

Essential Dhamma

A collection of essays by Michael M. Olds

Copyright information

All of the works (translations, essays, and artwork) of Michael Olds (aka: 'obo' aka 'Ol'Begga'Ols') carry no copyright and have been deliberately placed in the public domain. If you are a member of the public, you may use these works as you see fit.

Excerpts of translations included in this book originally published by the Pali Text Society are copyrighted by them. Except where they are already in the Public Domain, they are being offered under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 3.0 (CC BY-NC 3.0) licence. The publisher retains commercial rights. Permission has been granted to the public to reproduce, reformat, transmit and distribute these works for gratis, non-commercial use without further need to contact the publisher.

Excerpts of translations included in this book by Bhikkhu Nanamoli & Bhikkhu Bodhi are either in the public domain (<https://suttacentral.net/copyright>), or under Fair Use from Wisdom Pubs (<http://www.wisdompubs.org/rights-permissions>).

This book has been distributed completely free of charge.

Buddham Saranam Gacchami
Dhammam Saranam Gacchami
Sangham Saranam Gacchami

I go for Refuge to the Buddha
I go for Refuge to the Dhamma
I go for Refuge to the Sangha.

Editor's Introduction

The book you are holding in your hands is not an ordinary Dhamma book. It is the fruit of more than 50 years of dedicated practice and study of Gotama's Dhamma.

These essays have been written and posted online¹ by Michael M. Olds, also known as Old Beggar Olds ("obo"). I wanted to have a paper copy for myself (I find it easier to study this way), but I then realized that many practitioners could benefit from reading Mike's work.

At that point I must specify that Mike never requested such book to be published. The first teaching Mike gave me when I first met him was: "you need to become a master at giving²".

It was followed by a second teaching: "avoid fame at all costs. It will lead you astray from the goal".

So when I asked Michael if I could publish his work, he simply answered: "my work is in the public domain, you can do whatever you want with it".

I am confident that any serious practitioner whose mind is firmly set on liberation will recognize for him/herself the potency of the words presented here.

I will always remain highly indebted to Michael for the (likely huge) amount of wasted time off-track he saved me from.

Young Beggar Nick, San Francisco, October 2016

¹ See appendix for all the links.

² During my first visit at Mike's place, there was a little gift package waiting for me on his table.

Table of Contents

Not The Measure Of My Life.....	6
It Ends! It Ends!.....	8
Don't Chase Progress	12
Don Juan's Table.....	14
Kamma And Fate.....	20
Pajapati's Problem.....	26
Not-Self, Not No Self	38
Wonderland.....	50
Ethics Or Morality	56
The Maelstrom	62
Pajapati's Problem (Again)	66
Pursuing Jhana.....	70
Is Nibbana Conditioned?.....	72
Thinking In Ethical Terms	91
Attaining Nibbana Without Jhana.....	103
Green Tea.....	121
High Objective Detachment	125
Closing Words	129
Appendix	130

Not the Measure of My Life

This is not "The Measure of My Life."

Is what I say.

That is to say:

This Body is not the Measure of My Life,

This ability to see sights with the Eye

This ability to hear sounds with the Ear

This ability to smell scents with the Nose

This ability to taste savors with the Tongue,

This ability to feel touch with the Body

is not the Measure of My Life,

These experiences of pain and pleasure and not-painful but-not-pleasant sense experiences arising from contact of sense organ with sense object are not the Measure of My Life.

These perceptions of sight, sound, scent, taste, touch and thought,

This conjuring of a world of my own-making

This conscious awareness of knowing knowing is not the Measure of My Life.

I look at a "Lucky Bamboo" I have purchased in the local enlightenment bookstore, \$2.95.

Certified Organic.

I have planted it.

I gesture towards the one-link, one-leaf plant: "I will take this as the measure of my life; as this bamboo lives, I live, as it dies, I die."

Would anyone in their right mind take such a vow?

Would anyone fix one's time here on an object so completely out of one's control?

No Way!

In exactly the same way: "This is not The Measure of My Life."

Epilogue

That "Lucky Bamboo" has been dead now for so long that I don't even remember when it died.

It Ends! It Ends!

Develop serenity and the appreciation of solitude, my friends.

It is through developing serenity and the appreciation of solitude that one comes to know things as they really are.

What things?

The arising - in the appearance of self - of form, and the ending of form,
 the arising - in the appearance of self - of sense-experience, and the ending of sense-experience³,
 the arising - in the appearance of self - of perception, and the ending of perception,
 the arising - in the appearance of self - of own-making, and the ending of own-making⁴,
 the arising - in the appearance of self - of consciousness, and the ending of consciousness.

Taking pleasure in forms one is tied down,
 taking pleasure in sense-experiences one is tied down,
 taking pleasure in perceptions one is tied down,
 taking pleasure in own-making one is tied down,
 taking pleasure in consciousness one is tied down.

Regarding forms, sense experiences, perceptions, own-making and consciousness as self,

or the self as having forms, sense-experiences, perceptions, own-making and consciousness,

or forms, sense-experiences, perceptions, own-making and consciousness as having self,

or self as being in forms, sense-experiences, perceptions, own-making and consciousness,

³ vedana

⁴ sankhara

upon the alteration and change of forms, sense-experiences,
perceptions, own-making and consciousness, there is experience of
anxiety and fear.

Taking pleasure or experiencing anxiety and fear concerning forms,
sense-experiences, perceptions, own-making and consciousness,

one obsesses about forms, sense-experiences, perceptions, own-
making and consciousness,
making intentions with regard to forms, sense-experiences,
perceptions, own-making and consciousness.

Obsession and forming intentions are the fuel that drives existence.

The counterpart of existence is birth.

The counterpart of birth is aging and death,
grief and lamentation,
pain and misery,
and despair.

This was the case in the past,
this will be the case in the future,
and this is the case in what we see arising in front of us as self right
now.

This is what one sees in the serenity of solitude.

Forms, sense-experiences, perceptions, own-making, and
consciousness are unstable.

Being tied down to,
taking pleasure in,
experiencing anxiety and fear concerning
that which is unstable
is the experience of pain⁵.

⁵ dukkha

That which is painful is not wanted,
 experience of that which is not wanted is something that is not
 under one's control.

Something that is not under one's control
 is not reasonably to be seen as:

"This is mine"

"I am this"

"This is my self"

That on which forms, sense-experiences, perceptions, own-making
 and consciousness depend,
 that which is the fuel which supports their existence,
 the driving force of their existence,
 is unstable, painful, and not-self.

How could that which is dependent on,
 fueled and supported by,
 driven by,
 the unstable, painful, and not-self, be stable, pleasant, and self?

Such a thing o b,
 can no be.

So seeing, one is repelled by forms, sense-experiences, perceptions,
 own-making, and consciousness.

Repelled, one is not tied down to forms, sense-experiences,
 perceptions, own-making, and consciousness;
 one does not experience anxiety and fear at the instability of forms,
 sense-experiences, perceptions, own-making, and consciousness.

Not taking pleasure or experiencing anxiety and fear concerning
 forms, sense-experiences, perceptions, own-making and
 consciousness,
 one does not obsess about forms, sense-experiences, perceptions,
 own-making, and consciousness,
 one does not form intentions with regards to forms, sense-
 experiences, perceptions, own-making, and consciousness.

Not obsessing and forming intentions,
there is no fuel to drive existence.

Without existence there is no birth.

Without birth there is no aging and death,
grief and lamentation,
pain and misery,
and despair.

This too, is what one sees in the serenity of solitude.

Don't Chase Progress

A hint for sit-down meditators

There comes a time when one makes a little break-through. It may be experienced as a rush of emotion; a powerful feeling of love for someone or real compassion for everyone, or pity, or empathy, or joy or indifference; a huge degree more powerful than anything previously experienced.

Or it may come in the form of an "insight". Or one may see a vision: for example, "The Skeleton" with the understanding "Ah! This is really what this body is all about!", or one may see how some person has arrived at a certain state, or will arrive at a certain state, as though seeing a real-life animation (progressive stages in time in one swift picture).

Or one may get the feeling that one's body is lifting off the ground and about to fly (or the body may lift off the ground and start to fly). Or there may just be a feeling as though one were letting off a huge burden, a great sigh of relief. Or one may just get the feeling of a momentary rush of "wind" passing through one. Or any of a number of variations on this theme.

At this point it is very likely that this event will cause an interruption in the meditation and one will continue on thereafter for a while at least recollecting this experience and trying to duplicate what one has done with the idea of recreating the experience.

So here's the trick: while in no way saying that similar experiences will not recur in the future, it is a mistake to try and recreate one that has been experienced. What has happened is not that one has "attained" an insight, etc., one has dropped a chunk of blindness. What one is pursuing, pursuing the experience, is pursuing the blindness⁶. Thankfully, that cannot be retrieved.

⁶ This is the case whatever system one is studying, whatever the teacher may say: Knowledge is acquired; insight is experienced when blindness is dropped.

Unhappily, time spent in the pursuit is wasted. So just let it go. Let your sit down practice mimic the idea of Nibbana. It is not a doing. It is taking a position that can be maintained (a "posture" symbolically representing the condition of not being downbound to anything at all in the world) and not-doing.

This is not said to discourage "review".

Do look back on what lead up to a break-through and evaluate it for helpful techniques.

Make the distinction along the lines of what you might call "universals":

"This breakthrough occurred on an occasion when I let go of a certain desire to do something; letting go was the key factor."

not along the lines of:

"This breakthrough occurred on an occasion when I let go of my desire to eat such and such a food, not eating such and such a food is the key to breakthroughs."

This is where the Dhamma is helpful for one with faith: look for the principle in back of what lead up to a breakthrough through the eyes of your understanding of Dhamma. Where it lines up you can at least accept it as a place to start.

