power(s) (**balani**)

**bhikku**, **bhikkuni**, *bhiksu*, *bhiksuni*, monks and nuns

**pabajja**, *pravrajya*, going forth, ordination, into the homeless life

**pandita**, **vinnu** wise person, master, doctor, teacher, pundit

**parinibbana** the final end of an enlightened being

**parisuddha** clean, sublime, sacred, purified

**patisandhi** recollection of past lives

**pattanumodana** rejoicing in another's merit

**patthetu** seeker, candidate, aspirant

**pattidana** giving or transference of merit

**paviveka** solitude, seclusion, retirement

**sacchikiriya** realization, experiencing

**samana** a contemplative, wanderer, ascetic; suppression

**sappurisa** person of integrity, a good, worthy, superior person

**sappurisadhamma** characteristics of a great or true man

**sarana**, *saranar*, refuge, shelter, sanctuary

**sikkha** training, discipline, study

**sikkhapada** precept of training, discipline, study

**simhanada** lion's roar, the cogent voice of spiritual authority

**sota**, *srotas*, stream

**sotapanna** stream enterer, stream winner, one having abandoned the first three fetters

**sotapatti** stream entry

**suddhi** purity

**tunhibhava** silence; **ariya tunhibhava** noble silence

**vinaya** rules of the Buddhist order, discipline

**visuddhi** purification, excellence, rectitude

\*\*\*\*\*

Pleasant States (**Sukha**, **Kusala**)

**anudaya** sympathy, compassion, kindness

**anukampa** benevolence, compassion, tender concern

**aveccappasada** confirmed confidence, tested faith

**kalyana** fortunate, happy, advantageous, pleasant

**karuna** compassion, sympathy or mercy, gentle affection, aspiration to be truly helpful

**katannu** to have the sense of what has been done; knowing or recognition of what has been done for you SN48:10

**katannuta** thankfulness, gratitude, gratefulness

**katannuta-kataveda** gratitude and its reciprocity, being thankful, with readiness to show appreciation and return kindness

**khamanasila**, **khama**, or **titikkha**, forgiveness, willingness to let go of anger, resentment or vengefulness. **Khanti** is sometimes used, but this is closer to acceptance or tolerance.

**metta**, *maitri*, loving-kindness, love, goodwill, friendship, fraternal love, bestowing happiness, amity, or benevolence, without desire to possess

**pamojja** joy, gladness, relief, exultation, exhilaration

**passaddhi**, tranquility, calm or relaxation, rest, arising from enthusiasm, confidence, brightness, serenity of mind

**pema**, *prema* love and affection; as attachment: carnal love, selfish affectionate desire

**piti**, *priti*, exhilaration, elation, ecstasy, rapture, joy, bliss, delight, zest, refreshment, enthusiasm. 5 levels, from the lowest: minor (or goosebumps) rapture; momentary rapture; showering rapture; uplifting rapture; pervading or fulfilling rapture

**piya**, *priya* endearment (can be trouble if clinging attachment is involved)

**santi**, *shanti*, peace, calm, tranquility, **passaddhi**

**santosa** contentment, pleasure, satisfaction

**santutthi** contentment, satisfaction

**sata** comfort, ease

**somanassa**, *saumanasya*, mental pleasure, joy, gladness, serenity of mind, ease, sometimes regarded a higher feeling than **piti**

**subha** beautiful; fortunate, auspicious, lucky

**sukha**, *sukha*, happiness, pleasantness, pleasure, ease, satisfaction, happiness, blessedness, well-being

**kayasukha**, bodily or physical happiness, health

**cittasukha**, mental happiness

\*\*\*\*\*

Reality and Illusion (**Yathabhuta**, **Maya**)

**akincanna** nothingness

**asankhata**, *asamskrita*, unconditioned, uncreated, unproduced, **nibbana**, the opposite of **samsara**

**kalapas** atoms, elementary particles, miniscule elements

**maya**, *maya*, illusion, deceit

**nibbana**, *nirvana*, the end of suffering, from **nibbati**, to cool by blowing. ([Wiki](#))

**pakiti**, *prakriti*, nature, natural conditions

**parinibbana** the final end of an enlightened being

**samana** a contemplative

**sammati** convention, conventional reality, relative truth

**samsara**, *samsara*, the wandering, journeying, continual or phenomenal change, moving about continuously; round of death and rebirth, transmigration, round of repeated becoming. ([Wiki](#))

**sunnata**, *sunyata*, the void, nothingness, emptiness. ([Wiki](#))

**tathata**, *tathata*, sometimes described in Mahayana as being the opposite of phenomenon, immutable and immovable, formless, unmade, devoid of self-nature. It might be wise to disagree with immutable and immovable.

**tathabhava**, *tathata*, *bhutatathata* suchness

**tathata**, actuality

**vipallasa** distortion, illusion

**yathabhuta**, *yathabhutam*, reality-as-it-is, things as they really are

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Rebirth (**Punabhava**, *Punarbhava*)

This is not the same as reincarnation, which is literally "going into meat again." What

"goes back in" in reincarnation is the Atma or spirit, which does not exist in Buddhism. Instead a being is rebirthed or reproduced, re-emerges with a sense of continuity with the past due to some continuous factors. ([Wiki](#))

**abhinibbatti** to become, be reproduced, to result

**ayatim punabbhava-bhinibbatti** renewal of being in the future

**bhavanga** the subconscious continuum of existence

**cuti-citta** mind disconnecting the present life

**gandhabba** thread of being to be reborn

**maranasanna javana citta**, the terminal mental state of the dying entity that gives rise to the **paṭisandhi vinnana** or re-linking consciousness in another life. At the moment of death this predominating appetite (**tanha**) becomes a grasping force (**upadana**) that attracts to itself another existence.

**pubbenivasa** past life

**punabbhava**, *punarbhava*, rebecoming, renewal of being, renewed existence

**patisandhi** a relinking

**patisandhi citta** the again linking up mind, relinking mind

**patisandhi vinnana** the again linking up consciousness; the relinking, rejoining or rebirth consciousness

**pubbe nivasanussati-nana** remembering previous births (1/3 of **samma nana** in 10-fold path)

**samvattanika-vinnana** evolving consciousness

**upapatti** reappearance, rebirth, rearing, reemergence (with good and bad destinations)

**vatta** cycle of birth, death and rebirth

\*\*\*\*\*

Speech (**Vaca**)

**avadana** similes, parables, metaphors

**dhamma** can refer to any mind-object

**nirutti** language

**pannatti** conventional term, description, conceptual entity, such as first-person speech

**samanna** verbal designation

**subhasita** well-spoken, concerning one's well being and progress

**sammuti** convention, by common consent

**sammuti-sacca** conventional truth, truth of general opinion, relative truth

**tiracchana-katha** pointless talk, low speech, literally animal conversations

**udana** inspired utterance, exclamation, expression of intense feeling

**viggayha-katha** contentious talk, quarrelling, disputing

**vitakkavicara**, *vitarka-vicchara*, discursive thought, inner monologue

**vohara-sacca** marketplace truth, usable truth

\*\*\*\*\*

Unpleasant States (**Dukkha, Akusala**)

**abadha** affliction

**agha** grief, pain, suffering, misfortune

**anabhirati** dissatisfaction

**apaya** state of deprivation, misery, loss, misfortune, ruin

**akatannuta** ingratitude, thanklessness

**akatavedita** ingratitude, thanklessness

**attanuvada** self-reproach, self-criticism, a fear

**bhaya** fear, fright, dread, terror, cowardice

**dara** anguish, distress, anxiety

**domanassa** grief, sorrow, affliction, distress, displeasure, mental suffering or unpleasantness

**duggati** unhappy states, opposite **sugati**

**injita** perturbed, shaken, agitated; vacillation

**kankha** perplexity, doubt, uncertainty

**nigghata** depression

**piyehi vippayoga dukkha** suffering from absence of love and caring, from what or who is dear

**uparambha**, *upanaha* resentment, grudge

**uttasa** fright, alarm, dread, fear

**yampiccham na labhati dukkha** suffering from failure to realize cravings or desires

**vighata** vexation, distress

**vihesa** annoyance, vexation, worry

**vimati** uncertainty, doubt, perplexity, consternation

**vinipata** a place of suffering, a bad falling, state of loss, ruin or misfortune

**viparinama dukkha** suffering due to change

**vipariyasa** insanity, mental derangement, perversion, perversity

**vippatisara** regret, remorse, bad conscience

\*\*\*\*\*

View (**Ditthi**, *Drishti*)