In the above example, the first evaluation rests on a fundamental general principle of the Dhamma in that it is in alignment with the idea of Upekkha or detachment, the latter involves a subtle change of focus from the general principle of letting go⁷ to the idea that by not doing a certain specific thing progress will be made. This shift can result in a very long detour. The number of specific things to which one may become attached is unlimited!

⁷ As long as it does not have a specific object, letting go cannot be co-opted by desire — letting go, as a principle, can always apply to itself, so even if one did make letting go the object of desire, the end result would be letting go of that desire.

Don Juan's Table

It's hard to quote a look. When Carlos Castaneda one time brought up the subject of the Nagual to Don Juan, his response was a look of bemused scorn.

They were sitting at a table in a restaurant on a journey between the U.S. and Mexico. Don Juan pointed to the table.

"This is the Tonal." he said. Reaching for the ketchup he placed it in the center of the table. "This is in the Tonal." He did this for the fork and knife and spoon; the glasses, the plates. "Everything on the table and the table is all in the Tonal."

"Everything is in the Tonal."

"Everything you can imagine is in the Tonal."

"Even consciousness is in the Tonal."

"The Nagual is everything that is not on the table, not in the Tonal."

Don Juan repeated this exercise another time with all of his apprentices. That time he had them walk miles and miles into the countryside carrying the table and every conceivable sort of miscellaneous object. Then setting up the table they had a riotous time putting things on the table. Then they had to walk all the way back with all their stuff.



I used to copy this lesson with visitors to my palace in New York. At that time my table was a large round white marble slab sitting on the floor on a box.

"This is the World", I would say, circling my open hand around the table.

"Everything you can conceive of is in the world."

"Where you want to be is here," I would say, indicating a position away from the table.

"The difference between Buddhism and every other religion or philosophy or psychology out there is that for those systems there is behavior that if successful takes you from here [on the table] to there [on the table]. This is another way of describing something that involves Time. In Gotama's system you go from anywhere on the table to not being on the table."

Snap fingers. No Behavior. No Time.

You don't want to be on the table. The table is bound up in Time. Time involves coming to an end. If you are on the table when that happens, it hurts. And then it starts over again.

Being on the table is described in a multiplicity of ways that allows for no wiggle-room with regard to the meaning: everything conceivable is on the table.

It is only so far as there is conjunction of Named-Form and Consciousness that there is that which can be called 'being'.

Named-form is bound up in consciousness and consciousness is bound up in named-form.

With the ending of consciousness, the ending of named-form; with the ending of named-form, the ending of consciousness⁸.

The ending of being is Nibbana.

The constituents of being are 5:

- Forms
- Perceptions
- Sensations
- Personalization and the Personalized, the own-made
- Consciousness

⁸ DN 15

There is no 'being' outside of these things and there is no thing there that is the self or soul or essence, or on-going being-ness of a being.⁹

The attainment of Nibbana is accomplished by so abiding that of these things not a single one is seen as the self or soul or essence or on-going being-ness of one's self. No seeing anything as 'me'. No seeing anything as 'mine'. No seeing anything as 'comes from me.' No seeing anything as 'I come from it.'

This is the All:

the eye and visual objects,
the ear and sounds,
the nose and scents,
the tongue and tastes,
the body and feeling,
the mind and things.¹⁰

The All is the all.

There is no other all outside of this all that is more encompassing than this all.

This All is in flames¹¹.

Inflamed with the flames of lust.

Inflamed with the flames of anger.

Inflamed with the flames of blindness.

Inflamed with the flames of aging, sickness and death, grief and lamentation, pain and misery and despair.

Whosoever is not free from the All is not free from pain,
whoever is free from the all is free from Pain.

⁹ SN 3.22.1

¹⁰ SN 4.35.23

¹¹ SN 35.28

This is Pain.

This pain comes from hunger.

To end the pain, end the hunger.

This is the definition of *This*, the description of what is hungered-after, the description of what it is necessary to end hunger for to end the pain, the description of Pain, the definition of 'Dukkha':

Birth

Aging

Sickness

Death

Grief and Lamentation

Pain and Misery

Despair

Not getting what you want

Getting what you don't want

In a word, this entire stockpiled shit-pile defined as:

Forms

Perceptions

Sensations

Personalization and the Personalized

Consciousness.

The root concepts¹² describing Everything Whatsoever:

Earth or solidity

Water or liquidity

Firelight or heat and light

Wind or motion

Having become

Deities

The Creator or Death, The Evil One

The Supreme Being

Radiant beings

Luminous beings

Those who enjoy the fruit

Lordship

Space

¹² MN 1

Consciousness
 Nothingness
 Neither-perceiving-nor-not-perceiving
 Oneness
 Diversity
 Endless-ness
 Nibbana.

Of these one who is off the table understands: "This is not me," "This is not mine," "This is not derivative of me," "I am not derivative of this."

Is it possible, then, that one's meditation can result in such a state as, neither is there 'of earth', earth-perception, nor is there 'of water', water-perception, nor is there 'of fire', fire-perception, nor is there 'of wind', wind-perception, nor is there 'sphere-of-space' sphere-of-space-perception, nor is there, 'sphere-of-consciousness' sphere-of-consciousness-perception, nor is there 'sphere-of-no-thing-there' sphere-of-no-thing-there-perception, nor is there 'sphere-of-neither-perception-nor-non-perception' sphere-of-neither-perception-nor-non-perception-perception, nor is there 'this-world' this-world-perception, nor is there 'afterworld' afterworld-perception, and yet there is perception?

It is. How?

In this case, this is the perception:

"This is the resolution, this is the conclusion, that is:
 the calming of all own-making,
 the release of all that has arisen,
 dispassion,
 ending,
 Nibbana."

Nibbana is not a Void, not an Emptiness. Nibbana is devoid of, empty of disturbances emanating from perceptions of the city, human beings, the forest, earth, space, consciousness, nothingness, neither-perception-nor-non-perception, the six sense-spheres reacting to life ... the Tonal, the table.

So seeing through attending only to the perception of that which has no signs of lust or anger or blindness one attains detachment by understanding that "This Mental serenity that is Signless is something that has been constructed, thought out. Whatever has been constructed or thought out is subject to change and coming to an end."

Knowing and seeing this, his heart is free from the grip of sense pleasures, his heart is freed from the grip of living, his mind is free from the grip of blindness.

In Freedom comes the knowledge of Freedom, and he knows: "Left Behind is Rebirth, Lived is the Best of Lives, Done is Duty's Doing, Crossed over Am I; No More It'n and At'n for Me!"

Kamma and Fate

H2apo: Do you believe in fate, fate commanded by power I mean. I ask this because of things that have been happening to me recently. For the past couple months or so, I have been meeting people, being exposed to things, and seeing new directions that all deal with Buddhism, or wicca, or shamanism, or even the primal call of nature. Maybe I am just more receptive now, but it seems that something unseen is pushing me to a certain path, directing my attention and focus.

Also, I was just searching around and came upon Don Juan's quote concerning a warrior. I have to tell you that that was a Don Juanism that has stayed strong with me. My other favorite comes at the end of Journey to Ixtlan I believe, where Don Juan tells Carlos that the art of a warrior is to balance the terror of being a man with the wonder of being a man.

When you think about fate or coincidences or synchronicity, what you are really talking about is your own kamma. Kamma is another word for power, but it is the power you have set up for yourself by your prior actions of body, speech and mind. When, previously, you did an action with the intention of causing pain you set yourself up to experience pain. When you did an action with the intention of causing pleasure you set yourself up to experience pleasure.

There is one other way to "intend", and that is to intend to cause neither pain nor pleasure, but to resolve some kamma into non-existence. All of the specific kinds of "intentions" can be reduced down to these three basic intentions, or mixtures of these three.

What you put out earlier, comes back later. Given no action to change the experience of kamma, sometimes what you put out comes back instantaneously and sometimes it is delayed a short time and sometimes it takes lifetimes to come to fruition. It doesn't come back one for one, it comes back amplified in accordance with your own power, the power of what it is that you did, and the power of the one to whom you did it.

This power is a factor of how detached you are, how well what you did contributes to detachment, and how detached the person you

did it to is. Detachment is the key factor because it is the detached individual who has not wasted any of his power on this or that bias or attachment.

Imagine you are walking down the road, and facing you as you walk, in the form of the world that surrounds you, is yourself in the form of your kamma. Now at every step this kamma is watching your actions waiting its opportunity. No step, no opportunity. Step (means because you wanted¹³ something, you took action¹⁴ to get it) and you give kamma opportunity: sometimes you get what you want, sometimes you get what you deserve, sometimes you don't.

Just as an exercise, and not to suggest that there is anything "real" like this going on, imagine you handing out your kamma to you. Sometimes you smile on you and sometimes you piss you off. So the first thing you want to be doing, is to always be trying to make you smile on you! You will notice, if you look, that you smile on you the most (you experience the greatest periods of power) when you are in a totally indifferent¹⁵ state, and that you lose this power the minute you begin to grasp after it.

What is really happening when you perform an act of power or magic is that at the time there is little or no "self" between you and that which is materializing before you, such that "creation"¹⁶ and "consciousness"¹⁷ (or what you think of as wishing for something to happen) occur simultaneously.

These "coincidences" of yours are second cousins to magical acts: your kamma, sort of flowing into the places where you are providing space, is causing you to receive back some beneficial kamma from the past. In the case of other magical acts, you may be the vehicle for the good kamma due to others. By "providing space" is meant that you have headed in a direction, taken a step. When you take a step in a new direction, you place yourself in the "stream" of those others who are following the same direction, thus

¹³ kamacchanda (wanting, pleasure-wishing, sensual desire)

¹⁴ upadana (MO: fuel, Than: clinging/sustenance, Bodhi: grasping)

¹⁵ passaddhi

¹⁶ bhava

¹⁷ vinnana

in the beginning of going in a new direction it will give you an impression such as you have gotten here, that things all around you are conspiring to lead you 'This Way'¹⁸. In fact, it is your steps that have done this. For the rest it is "Birds of a Feather flock together."

The so called "man of power" knows that he has no power, and therefore grasps after nothing at all in the world. His power is in the manner in which he handles himself whether what is coming back to him is experienced¹⁹ as pleasant or painful or neither pleasant nor painful: Indifferent, at ease, detached²⁰, what we used to call "cool".

For the ordinary man of power, this detachment will come from the knowledge of his complete lack of power and the fact that in spite of this, he struggles with his entire might to perfect completely his manner of behaving such that *all* the kamma he creates at all times is such as will produce only pleasant outcomes or outcomes that are neither painful nor pleasant. He knows that he can always answer his kamma when the bad shit happens with the statement that: "Whatever I may have done carelessly in the past, all that is over with and I set going no new bad kamma!" Don Juan's impeccability is somewhat different than this in that it is totally focused on the indifference, there is no consideration of the painful or pleasant nature of the outcome of his actions. This is in my opinion, an error that will result in incomplete freedom for those who follow his method too closely.

Here in this system²¹ we set ourselves the goal of ending the ability of kamma to reach us at all. As I said above, kamma is the consequence of deeds of body, speech, and mind; its consequences have the ability to reach us only insofar as we are identified with body, speech, and mind. Or to put it another way: kamma has reach only as far as bodies (material things), speech and mind.

The Buddha, when considering the powerlessness of the individual in the face of kamma, set out to discover a way of escaping from this kamma. What he noticed was that people relate to what it is

¹⁸ the Noble Eightfold Path

¹⁹ vedana (MO: sensations, experience, sense-experience, others: feelings)

²⁰ uppekkha (MO: objective detachment ; others: equanimity)

²¹ The Buddha Dhamma

they call "myself" in different ways (and that therefore it must be possible to escape this identification, for if it had no "single, permanent grounds" it had no "ultimate reality" only a "relative reality," or "conditional reality"). Looking into that he saw that in fact, identification with the body or speech or mind is entirely unnecessary. People have "injected" themselves into bodies, speech, and mind by identification with acts. Had they not "identified with stepping", they would not have "injected" themselves. They step from fear of not stepping and from desire to step based on an idea (point of view²²) they have about what it is that they really are. One man looks at his body and says "My body". Another man identifies with his sense experiences (these pleasant and unpleasant experiences), another with his emotions. Another with ideas (Dhammas).

Once they have taken up a position (ditthi, point of view) with regard to the existence of some thing or another as the "self" of them, then it becomes necessary to defend it. Defending it they take up a position in opposition to the other ways of identification with self and forget altogether the option to not identify at all.

So, seeing this, the Buddha constructed a system which is made up virtually entirely of "not-doing". This is not the same "not-doing" of Don Juan, although they may be related. If one's actions are made up of "abstaining from" (both making good and bad kamma, although one begins, for sure, by concentrating on abstaining from what makes for bad kamma); perhaps after a long long while, but sooner or later one will have completely worn out one's old kamma²³ and will have set going no new kamma, and along the way

²² ditthi

²³ In fact, one's "kamma" as manifested by the changes caused to the world by one's actions, is never worn out. What is intended by this statement is that one has passed beyond the point where the kamma to be experienced in, say, body can reach one because one no longer identifies with body.

In the same way as a man who has saved up a certain amount of money could use that money to purchase goods, or to exchange it for gold or silver or jewels or other forms of money, an individual will always experience the sum total magnitude of kamma he has set rolling (as measured by the rebound off the pleasant or unpleasant or neither pleasant nor unpleasant sensations invested in the original actions), but he may experience it in various ways: bodily, in speech,

one will have become increasingly free of kamma (not everything that happens, happens because of kamma²⁴) such that at stages along the way one does not find it difficult at all to see the error of making these "identifications" that once were thought to be so basic to existing.

This is the method all the way to the top, nikkamma: dump-shit. If you make a lifestyle²⁵ out of dumping that which you can clearly see for your own self is a source of pain, then you don't need to think about the rest. And this also applies to the descriptions of the end goal: we never put it in terms of "getting" something. You think of it as what is left after "getting rid of" what it isn't. It is always put in terms of what it isn't.

The goal is Nibbana: Downbound Never No More; or Sanskrit: Nirvana: Out of the Woods.

Akalika²⁶: no-shit-line-shit (from the practice of hunters of tracking an animal by way of its scat: this one is three days old, this one is two days old, this one was dumped not more than an hour ago, after he ate his rice and beans! In other words: Free from Time). Detached.

or in mind.

What “not-doing” does here is to cause the individual to consciously evaluate the action he wants to take. This “evaluation” is a “making conscious”; this “making conscious” will, within the context of this system (The Four Truths) illuminate the disadvantages of taking action on desire; this it will then be seen is the ending of an impulse to act set going by previous kamma; or, in other words, the experience of kamma at the mental level. This process leads step-wise away from the experience of old kamma in body, or in speech, and eventually even in consciousness. That is the experience of Vimutti, or Freedom from Kamma. In the same way as a man who has saved up a certain amount of money could use that money to pay off a loan; he would be out of debt, free of obligation to another. In the same way a man can let go of identification with body, speech and mind and be free from that which effects body, speech and mind.

²⁴ SN 36.21

²⁵ samma ajiva, MO: high lifestyle, others: right livelihood

²⁶ *Editor's note* : Mike's view about the word *dukkha* is that it is made of sounds that all point to « shit » (Du, K, K-Kha, caca). Here he is doing a « literal » translation of *A-Ka-Li-Ka*.

Here one has "Añña". The answer to whatever you want to know whenever you want to know it.

Pajapati's Problem

Introduction

As I hear it, what Castaneda's Don Juan has identified as the "inner dialogue" is, in the Pali, what is known as vitakka (vi = 2; taka = talk). If we broaden our awareness to include the way the picturing-side mind searches through the imagination, conjuring images and their emotions, we will have identified the second half of a pair of thought processes needed to be mastered to gain control of the mind. This second process is called vicara (vi + cara = wandering, meandering, searching).²⁷

There are numerous methods to deal with vitakka and vicara. The one most praised by the Buddha is to sit down after the mid-day meal and resolve not to get up again (even though flesh rots off the bone), until complete freedom has been obtained. Another (at almost the opposite end of the spectrum of techniques — but the one in actual practice, if primarily unconsciously, by most human beings) is to consciously argue the case for each side of the dialogue according to the Hegelian scheme:

- Thesis — Antithesis > Synthesis
- [Previous] Synthesis = [New] Thesis
- [New] Thesis > [Produces] [New] Antithesis

On this long and twisting road every ordinary form of madness will be encountered, and must be met as a crisis of faith: "Does this system (the Pali) get me out of this one?"

²⁷ This is one interpretation. Further research into the terms Vitakka and Vicara indicates that there is not likely any difference in the two terms; they both just come down to "thinking."

Along the way, one encounters what I am calling here "Pajapati's Problem", the final, and most formidable obstacle to attaining the condition of Sotapatti.²⁸

Pajapati's Problem

What is it the seeker is attempting to discover with his inquiries? Well, of course we know what it is on one level: he is actually trying to answer the question "How can I optimize my situation here. Make everything all right. Make me feel good." But the Pali suggests a deeper motive at the highest level. It is in the opposite direction. It is the question: "How can one bring the pain associated with "being" to an end?"

Pajapati's Problem is a problem that we all face, either as a stage in the development of our mental cultivation through meditation, drugs, or even deep philosophical inquiry, and, of course, in the madness known as 'paranoia', or at death. That problem is the conclusion one must reach when facing the observed data that although the world around us is perceived to be in continual change, we perceive an "our self" as a constant.

This observation of what appears to be a continuing self, in combination with a ditthi (point of view) which goes "I am" and the nature of perception, which is such that we perceive consciousness and creation (the coming to be of a thing in our world) as simultaneous events — we do not see beyond our own perceptions to any "real" origin of the creation of a thing — leads to the inevitable conclusion that one is ["I" am] the **Only** One. Usually called "God."

In the Catholic Christian context this is called an Epiphany, or coming face-to-face with God, and the issues that come up are resolved [rather, put to the side] by way of the Mysteries of the Trinity.

²⁸ Here I distinguish between the Streamwinner by faith or momentum, and the one that has actually attained the Dhammacakkhu, The Eye of Dhamma, the clear understanding that all that which has been confounded comes to an end.

The non-catholic and Hindu contexts are similar and somewhat different. Using the Hindu vocabulary, Pajapati is the Hindu God of Creation. But Pajapati is also the name of Mara, Death, or The Evil One, the Devil. Here today, (U.S.A. August 24, 1998), we do not have such instructive mythology. The idea is that the creator is also the destroyer.

The perceived problem at this point is that because one is the Only One, one is also this Destroyer; that one is, one's self alone, responsible for all the suffering in all the world. The alternative (one step up passed the initial awareness of the problem, but while still hanging on to the ditthi "I am") is "existing" in a world consisting of the absolute non-existence of everything but the perception of self.

This is where Kamma gets its opportunity. And it is the recognition of or invention of the notion of kamma that is the solution in the Hindu context (there is no solution or even recognition of the problem in the non-Catholic Christian context): somehow one must contrive to escape kamma. This is the issue of the day into which the Buddha was born and the problem which his system solves.

To Be or Not To Be; That is the Question.

If the individual has retained consciousness enough to observe the process after death, or if one is examining it during meditation, one might say, at this point that Pajapati's Problem was the dramatization of the process described by the Paticca Samuppada. It is the experience of the process as acted out by personifications of the various forces at work in that formula. Kamma will look like a dialogue between "beings", (say between one's self and Yama, The Lord of Judgment).