**akiriya-ditthi** non-action, moral impotency, the view that actions aren't connected

**amara-vikkhepa** eel-wriggling, sophistry, evasiveness

**amara-vikheppika** endless equivocation

**attanuditthi** self-view, belief that the true self is eternal spirit

**attavadupadana** clinging to the theory of soul, self-doctrine

**ditthi**, *drishti*, view, point of view, perspective. outlook, opinion, belief, understanding. The default value of this word is negative in Buddhism: misinterpretation, prejudice, prejudgment, speculative views, dogma, unless qualified by a word like **samma**

**ditthijukkhamā** straightening or correcting the views

**ditthithanna** standpoint for views, ground or position for false views

**lokiya** mundane understanding, knowing accordingly **anubodha**

**lokuttara** supra-mundane penetration, deep comprehension (**pativedha**)

**mannana** misconceptions, illusion, imagination

**micchaditthi**, *mithyadrishti*, wrong views, misbelief, misunderstanding

**nanatta** diversity, not in positive sense, complication rather than complexity, more like **papanca**, opposite **ekatta** unity

**nippapanca** simplification, opposite of **papanca**

**niyativada** determinism view, fatalism

**papanca**, *prapanca*, conceptual proliferation, diversification, differentiation, diffuseness, elaboration, multiplication, complication, embellishment, complication, ideas running wild, self-reflexive thinking, reification, tautology, objectification DN 14, MN 18. ([Wiki](#))

**papanca-sanna-sankha**, concepts thus derived

**papancita** products of conceptual proliferation

**paramattha-sacca** ultimate truth

**parinna**, full understanding, comprehension; exact knowledge, discernment

**sampajanna**, *samprajanya*, comprehensive understanding, also important in **samma sati**

**vipallasa** distortion, corruption, perversion, inversion

**vipassanupakkilesa** corruption of insight, intense experiences misconstrued into wrong belief (**micchaditthi**) regarding enlightenment, including experiences of light, psychic knowledge, rapture, serenity, pleasure, extreme conviction, excessive effort, obsession, indifference, and contentment

**vohara-sacca** marketplace truth, usable truth (opposite **paramattha-sacca**)

□ Speculative views derive from (SN III 12:33):

- **avijja**, *avidya*, ignorance, nescience, unawareness, not knowing, blindness, delusion, misunderstanding.
- **adassana** not seeing
- **anabhisamaya** not breaking through
- **ananubodha** not comprehending
- **appativedha** not penetrating
- **asallakkhana** not discerning
- **anupalakkhana** not discriminating
- **apaccu-palakkhana** not differentiating
- **asamapekkhana** not examining
- **appaccu-pekkhana** not closely examining
- **apaccakkhakamma** not directly cognizing

\*\*\*\*\*

Worlds (**Loka**, *Lokya*)

The cartography of the afterlife gets extremely elaborate even in Theravada. Only the main terms and names for groups of realms are given here as starting points for deeper searches.

□ There are Three Worlds, realms or planes (**Tiloka**, *Trailokya*). ([Wiki](#))

**kamaloka**, **kamabhava** world of sense and desire

**rupaloka**, **rupabhava** world of form

**arupaloka**, **arupabhava** formless world

□ In the world of Sense and Desire are the Six Realms, worlds, realms, states of existence. ([Wiki](#))