When faced at death, the result of encountering this problem is usually instantaneous: The individual immediately opts for creating the world, (Downbound blindness as to the ultimate consequence, rebounds bound up in a personal world [Sankharam]) and will submit to any condition it [The World, or from the Buddhist point of view, really one's kamma] may impose on him as a price for being made to exist. "OK, guy, I'll come play with you again, but

this time you will be a cockroach in my Apartment in New York, where I will watch as little m whacks you with her shoe." — *Michael, The King of New York*

What is at work is that one's memory of one's past deeds is being judged now by a self at the level of God. The reckoning is often a terrible one. It is the judgment of a god made in the image of one's own ignorant ideas of what such a god would be like and how he would deal with a transgressor such as oneself. The evil individual here, as in life, has a much harsher attitude than the man of understanding. At such a point, even minor faults can meet with terrible punishments.

For the Pali Buddhist, that is the real Dukkha.

That is what is called the Wheel of Samsara — the endless rising up to the point where one meets Pajapati's Problem and being thrown back in accordance with one's karma. The injustice of some punishments meted out by this god of wrath, is itself bad kamma and the cause of additional judgments and punishments in the future for one bound by ditthi to this apparently endless cycle.

Such things as sickness, old age, and various grievous problems connected to living, while also being solved by the same method, and while not being minimized at all, are not really the problem here.

The Solution

Pajapati's Problem is solved by Samma Ditthi; the consummate thesis.²⁹

This is the condition of the ordinary common man: that is that he is blown by every wind, back and forth, and up and down and round and round and round and round that wheel of samsara because he insists on having a viewpoint.

²⁹ Samma = summit, summa, sum, consummate, the highest; ditthi = thesis, view, hypothesis.

Stuck to the idea of an existing "I", one is stuck to the problem of being and not being. Samma Ditthi, by overcoming the need to have a viewpoint, gets past the problem of identifying the process as "one's own".

This is how it works:

This is what is meant by samma ditthi: Samma, High or Consummate, is to signify that it is the best without signifying that it is the only valid viewpoint, or even that it is absolutely True or Right.

The idea is that individuals caught in samsara are trapped by viewpoints, and that in order to escape these viewpoints it is necessary to go from the one being currently held as "True, or Right" to one that is above it, but which can itself be abandoned without difficulty. Going directly from holding views to holding no view is not possible. One needs a point of exit, a position (view) from which one is able to see that views are not necessary, only that can prevent one from slipping back into view unawares.

Samma Ditthi, when adopted as one's working hypothesis, keeps one focused on the real problem (which is as stated above, not the problem of existence, but the problem of pain, dukkha) by continuously pointing to the answer: Dukkha is the Problem. The cause of dukkha is desire. Go this way to bring desire to an end and that will bring the pain to an end. When you see how pain is brought to an end you will see that it was holding an erroneous idea regarding existence that was the source of the problem of existence you thought was so important in the first place. By letting that go, Pajapati's problem is solved.

This is The Way

In the examination of one's dialogue, the seeker should keep two things in mind: The goal is not an answer that will make everything here ok; and the form of one's inquiry should take the structure:

	This Being
	That Becomes
	From the Ending of This
	The ending of That

Without What would there be no Dukkha?

Without Birth in any Sphere of Being there would be no Dukkha.

Pali [The language] is crystal clear on the matter:

The word "Dukkha" is made up from all kinds of sounds meaning shit: Do-do, Uk, K-Kha.

Tanha, hunger and thirst, as the cause of shit, is irrefutable. Think about this once a day when you are on the can. Another way of stating the first part of High View is: "You gotta know your shit!"

And bringing hunger and thirst to an end can be demonstrated to bring shit to an end. Try it.

Samma Ditthi is the view that All This (whatsoever there is that has come to be) is Dukkha: ugly, ukky, painful, k-kha.

It is the view that that Dukkha has its origin in Tanha or hunger/thirst... we say desire.

It is the view that to bring that Dukkha to an end it is necessary to stop its development from Tanha.

And it is the view that this is the way: High Views, High Principles, High Talk, High Works, High Lifestyle, High Self-Control, High Mindedness, High Getting High, High Vision, and High Objective Detachment.

- **High Principles:** The view dictates the principles: if it is all k-kha, then one's first principle would naturally be to dump it. Renunciation is the first principle. The other two are also natural consequences of high view: do no mental harm and do no physical harm. Both follow from the idea that to do either is involvement, and involvement is involvement with k-kha.

- **High Talk:** Begins the process of identifying areas where involvement occurs. In the Pali, talk is second to the imagination. High talk is the talk that results when one eliminates the kind of talk that is symptomatic of involvement: no lies, no slander, no abusive or idle talk.
- **High Works:** High works are works done after excluding all lies, theft, harm, and carelessness, being especially careful not to break one's morality when under the influence of lust.
- **High Lifestyle:** The lifestyle that results when one examines one's lifestyle and does one's best at all times to eliminate what one understands for one's self is a low element of one's lifestyle.
- **High Self Control:** Put forth energetic effort to:
 - Abstain from low conditions not yet in the here and now.
 - Restrain low conditions in the here and now.
 - Retain high conditions in the here and now.
 - Obtain high conditions not yet in the here and now.
- **High Satisfying [Memory/Mental] Pastures:** (or the Preparation [patthana] of the Mind [sati] for its new way of viewing the world as "not me", "not mine", "not a part of me", "not a product of mine") It is the gathering into conscious awareness the idea that bodies, sensations, emotions, and ideas are all temporary phenomena, connected to pain, with such penetrating knowledge that we release (release is part of the process of sati-patthana) our hopes and disappointments and rise up, bound up to nothing at all in the world.
- **High Getting High:** Samadhi. There are four stages to this. They are called "jhanas" meaning "burning" or "shining" and jhana is the word from which we get "knowledge", "gnosis" — "Chan" in Chinese, and "Zen" in Japanese.

The term "samadhi", often translated "concentration" includes concentrating, but is really "focus". One concentrates to bring into focus and then one no longer concentrates, but is concentrated on what one has brought into focus. The term "samadhi" includes the totality of the training, and the burnings are only the culminating experience.

The First Burning begins with a simple appreciation of Solitude (it gets much deeper, but always has the character of appreciating solitude). In this stage, there is still awareness of the inner dialogue and imaginative thinking [vitakka and vicara].

The Second Burning is the stage after vitakka and vicara have been successfully overcome. It is what many have experienced when concentrating on an enjoyable task at the point where the process seems to go on of its own. This stage is characterized by the peace and calm of getting high itself.

The Third Burning is the stage after the thrill of the experience of the second stage has been overcome. It is characterized by a profound sense of ease.

The Fourth Burning. After ease itself has been let go of, and all connection to either pain or sorrows connected to the world are let go of, this is the state of profound objective detachment. This burning is the stepping stone to three stages of very high accomplishment: Magic Powers, Realms of Pure Consciousness unconnected to materiality, and Final Knowledge.

The jhanas are mental states ranked in order from most attached to least attached, and are tools to be used in attaining detachment. If one understands the process after the first jhana, that is sufficient. The consummate Samadhi is the entering into and abiding in one or another of three states: Emptiness, Pointlessness, or Signlessness. That is: Empty of Lust, Anger, and Blindness; not aimed at (pointing to) Lust, Anger, or Blindness; without signs of Lust, Anger, or Blindness.

- **High Vision:** Whereas High Ditthi is a theoretical stance taken intellectually, a scaffolding from which we build our means of exit from views Samma Vijja, High Vision, is the

actual seeing for one's self the truth of that view, which is seeing the mechanism of action of kamma, or Paticca Samuppada

Downbound Confounded Rebounding Conjunction

- **Downbound Blindness** (avijja: remember, Blindness is blindness of this mechanism, or stated in other terms, the Four Truths) Rebounds Bound up in Confounding a personal world (sankhara; The making of one's own world by identification with the Intent connected with acts of Mind, Speech, and Body, that is, kamma)
- **Downbound Confounding Rebounds Bound up in Consciousness** vinnana: Double Knowing Knowing; the knowing of knowing.
- **Downbound Consciousness Rebounds Bound up in Named/Form** (nama/rupa: Name and Shape, Form; [Self-conscious] Mind and Matter), Identity/Entity. The material that together with consciousness goes into the make-up, both mental and material, of the individual.
- **Downbound named form Rebounds Bound up in Consciousness** This step is not always included — in fact the entire structure is quite flexible — in this construction the previous consciousness is the consciousness of a personal world created by previous acts but it is not yet that consciousness experienced as an individual — this consciousness (this second iteration) is that of the way the world that has been created works: the consciousness of the consciousness of the eye seeing visible objects, of the ear hearing sounds, etc.

In the Maha Nidana Sutta the double occurrence of consciousness is given and explained as the point where the limit of individuality can be observed; that is that the first instance of consciousness is aware, so to speak, of the individualized world "there" where the second instance is the consciousness being experienced by the individual from within. It would be just before this second consciousness that

Pajapati's problem would be broken by the individual conscious of Samma Ditthi: the next step would just not be taken.

- **Downbound Consciousness Rebounds Bound up in The Six-Fold Sense Realm** (salayatana: The Eye and Sights, Ear and Sounds, Nose and Scents, Tongue and Tastes, Body and Touches, Mind and Ideas)
- **Downbound, The Six-Fold Sense Realm Rebounds Bound up in Contact** (phassa: touch)
- **Downbound Contact Rebounds Bound up in Sense Experience** (vedana: Pleasant, Unpleasant, or Not-Unpleasant-but-not-Pleasant sensations arising from contact with the senses)
- **Downbound Sense Experience Rebounds Bound up in Hunger/Thirst** (tanha)
- **Downbound Hunger/Thirst Rebounds Bound up Bound up** (upadana) In terms of the way the Paticca Samuppada is presented in the Maha Nidana Sutta, as discussed above (under consciousness the not-doing, the not "getting bound up" or as I often translate it the not "going after getting" or engaging in upkeep of things in the current personal world that are breaking up and breaking down, at this point would be where one would begin the process of breaking the chain, but would not necessarily either require, or result in the insight necessary to free one's self from the process. Like the drug addict who resolves to forego the next fix; he might see the benefit, he might not.
- **Downbound Bound up, Rebounds Bound up Living** (bhava, a [form of] living, being, some sort of being in some place of being)
- **Downbound Living Rebounds Bound up in Birth** (jati: born this: that is as some sort of being in some place of being) first there is the form or type and place of being, then there is being born in that form and type; it's like the difference between having a dream of some wonderful world and finding one's self born there.
- **Downbound Birth Rebounds Bound Up in jaramarana** Aging, Sickness and Death

Grief and Lamentation
 Pain and Misery, and
 Despair

- **High Objective Detachment** High Upekkha: Seeing with High Vision, one is disgusted with all that which has come to be. Disgusted (meaning not that one "dislikes", but that one has no "taste for") one is detached. Detached one is free. In freedom, seeing freedom as freedom, one knows "this is freedom!" and knows "Left behind is being reborn. Lived is the best of lives! Done is duty's doing. No hither, no further, no more being any sort of "it" at any place of "at-ness" for me!

Conclusion

Most of this is not in any book on Buddhism you will read. This is one reason some systems say one must have a guru to get anywhere. But portions of it can be found in the Tibetan Book of the Dead, and the Zen "Koan" is an attempt to force the mind up to the point of seeing from this point of view (If God is all, then the sound of two hands clapping is the sound of one hand clapping... get it? You would if you were God).

Now think about what the whole thing implies. Imagine some person here complaining about his or her circumstances. Or imagine some person here boasting and bragging or taking delight in some insignificant accomplishment. Then place that person in the context of the large picture. What is happening in such a case if it is not that God himself is complaining or boasting? Is that not an absurd proposition? Imagine the reaction when one comes face-to-face with such behavior when one is confronted with the certainty that one is one's self that God? That is why the emphasis is not placed on the ordinary pains and disagreeable states of life. And this is the reason that a very, very low profile is adopted by the Bhikkhus, and is recommended to everyone. Imagine how stupid one would look and feel if one were a Bhikkhu who, while being ignorant of the deeper picture, was nevertheless able to work certain psychic wonders, and who then was brought to the level of

Pajapati, or to the brink of being Sotapatti? (O, Yeah, great, so God can walk on water, so what!) It could well throw him off the track. Very dangerous.

Thus this dialogue that is spoken of as going on within can be seen to be the echo of the dialogue that goes on between the ordinary man in his ordinary state and the ordinary man as God. The Buddhist position is not that such does not exist, it is that it is not conducive to a solution to engage in the dialogue. Stand aside. Say [even out loud] "This is not "my" dialogue; this is merely the suffering that results (the dukkha) from not having a solution to Pajapati's problem: the solution is to end the desire that results in such a dilemma. What is that? The desire to be; the desire to escape being the only one, the desire to escape the problem without finding a solution to it by indulging in the pleasures of the senses.

Not-self, not No Self

Anatta means 'not-atta' it does not mean 'no atta'.

The difference between 'no-atta' and 'not-atta' is very simple:

'No atta' is an opinion, a conclusion, an inference, a point of view, something that cannot be verified, something that could only be known by someone who knew all things at all times. Even the Buddha did not claim to know all things at all times.

'Not-atta' is something that can be known about most things by any fool, about anything by anyone understanding the meaning of 'mine' or 'me' as indicating something that is under one's own power, not under the power of another or nature.

The Buddhist term is 'not-atta', not 'no atta'.

What we are talking about here is the implication of the two translations (not to mention the correctness... to mention the correctness, there is no question: the correct translation is 'not' or 'non' atta).

You will see below how 'atta' should be understood. The issue once that is fixed is that to say 'There is NO atta' is to say that one knows everything. How else could one know that there was no anything? To say that 'Such and such a thing is not the atta,' is something that can be said because whatever thing that is being pointed to can be examined against the criteria for atta and a determination can be made.



MO to HC: The complexity of a response to you is not so much a matter of detail as approach³⁰. If I simply deal with the detail, without putting the problem into context, we will get lost in the

³⁰ *Editor's note:* The following is a conversation over email between Michael and another individual known by his initials HC. We do not have the beginning of the conversation here, but as you will see, it doesn't really matter.

details and not see that it is the problem that makes getting the details correct that is the important thing. I will also deal with the details, but first I need to establish the approach.

The difficulty for you in understanding the Pali is always going to be a matter of the fact that you are not coming at it as a man seeking the answer to the problem of pain. To really grasp the importance of what the Buddha has taught, this needs to be a burning issue. You need, even as an academic, to at least put yourself into this frame of mind as a hypothetical position.

The problem of pain is not simply the problem of physical pain, it is the problem of the pain of endless rebirth into life that is bound up in pain and always ends separating us from what we love, that is, life. It is also the pain associated with the way the forms we take in life are out of our control. You need to try and avoid the western approach of "we gotta take the bad with the good", and other forms of trying to justify an imperfect existence. That is an unacceptable answer in this effort and will result in your wasting your time in this study if you hang on to that.

What we have in your questions is a variety of issues that relate to the argument concerning existence and non-existence. In the Pali a position taken on this question is called a 'ditthi'. A point of view. A 'thesis'. What the Pali does is present one with a ditthi that passes beyond the debate concerning existence and non-existence and deals directly and exclusively with the idea of ending any sort of pain connected with existing or not existing which, it is held, is the real reason people debate this question in the first place.

The 'ditthi' given to us in the Pali, the ditthi that overcomes ditthis, and self-destructs when it is seen clearly, is what you have heard of as 'The Four Noble Truths': The Four Aristocratic Truths or Aristocrats of Truths.

1. This (whatever thing) is Pain.
2. This Pain is a consequence (not 'is caused by' but 'follows as a consequence'³¹) of hunger/thirst or wanting.
3. To End the Pain, end the wanting.
4. This is the method: High ditthi, High principles based on that ditthi, High talk, High works, High lifestyle, High self-control, High preparation of mind, High focus, High seeing and High detachment.

You see there that in this there is no discussion of existence or non-existence.

Where this discussion enters the picture is in inference drawn from the detailed presentation of 'high seeing'.

High seeing is another way of seeing these four truths, that way being in terms of kamma.

Downbound (acting in a way bound up in) blindness, the rebound is own-made.

³¹ (*Editor's note*) I asked Michael about the nuance : In this society we do use 'cause' in a very sloppy way ... 'just because' ... 'what caused you to do that?' ... etc. But 'cause' means 'cause.' The thing or things that make a thing happen. When there is a cause, there should always follow a certain result. But here what is being spoken of is 'association'. Cause is mysterious, association is something we can see with our own eyes. To say smoking tobacco causes cancer is not accurate because we can see that there are tobacco smokers that do not get cancer. If we say 'smoking sometimes causes cancer' we are as good as saying we do not know if smoking causes cancer. All we can say is that there is a strong association between the two. But when we say 'where there is birth there is also aging and death', or 'without birth there would be no aging and death' the statement is manifestly accurate and we can see the association. And this is how the Buddha speaks, the way we are to think of things. Thinking that he was speaking about cause is what has ... ahum ... caused the translators to assume that the Paticca Samuppada is a chain of causation where we can see that it is not a chain of causes, but a number of often overlapping associations in which if one side is missing, the other side is also missing, if one side is present, the other side is also present: both cases precisely as stated.

That's the whole of it stated in one way. There are other ways which go into much greater detail.

This way is sufficient to allow you to see that the proposed solution to the problem of pain is that not downbound to blindness there will be no rebound in the own-made.

Enter those who wish to go farther with this and conclude that that is saying that there is 'no self'. But that is not being said. And the Buddha is very specific about this, at one point he says that what others are saying when they say he teaches the annihilation of the individual is precisely what he is not saying; always and only he has taught about pain and its ending.

What he has taught is that there is no 'thing' there that can justify the term 'own' or 'self' (atta).

Turning it around, it is precisely the taking up of a ditthi concerning existence that is the blindness that results in own-making.

Holding a position with regard to existence comes in four basic formats:

- it is
- it is not
- it both is and is not
- it neither is nor is not

"No self" is the "it is not" format and is an opinion, a conclusion, an inference, a point of view, something that cannot be verified, something that could only be known by someone who knew all things at all times.

This is a system that states absolutely that what it teaches is to be seen for the self by the intelligent in 'this visible state'³². No conclusions, inferences, points of view, nothing that cannot be verified, that cannot be known by someone who cannot know all things at all times.

³² the so-called here and now but stated in terms that avoid the difficulties of finding a here and a now in a world bound up in Time.

HC: *So the question is whether to translate anatta as "no self" or "not self?"*

Correct. The 'word' is extremely important in this system. It reflects one's thinking. What happens with this translator often happens: the translation is got correctly, but the interpretation shows that what is written is not understood, or, sometimes, the reverse occurs: a translator appears to have the correct understanding but by his choice of words indicates otherwise. Here the translator translates both ways!

HC: *I feel that the important fact is that the self is the aggregate of sensations.*

MO: Ok, right here we should stop as this is already off-track. You are trying to find a self there where what is being taught is that there is no thing there, whether it is material, sense-experience, perception, own-making, or consciousness, that can be called the self.

You need to understand that a conventional understanding of self is allowed for matters of dealing with the ordinary world, and you need to understand that the meaning of 'self' (atta) in terms of this debate is defined as that which is under one's control, not subject to aging, suffering and death.