- **Deva-loka**, *Devalokya* Realm of Celestial Beings. Some of the divine beings (**devas**) inhabit worlds above **kamaloka**. ([Wiki](#))
- **Asura-kaya** Titan Realm ([Wiki](#))
- **Manussa-loka**, *Manusyalokya* Human Realm ([Wiki](#))
- **Pettvisaya** Realm of Hungry Ghosts (**petta**, *preta*), ([Wiki](#))
- **Tiracchanayoni**, *Tirygyoni*, Animal Birth. ([Wiki](#))
- **Niraka** or **Niraya**, *Niraka*, Hell Realm, see MN 130 ([Wiki](#))



destination **gati** bad destination **duggati**

destruction **khaya**

disposition **adhimutti**

divine beings **devas**, *devas*, even in Theravada there are gods and divine beings in unseen realms (see world **loka**) but these beings are mortal as well

door **dvara** gate

dyad **dvaya**

enmity **vera**

evil **papa** wrongdoing, sin

evil desire **papiccha**

evil one **mara** temptation, dissipation, the killer, personification of unwholesome impulses

exceed the right amount **atinameti**

faith **saddha**, *sraddha*, Confidence, reliance, trust. Despite the value place on this, personal empirical verification of **Dhamma** teachings remains fundamental to Buddhist training

fearlessness **abhaya**

forgiveness **khamanasila**, **khama**, or **titikkha**. **Khanti** is sometimes used, but this is closer to acceptance or tolerance.

friend **mitta** companion

friendship **kalyana-mittata**, *kalyana-mitrata*, advantageous friendships, parents, teachers and spiritual friends. ([Wiki](#))

fulfillment **paripuri**

gentleness **soracca**

good **kusala** merit, skillful states and deeds, karmically profitable, wholesome, efficient, productive of happy results

harm **anattha**

health **arogya**

heedfulness **appamada**, *apramada*, diligence, vigilance, conscientiousness, care, carefulness

honesty **ajjava** integrity, candor

honesty **soceyya** purity

human types **puggala-pannatti**

illumination **obhasa**

impediments **kincana**

imperfection **upakilesa** corruption impurity, depravity, perversion  
interest **vyapara** interestedness; calling, vocation, undertaking  
karma kamma action, acts, normally associated with intention (**cetana**). ([Wiki](#))  
karmic results **vipaka**  
karmic fruits **phala**  
karmic matrix **kammayoni**  
karmically cumulative existence **kammabhava**  
knowledge (higher) **abhinna**, *abhijna*, intellectual acumen  
light **abha**  
light **aloka** illumination  
lotus **padma**  
material **amisa** worldly  
matrices **matika**  
method **naya**  
method **patipada** way, line of conduct  
modesty **lajjavan**  
monk, nun **bhikku**, **bhikkuni**, *bhiksu*, *bhiksuni*  
obstruction **avarana**  
one **eka**  
opening **okasa**  
out of body experience **manomaya** mind-made  
path **magga**, *marga* way, road  
peace **santi**, *shanti*  
permission **okasa** open space  
prayer **patthana**, **abhipatthana**, aspiration, desire; there is no petitionary or intercessory prayer, there is no real praying to ...  
processes **niyamas**  
quality **akara** aspect, reason  
resort **gocara** abode, province, pasture  
respect **puja**, *puja*, worship, honor, devotional observance  
resting place **senasana**  
restraint **samvara** guarding  
restraint or control of the senses or faculties **indriya samvara**

reverence **apacayana** act of respect  
reverence **garava**  
right **samma** full, complete optimal  
righthand side **dakkhina**, *dakshina*; lefthand side is **vama**, *vama*  
security **khema** safety  
seeing **dassana** vision  
self-confidence **vesarajja** ground of  
self-reliance **paccatta** for oneself  
sense or mental mental object **arammana**  
spiritual **niramisa** non-carnal, having no meat, without attachment, opposite **samisa**  
stain **mala**, *mala*, impurity, dirt  
step **pada**, *pad*, foot, path, track  
straightforwardness **ajjavan**  
substitution **tadanga** substitution of opposites, as simple replacement of **akusala** with **kusala**  
suitability **sappaya** beneficial, salubrious  
suppression **vikkhambhana-pahana** abandoning, abandonment  
sutra **sutta**, *sutra*, thread, root of suture  
theory and practice **pariyatti** and **patipatti**  
true man **sappurisa** virtuous or superior person  
unification **ekaggata** attention to one subject, one-pointedness  
unified **ekagga** concentrated, concentric  
untrue man **asappurisa** (**sappurisa** = true man)  
uprooting **samugghata** abolition, removal  
volunteer **pubbakari** one who volunteers to help others selflessly  
wheel **cakka**, *cakra* circle  
wheel of dhamma **dhammachakka**, *dharmacakra*  
worldly **samisa** carnal  
wrong **miccha**, opposite of **samma**