HC: *Insofar as sensorial experience occurs and is perceived, there must be a perceiving self, of some sort.*

MO: No. That is just you theorizing. In this system, consciousness is an element. Consciousness of being is the consciousness experienced when consciousness is in contact with named (a definition in memory) formed material. This is the limit of 'existence' or 'being'.

HC: *Self is functional, albeit nonexistent... Or is it not-existent. But that the self is an artificial creation of the act of perception, a sorta bootstrap effort and result of perceiving then shifts the focus of the question onto what, exactly, is it to perceive.*

Here you come close but go on to drag in the self. The self is a super-imposition. I say it's like the cursor on your computer screen. It is a convenient way to locate a spot in space/time.

HC: *When "I" "see" what is the "I" and what is it "to see?" If not-self is the answer, then what relationship ought "I" to have with that statement?*

When you see, leave the "I" out of it. You will find you get along just fine without.

HC: *Should I aspire to blob-like inaction, neither doing nor not-doing? Or should I continue about my daily life much as I did before being exposed to this Truth?*

I'm not sure how you arrived at this question from the preceding, but the response is that if you see the problem connected with being connected to a ditthi, you need to work at letting go of that ditthi and of those habitual behaviors proceeding from that ditthi.

That is the Fourth Truth. The Magga, or The High Way.

It is essentially a scheme that focuses in different ways on every aspect of living pointing out what should not be done.

High talk is: Train yourself to abstain from intentionally saying what is not true.

It does not tell you what you can say. The assumption is that you will continue to behave as your previous habits have formed your behavior and that you will need to chip away at this behavior by not doing this and that.

It's a long hard journey.

HC: *I'm stumbling over the function of these ideas. I can understand the non-reality of the Self. There is no soul, there is no spirit.*

MO: Again, this is not what the Buddha teaches. He teaches that there is no real thing there that is the self. There is no thing that is the soul. There is no thing that is the spirit.

HC: *There is only a convenient, learned, center-point of perception referred to as self, much in the way that we refer to a city by a name and consider it to have an identity, though there is nothing tangibly nor essentially the city. A city is an idea in the same way that calculus is an idea or the self is an idea. They have no*

reality except in their functioning as a self, or as an equation, or as a mode of governance.

Here you have it correctly.

HC: *The self however seems to be a little closer to home than the city.*

Not at all.

HC: *But a self cannot exist apart from its community. And lately I've become interested in the ethical relationship of an illusory self with its illusory community. What ought one to do with one's time, with one's life?*

Dealt with above: if you recognize the problem is pain, that that is a consequence of wanting, that to end the pain one must end the wanting, then one's course of action is clear: end the wanting.

Use the Magga as a way to focus down on the specifics. Whenever you intentionally say what is not true, you are saying it because you want something. That thing you want ends in pain. Let that go.

HC: *The options seem to be to do what one will at harm to none, or to follow the scripted paradigms of one's surroundings...*

This is what the Buddha dealt with in his first sutta:

Two, me bhikkhus, are ends not to be gone after by one embarking on the seeker's life.

What two?

At the one end: whatever is desire, is yoked to desire for the sweet-life, inferior, peasant-like, of the common man, not aristocratic, destitute of character;

And at the other end: whatever is yoked to causing self-torment, is painful, not aristocratic, destitute of character.

SN 56.11, Olds Translation

Abstaining from going in either direction, follow the Magga.

HC: *If the self is not a Real entity, it cannot be a moral authority, and moral actions must stem not from one man's gut, but rather from an outpouring of one's culture erupting within a spatiotemporal coordinate known as MO, or HC.*

First, the end of pain is not achieved through ethical conduct alone.

Second, ethical standards proceed from 'ditthi' point of view. A ditthi taking a position with regard to existence and non-existence will ultimately bring one to corruption and unethical standards in that it depends on a bias against all other points of view. The Pali ditthi, based on a position with regard to pain deals indifferently with pain whether it is found to have ultimate existence or not. It therefore saves all, harms none even when pushed to its furthest extremes.

When pushed to its furthest extreme it simply self-destructs: This (ditthi) too is pain and must be let go.

HC: *Self cannot be the source of intuition or gut-feelings of righteousness or of anything else for that matter if all is not-self.*

This is a non-issue if you understand how ethical standards proceed from ditthi and that what proceeds from ditthi is learned, acquired. There is no 'real core' there from which proceed ethical standards.

This mind is pure and is corrupted from without. Imagine a sheet of clear plastic covering a door frame. Then imagine trying to step through that door. Then imagine wandering around on the other side of that door with that plastic becoming ever more wound up and tangled. Ethical standards are one tool one uses to backtrack and unwind that twisted plastic. What is not done ethically when ethical standards are based on not causing pain is always done from wanting.

HC: *This not-self desires to take over the world.*

Exactly!

HC: *But what for?*

Also exactly! Absurd. Meaningless. Impossible. Unsatisfactory even if possible because it ends. Painful. Done out of blindness to the consequences.

HC: *Is even this a programmed reaction to the aggregation of sensation of my life?*

...of this life. Yes.

HC: *Are "my" feelings of truth and beauty and love unique to me or identical with those feelings of other homo sapiens?*

Feelings of truth and beauty and love can be (at least in theory) unique but are mostly identical with many others. From fear not many venture into what is possible.

HC: *And if there are no selves to locate these feelings within, then would it be accurate to say that when I feel love and you feel love, we are in fact experiencing the identical thing known as love?*

Again, The Pali is not saying there is no self. And there are feelings within. They are seen to arise as a consequence of interdependent factors.

When a visible object comes into the range of a functioning eye together with consciousness, there arises sensation, perception, own-making, and consciousness of seeing a visible object producing a sensation of pleasure or pain or of neither-pain-nor-pleasure.

In the analysis of the being what you are calling love is just another form of wanting and is in essence the same for one and all, gods and man. Experiencing pleasure connected with the experience of seeing a pleasurable object with the eye in the blind individual, there arises desire to re-create that experience and action is taken which results in new experience arising.

HC: *Does love not exist in the same way that self does not exist and for the same reason?*

The same logic applies to any phenomena. There is no 'thing' there that is the essential thing of that thing. It's all the coming together of parts and their names.

HC: *Or rather, is there a self, but "this is not it." Hence, "Who feels the pain?" "Not-self."*

Exactly the problem. Just leave the issue of self undealt with and see whatever it is as 'This is not self.' Who feels is unimportant. That there is feeling and that there is a way to escape that feeling, that is the issue.

AP: *I must say that it's difficult for me to believe that we can talk about not-X without first knowing what X is. It seems an unreasonable approach to gaining knowledge about anything.*

Science or learning is always going to be about trying to understand something we don't understand from the start. No? Adopting hypothetical positions and working from them with the known to perhaps later draw inferences with regard to our initial hypothetical?

Beings for the most part, simply by the fact that they are beings, already have made a determination concerning their existence. What is being said in the Pali is that it is that determination itself that is the source of Pain. It is being said in the Pali that the question being dealt with is the issue of Pain, not the issue of Self or Existence. So it is being said in the Pali: "At least for the purposes of this discussion, put away your questions concerning self and existence and focus at this time on what we can see with our own eyes." What we can see with our own eyes is that, whatever May or May Not be the Self, THIS is not the self. How do we know? It causes pain.

We are not asking 'what is not-self?' (we are not looking for a thing that is the not-self), we are saying 'this thing and that thing are not-self'.

The issue of how to understand that a thing is not-self without defining what thing is the self is accomplished by defining the criteria that would need to be in place for a thing to be rightfully called a self or 'me' or 'mine': namely that it would be under one's own control. It would not cause pain.

We do not take the western compromise approach of accepting the imperfect solution of a painful existence. This far it might be justified to say there is the need to trust what the Buddha has said. The quest for a perfect solution preceded the Buddha, but the Buddha has said that he found a perfect solution.

Others in turn, following the method he described for attaining it have said that they attained it. So then not having attained it ourselves we cannot call ourselves seekers after knowledge and wisdom if we give up the quest and settle for an imperfect solution when a perfect solution is said to be attainable. We trust in so far as we follow the method as hypothetically leading to a perfect solution and we are rational to the degree that we examine the results impartially.

It's like a scientist looking for anti-matter. He could know right away that he had not found it as soon as he identified any thing as matter. How come? Because his definition of anti-matter excludes anything that is matter. He leaves open the issue of what he may find there when he actually finds anti-matter.

So we can look at a rock and we can say without a lot of confusion: this is not myself. How come? Because we cannot control it.

And we can look at the body and say: 'This is not myself' because we can see that it ages, gets sick and dies, i.e., causes pain against our will. That is, we cannot control it.

And we can say the same thing of any formed material, perception, sense experience, own-made thing, and even consciousness.

Then we can say: "It is only insofar as there is the conjunction of consciousness, formed material and identifications (perceptions) that there is that which is understood to have existence or to be a living being".

The full scope of that is covered by the categories: formed material, perception, sense-experience, own-made things, and consciousness.

As for 'self' and 'existence' it is clearly a matter of point of view concerning these things, a super-imposition, not a matter of ultimate realities.

Those who see how these things come together cannot deny existence and living beings; those who see how these things are subject to breaking apart cannot justify the statement that there is an existing thing or self there. The whole matter of self and existence is an effort made in blindness to establish stability where there is none. The only place where there is stability is in not holding a position with regard to self and existence concerning anything conceivable whatsoever.

One more thing. Nobody has asked this one yet: "OK, so say we accept that we can say 'this' is not the self about a thing, how can we say 'there is no thing there that is the self?' without falling into the need for knowing all things at all times as is required for the statement, 'there is no self'?"

Good Question. Glad I asked it!

We can make this statement because we have examined the nature of things that have come to be. Things that have come to be are bound by Time. They have beginnings, middles, and ends. That defines a thing that has come to be. Changing and ending are properties that define a thing as out of our control.

Wonderland

There is a statement made frequently in the suttas that a person holding wrong view, grasping it tightly, not letting it go easily, if he does not let that view go beforehand has the expectation of only two destinies at the breakup of the six sense-spheres at death: rebirth as an animal or in hell.³³ I have often wondered exactly what mechanism was involved in that. How it comes about.

The other night I had a vision while sitting which showed me how it comes about. I had asked myself about a certain beggar with whom I had been corresponding: "What is to happen with this fellow, believing as he does, hanging on tightly as he does to a wrong idea of Gotama's Dhamma?"

What I saw was a vision of him reaching up into a mass of flames cascading down on him from above. Every time he reached up the flames tore into him stripping off parts. The more he reached the more the flames shredded him into pieces and the pieces would turn into flames with his face looking out from the flame as he experienced the horrors and woes of pain they have in Niraya.

It is because he has, as the simile has it, grasped the Dragon by the wrong end.

He, and unfortunately what appears to be a growing number of individuals are of a school. They begin their study of the Dhamma with the preconception that it teaches a doctrine aimed at correcting the wrongs of the world. They hear that the Buddha, Buddhism, teaches compassion, and understanding 'compassion' the way they have always understood 'compassion' they think that they have received a mandate to re-write the Dhamma according to their understanding.

They are each characterized by this phenomena: they have begun to study the suttas and before they have a mature understanding of the suttas (most before even they have finished reading the suttas!) they

³³ See AN 2.27

have begun to rewrite what they continuously encounter and believe to be 'mistakes' in the Dhamma.

As a consequence of their writing they achieve a small notoriety which confirms to them that they are discovering the real meaning of the Dhamma so they are motivated to continue reading in the Dhamma. The more they read, the more 'mistakes' they will find and the more subject matter they will have for their corrections, for their discourses, and to feed their followers.

Their trifling fame flames their efforts, their efforts strip away all avenues of approach to what it is that is really being taught in the Dhamma.

They reach up into the Dhamma and see something that contradicts their thinking and letting go what they see, they create a doctrine that conforms to their belief. Bit by bit they rip themselves off from the true Dhamma and create a wrong Dhamma which they teach and become only to face the reality that a doctrine that attempts to right the wrongs of the world is destined to fail and frustrate the aims of anyone who believes it to be possible. Unable to face the hopelessness of their practice and its failures they ever more deeply cling to the 'rightness' of their view and the errors of those who think differently.

Bit by bit they piece together a mirror image of the Dhamma and with each new bit make it more difficult to extract themselves, reverse course. And they lead their loyal followers down a painful path.

What you need to do if you find yourself tempted to go down this path, is to stop and think for a minute. Put aside your pre-conception in the case of this Dhamma and allow for the possibility that there may be something new in the world for you to learn. Allow for the possibility that it may be necessary for you to undergo a 180° turn... or maybe more than one. The approach is not that difficult. When you catch yourself saying 'This cannot be correct,' or 'this just doesn't feel right' stop and deliberately adopt the stand that you will keep an open mind and assume that it is correct and try and see how it is correct rather than how it must be wrong.

Continually making the effort to see how what is being said is correct from 'another point of view' will eventually result in a mirror view exactly similar to the wrong mirror view created by attempting to re-write the Dhamma. There will emerge a whole new possible perspective on seeing this world. At that time, you will be able to make a rational choice as to whether you want to discard your old view and adopt this new one. Or not.

Today I read on a certain beggar's blog an extremely long and completely backward description of the meaning of vitakka and vicara based on unproven and unprovable assumption after unproven and unprovable assumption. He cannot see in his argument the contradictions in his very argument (throughout the Suttas Vitakka and Vicara are used for 'thinking' — he even admits that this is the case, but in the jhanas, it cannot mean that because the jhanas couldn't be accomplished with thinking ... an assumption that he knows what jhana is ... and, of course, he excludes from the discussion the discussion of what jhana is! But, also, of course, that does not prevent him from stating what he thinks is jhana as being, 'after all' what the Buddha 'simply taught') let alone the way his conclusion contradicts the real aim of the Dhamma.

In a word, he is unable to see jhana practice as a practice which begins in this real world and by a process of elimination arrives at complete detachment. He states, as do others, that it cannot be that jhana has in it, 'thinking'. But we do think in this real world, and Gotama, in his very careful descriptions of everything on this path would not have left out the step that goes from thinking to not thinking.

Gotama has, in fact, included that step. In the first jhana there is thinking and in the second thinking is to be let go.

First jhana:

He, thus separated from sense pleasures,
separated from unskilled things,
with thinking,
with pondering,
there comes the solitude-born enthusiastic-pleasure
inhabiting The First Burning Knowledge

Second jhana:

Again, friends, deeper than that, to a beggar,
 thinking, pondering calmed,
 become one with an inwardly tranquil heart,
 not thinking,
 not pondering,
 there comes the serenity-born enthusiastic-pleasure
 inhabiting The Second Burning Knowledge.

But because these seekers have grasped the dragon by the wrong end and see the practice of the system as a practice of worldly involvement, they see jhana practice as a 'getting' not a 'letting go'. So they cannot imagine a process of 'less and less' even when it is right in front of their eyes as it is in the descriptions of the first and second jhanas.

This is the question: What is to be done about this? It looks like a trend. It looks like a growing trend. One can imagine this trend completely taking over the popular conception of what it is that is Buddhism. This is especially the case where, as here, the doctrine being created is virtually identical to the existing doctrine held by the people here, that is, Christianity.



“Before my mind's eye
 there pass the the faces of men
 and I see
 and I hear sounds near and far:

This is the sound of little bells,
 and beyond —
 that is the sound of a big drum.

In the same way as if a man,
 traveling along the Highway
 were to hear the sound of a big drum
 or a little drum
 or cymbals
 or little bells,
 he would be able to say:

"That is the sound of a big drum.'
 "That is the sound of a little drum.'
 "That is the sound of cymbals.'
 "That is the sound of little bells.'

I hear little bells
 and beyond —
 I hear a big drum
 and I know:
 there is no stopping Mara's Army on the march."



One can imagine getting quite upset about this. Thinking of doing something about it one can imagine a path of confrontation.

Battle.

Violence.

Perhaps even advocating the use of lies, deception and entrapment in order to root out the infidel!

Off with their heads!

And there we see we will have met the enemy and it is us.

That is not the way, This is 'The Way: Let it go.

If someone asks: So and so says this about the Dhamma, is this representing what Gotama said or is it a misrepresentation, we can respond: This is a misrepresentation. Gotama did not say this, advocate this. And one may point out what Gotama did in fact say, did in fact advocate. That's as far as we can go without ourselves abandoning the Dhamma as taught by Gotama.

Otherwise we should understand that this is a world that is a work of the imagination and the imagination knows no limits and in a thing without limits all possibilities will occur and here we have one of the more unfortunate of those possibilities being acted out in front of our eyes and we must refrain from the impulse to try and

right this wrong by messing with the world unasked and in a way not in accordance with Dhamma and simply watch the show.

That is the practice.

Practicing is teaching by example.

Seeing the practice as it is actually lived is the only way people can see that it can be done in a way that does not require blind trust.

Teaching by example is compassion as it really is.

Say I.



PS: I think I have been careful here. This is not a confrontation. This is what I think about the doctrines of some well-intentioned people who are taking a painful path, leading other people astray, teaching a Dhamma that is not the Dhamma taught by The Buddha while claiming that it is, putting themselves above The Buddha and putting Gotama below themselves and by that marching in Mara's army.

Ethics or Morality

What is the difference between Ethics and Morality?

Morality is based on the common, accepted behavior of the times, Ethics is based on perceptions of fundamental reality.

Morals are rules and customs of behavior that are determined to be right based on "norms"; behavior accepted by the majority in a society. Morals may be rational and they may be irrational.

Ethics are rules of behavior that are determined based on what is believed to be a rational understanding of reality. Ethics are always rational, relative to that understanding.

In the USA, today (Saturday, March 08, 2003 6:32 AM), where there is any standard at all, it is a moral standard, and it is dominated by the Christian ethic.

For Buddhists who follow the Pali, the standard for a rational system of ethics is an understanding of Kamma which teaches that the individual is responsible for his intentions, deeds of thought and word, and deeds of body, and that those deeds cause his subjective experience of pain and pleasure.

There is no punishment and no reward, there is only consequence.

Deeds done with the intent to cause pain, result in the return of pain to the individual, deeds done with the intent to cause pleasure result in the return of pleasure to the individual.

The return is not one-for-one, but hugely magnified. The ethics that follows from this perceived mechanism of action of reality comes in the form of "good advice": "Don't do deeds of thought and word or deeds of body that proceed from the intent to cause pain".

So, for example, the moral view is that stealing is bad, because the majority of people hold it to be bad and to be against goodness, and

to be contrary to their religious beliefs and subject to punishments both here and in the world beyond.

The ethical view, without reference to kamma, is that stealing is bad because it creates a conflict in the mind with those who hold moral views that stealing is bad; it engenders fear that one will be caught and punished; it often results in being caught and punished; one's fellow-men hold one in bad repute here and now; it causes others to fear for the safety of their possessions; it causes others the pain of loss of their possessions; there is the knowledge that if one steals one's self, then one has allowed that others may steal also and that consequently one's own possessions are vulnerable to theft without consequences, and there is, from that, fear and anxiety and a perpetual need to guard over what is one's own; and the intelligent see that the thief has played a one-sided game, not covering his ass against the possibility that morality has some grounds and that there is holy retribution hereafter.

Case study

This is a re-write to transform a real event into a generic one; it is a case that comes up in the real world quite frequently.