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Vinaya Index

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Sutta Pitaka: The Basket of Suttas

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  - [Samyutta Nikaya Index](#)
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  - [Samyutta Nikaya - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)
4. Anguttara Nikaya, Numerical Discourses
  - [Anguttara Nikaya: The Further-factored Discourses](#)
  - [Anguttara Nikaya, selected](#)
  - [Anguttara Nikaya Index](#)
  - [Anguttara Nikaya - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)
  - [Wisdom Publications :: Numerical Discourses Anguttara Nikaya](#)
5. Khuddaka Nikaya, Lesser Collection
  - [Khuddaka Nikaya: The Collection of Little Texts](#)
  - [Khuddaka Nikaya Index](#)
  - [Khuddaka Nikaya - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)
  - [Dhammapada](#)

### 3. Abhidhamma Pitaka

- [Abhidhamma Pitaka: The Basket of Abhidhamma](#)
- [Abhidhamma Pitaka Index](#)

### Mahayana Sutras and Zen Traditions

- [Dharmapada Comparative](#)
- [Diamond Sutra - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)
- [Heart Sutra - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)
- [Longer Prajnaparamita Hrdaya Sutra \(Heart Sutra\) - Lapis Lazuli Texts](#)
- [Lotus Sutra - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)
- [Mahaprajnaparamita Manjusriparivarta Sutra - Lapis Lazuli Texts](#)
- [Oxherding Pictures, Ten Bulls - Wikipedia](#)
- [Oxherding Pictures - Lion's Roar](#)
- [Prajnaparamita - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)
- [The Lotus Sutra Index](#)
- [Vajracchedika Prajnaparamita Sutra \(Diamond Sutra\) - Lapis Lazuli Texts](#)

### Buddhist Forums and Assorted Resources

- [American Buddhist Net \(Functional Interpersonal Meta Linguistics Blog\)](#)
- [Buddha Forum • Index page](#)
- [Buddhism - Forum at thebigview.com](#)
- [Buddhism and Modern Psychology - Princeton University | Coursera](#)
- [Dhamma Wheel | Index page | A Buddhist forum](#)
- [Fake Buddha Quotes - "I can't believe it's not Buddha."](#)
- [Lion's Roar](#)
- [Real Buddha Quotes – Verified Quotes from the Buddhist Scriptures](#)
- [Speculative Non-Buddhism](#)

### Buddhism and Recovery

- [Affirming the Truths of the Heart: The Buddhist Teachings on Samvega & Pasada](#)
- [Buddhism and psychology - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)
- [Buddhist Recovery Network](#)
- [Buddhist Recovery Network : Links](#)
- [A Discipline of Sobriety - Bhikkhu Bodhi](#)
- [Mahabodhi IP: The Buddhist Search Engine and Internet Portal](#)

[Meditation in Recovery - San Francisco Zen Center](#)  
[Meditation for Recovery from drug and alcohol addictions](#)  
[Recovery & the Fifth Precept | Tricycle](#)  
[Sarpashana Sourcebook, Shambhala \(Vajrayana & 12 Step\) \[pdf\]](#)  
[The Psychology of Emotions in Buddhist Perspective: Sir D. B. Jayatilleke](#)  
[The Roots of Buddhist Romanticism \(Some Misconceptions of Western Buddhism\)](#)

#### Western Psychology and Other Approaches

##### Addiction

[Addiction - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Addictive behavior - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Behavioral addiction - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Compulsive behavior - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Impulse control disorder - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Recovery approach - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Substance abuse - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Substance dependence - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Withdrawal from Addiction, Symptoms & Recovery | Withdrawal.org](#)

##### Clinical Dependence (Addiction)

[DSM-IV-TR® Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders](#)  
[Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders \(DSM IV\)](#)  
[Alphabetical Index of all Psychiatric Disorders at ALLPSYCH Online](#)  
[DSM-IV Codes - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[ICD-10 Version:2010](#)  
[ICD-10 Chapter V: Mental and behavioural disorders - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)

##### Western Recovery Models

[Addiction recovery groups - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Alcohol Awareness Council](#)  
[Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Recovery News | Resources – The Fix](#)  
[Big Book On Line - Big Book of A.A.](#)  
[Big Book On Line - 12 Steps, 12 Traditions](#)  
[Handbook of Alcoholism Treatment Approaches - Haster \(Amazon\)](#)  
[LifeRing Home Page - Secular Recovery](#)  
[Rational Recovery - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Rational Recovery | The Mini Crash Course on AVRT®](#)  
[Recovery approach - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[SMART Recovery - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Self-help groups for mental health - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Self Help Substance Abuse & Addiction Recovery | SMART Recovery®](#)  
[SMART Recovery® - Tool Chest and Homework](#)  
[Twelve-Step Program - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)

##### Western Psychological Therapies

[Acceptance and Commitment Therapy - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Aversion therapy - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Cognitive behavioral therapy - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Dialectical behavior therapy - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Exposure therapy - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy - Wikipedia](#)

[Motivational interviewing - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Rational emotive behavior therapy - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Self-efficacy - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)

#### Western Psychology

[Adaptive unconscious - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Affect heuristic - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Apperception - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Attention - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Attitude \(psychology\) - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Basic Neurochemistry - NCBI Bookshelf](#)  
[Cognitive psychology - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Cognitive bias - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Cognitive bias mitigation - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Cognitive biases listed - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Cognitive distortion, List of fallacies - Wikipedia](#)  
[Cognitive Psychology and Cognitive Neuroscience/Motivation and Emotion - Wikibooks](#)  
[Cognitive restructuring - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Cognitive reframing - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Cognitivism \(psychology\) - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Cognitive Psychology and Cognitive Neuroscience - Wikibooks](#)  
[Compulsive behavior - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Conditioning, Classical - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Conditioning, Operant - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
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[Coping Strategies \(psychology\) - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Core self-evaluations - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Defence Mechanism - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Denial - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Dispositional affect - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Dissociation \(psychology\) - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Drive theory - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Emotion - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Extinction \(psychology\) - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Fallacy - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[List of Fallacies - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Habit \(psychology\) - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Hedonic treadmill - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Introspection - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Locus of control - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Motivation - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Narcissism - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Neurochemistry - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Neurognosis - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Neuromodulation - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Personal construct theory - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Qualia - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Self control - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Self-determination theory - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Self-schema - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Social emotions - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)

[Society of Mind - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Theory of multiple intelligences - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Value \(personal and cultural\) - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Value theory - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)

#### Neurochemistry and Substrates of Consciousness

[Antonio Damasio - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Bernard Baars - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Biogenetic structuralism - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Cognitive neuroscience - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Cognitive Psychology and Cognitive Neuroscience/Reasoning and Decision Making](#)  
[Conceptual metaphor - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Daniel Dennett - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Dopamine - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Embodied cognition - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Emergence - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Emergentism - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Endorphin - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Evolutionary neuroscience - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Evolutionary psychology - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Evolutionary Psychology \(Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy\)](#)  
[Gerald Edelman - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Human nature - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Modularity of mind - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Morphogenesis - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Neurophenomenology - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Neuroplasticity - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Neurotransmitter - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Orbitofrontal cortex - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Reward system - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Sam Harris \(author\) - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Teleonomy - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[The Moral Landscape - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)

#### Positive Psychology and Broader Western Ideas

[Abraham Maslow - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Character Strengths and Virtues \(book\) - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Cost–benefit analysis - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Daniel Goleman - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Emergence - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Emotional intelligence - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Epicureanism - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Epicurus \(Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy\)](#)  
[Ethics - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Flow \(psychology\) - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Graphical user interface - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Individuation - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Life-cycle assessment - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Martin Seligman - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Maslow's hierarchy of needs - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)  
[Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)

[Phenomenology \(psychology\) - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)

[Positive psychology - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)

[Self-actualization - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)

[Stoicism - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)

[Stoicism \(Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy\)](#)

[Strong emergence - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)

[Time horizon - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)

[Transpersonal psychology - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)

[Verstehen - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)