An individual ordered a \$23 item on line and received an item worth \$300 by mistake. This individual inquired on a public forum as to what the others thought he should do and indicated that his inclination was to keep the item and say nothing.

Several individuals responded by encouraging the fellow to keep the item. Because this individual had asked for advice about the matter I stepped in with this:

“Doesn't look like anyone is going to try and save you from yourself here, and that is what you need. Return the item. That is the ethical thing to do. That doesn't mean you cannot mention your expenses connected with the mixup at the same time. I would be surprised if they didn't make you some kind of offer.

Otherwise, consider that you have more or less publicly confessed

to intent to commit a felony, and whether or not they take action, they could”.

This individual responded to all the advice received with hostility and outrage that his morality was being judged.

"I don't want people coming in and judging why I did not return the thing³⁴. It is just my decision. I will think about it and if I decide I want to send it back to them I will. I don't think anyone here has the right to be judging my decision³⁵. I like [name of company where the item was purchased] and their business style. That is the only reason I am considering giving it back. If it was another company that had bad practices, I would not even give it a second thought”.

³⁴ He might have thought of that before he asked for advice!

Others who responded may have been judging him, I was not; I was judging the deed. I was motivated by the reasonable conclusion from his speaking about the subject that he was actually confused as to what to do and was asking for help in determining the best course of action. On the other hand, subsequent to his hostile reaction, there is enough information to make a judgment:

There are these three signs of a fool:

foolish bodily deeds,

foolish words and

foolish imaginings.

Were there not these three signs of a fool, how could the intelligent judge of a person:

This person is a fool, no real person.”

³⁵ In its sense of having the ability to do a thing whether or not it is allowed by rules or customs, everyone has the “right” to judge anything period. But this is not to say that judging is not sometimes or even often a dangerous and presumptuous proposition! Without the right to judge there could be no personal growth, but this is not what people who say this really mean.

For the Pali method of judging what is right,

see: http://buddhadust.net/dhammatalk/the_pali_line/course/gradualsila.htm#HOW_TO_JUDGE

Having the “right” really means that, standing in the position of the correct thing, one judges the correctness of something.

What it is understood to mean is that one is in some position which has been designated by way of the rule, “might is right,” as having the authority to make such judgments. It is largely because of the abuse of the idea of “right” that people object to having their behavior judged.

The discussion that followed included input from others (after the first exchange, a number of others, arguing the Christian, moral position entered the discussion) and the discussion of the distinction between ethics and morality included in this article.

In the end, this individual decided to return the item, but not because of the logic of this argument but because of peer pressure. The company compensated the individual for his extra effort by giving him a number of gifts — also possibly because of peer pressure, as the owner of the establishment from which this fellow had purchased the item, was monitoring the discussion.

The danger, for Buddhists, in jumping in to issues like this here today is twofold as I see it:

On the one hand one may commit the error of using the Pali as a club to vent one's anger and show one's superiority over others, and this is an incorrect use of the Dhamma.

On the other hand, one may fall into a "savior" mode and feel there is a desperate need to set others straight. This would be acting from an incomplete understanding of the Dhamma and would most likely result in errors in one's arguments.

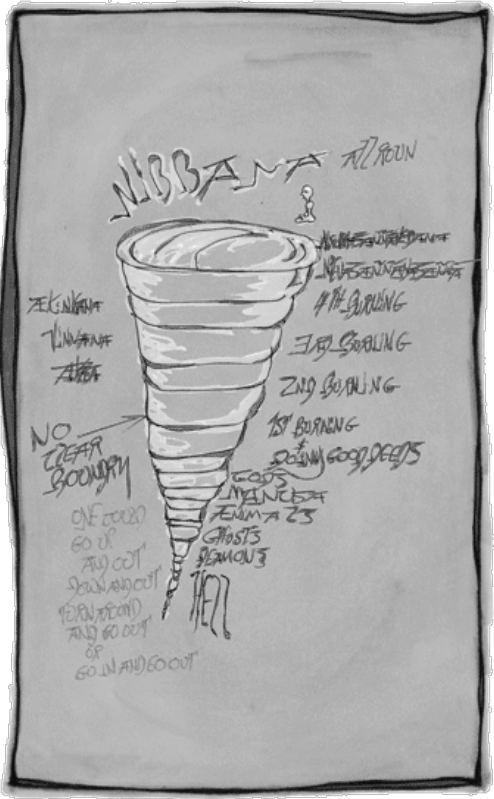
This is a system in which the destiny of others is a matter of indifference.

In helping others, we should act out of compassion for others, not a desire to save them.

This means: one has the answer to a certain question, one sees the need in another for this answer to avoid a painful destiny, one provides the answer if:

1. there is a possibility that the answer will be understood,
2. if there is the understanding in one's self that one is able to teach the answer; and this, whether or not it is a matter of some trouble and disagreeableness in either one's self or another.

If items 1 and 2 are not present, then one abstains from the effort with the thought: "Why make trouble uselessly for myself and others?"



The Maelstrom³⁶

Vipassana, let it not be the myopia of the p-pa.

Insight does not occur simply because one pays attention to the breathing/body (meaning: paying attention to the breathing is paying attention to the body), insight occurs because, paying attention to the breathing/body, one withdraws one's attention from everything else (that is, primarily, derivative "issues" pre-occupying the mind).

Paying attention to the breathing/body is always paying attention in such a way as to encourage and promote deep penetrating knowledge leading to: disgust for, repulsion from, and abandonment of the body, sense experiences, emotions, and the world as seen through Dhamma.

Paying attention, if made an end in and of itself is a source of blindness, the cause of liking and disliking, the beginning of attachment to and re-formation of the world, the very origin of old age and death, grief and lamentation, pain and misery and despair.

It's like an old story my father used to read me (I believe it was from Edgar Allan Poe) called 'The Maelstrom'. The maelstrom is a tornado-like formation made in the sea when the currents of three - let us be Buddhist and speak of 4: earth, water, fire and wind - different directions collide.

It is one of the great terrors of the seaman. If a boat is caught in such a thing, it is torn to shreds in an instant. If one survives that, and one clings to a heavy object, one slides down the sides of the maelstrom to the bottom where one perishes. The only way to survive such a thing is to cling to a very light object. (High View, is a very light object, High View promotes disgust with the world and

³⁶ Editor's note: See the full picture at

<http://obo.genaud.net/moz/resources/images/maelstrom.gif>

In the illustration, Nibbana is not part of the Maelstrom, but « all around »

is easy to let go). A light object, rises up the sides of the maelstrom's inner tube and one is able to escape.

So when you sit down,
and you sit down sitting up straight,
head, neck, and spine in alignment,
and you bring your attention to the area of the mouth
and in the same way to the breathing,
and you breath in with a long breath,
directing your mind to penetrating knowledge of the body,
and you breath out with a long breath
releasing yourself from the body,
and you breathe in and out with short breaths
stilling, calming, tranquilizing the body,
and you do not "do" anything else,
and you do not Pay Attention
to anything else at all in the world,
then the world begins to peel off from the conglomeration that you
have been considering to this point as "Me".

It peels off like a maelstrom.

It can peel off from below the navel,
or it can peel off from the solar plexus,
or it can peel off from the heart,
or it can peel off from the throat,
or it can peel off from the region above the nose and between the
eyes,
or it can peel off from the top of the head,
and it peels off and reforms the world in ways that have nothing to
do with "you".

It will feel like you are twisting,
but you are untwisting.

This is what is known as the Cobra, or Kundalini force³⁷ rising, but
it is a mischaracterization to call it something happening.

³⁷ AKA: che (say 'key'); or pranha. A little taste of which is experienced whenever one "breaths a sigh of relief"

It is something that is un-happening.

And this is not something that is un-happening to 'You',
this is something that has stopped happening to you.

But if you pay attention to the world,
if you do not let go of that attention to the world,
that maelstrom's energy takes that body and twists it
and carries it off
and throws you off
out into that world in the Eastern direction
and tosses you against the debris being carried by the Western
current,
or it throws you off out into that world in the Western direction
and tosses you against the debris being carried by the Eastern
current,
or it throws you off out into that world in the Southern direction
and tosses you against the debris being carried by the Northern
current,
or it throws you off out into that world in the Northern direction
and it tosses you against the debris being carried by the Southern
current,
or tosses you up and it tosses you down
and it stirs you round and round and round and round
and it does the hokey-pokey,
and drives you deep into the ground...

Or so say I.



Just an afterthought here. Why is it so important for me to continuously be stressing that the method here is "not-doing" and that what is "happening" here is an "un-happening", something that is being un-done, brought to an end?

Because for most of us this trip is going to be very long and progress very slow and painful. Not many of us have the opportunity to devote 100% of our time to sitting down to get this over with. The consequence of this is that if we characterize a

moment of liberation as "progress", in the sense of having gained something, and take delight in that, we will lose motivation when the sensations connected with that progress subside, and the reality of our situation reasserts itself.

Insight seems profound for a few minutes and then quickly becomes part of what we think we should have seen all along (think about that! Isn't that the way it *should* be for one waking from an illusion?); taking pride in our insights is a clear path to continuously feeling foolish (and that is unnecessary baggage that is a hindrance in and of itself).

Here the likely path is: letting go of some small weight that is keeping us under, we rise up to hit the next thing that is keeping us under.

Keeping in mind that the way is observing, learning about, not-doing, and letting go, our eye is on the important thing (what we must let go of next) and we do not subject ourselves to unreasonable expectations and the resultant disappointments.

Think of being Downbound by a million threads. The task is cutting those threads one at a time. The eye needs to be on the next thread. The eye on the slight release felt after one has cut one thread is an eye on the useless. One will be free when the threads are cut whether one is looking or not.

Pajapati's Problem (again)

Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow
 Creeps in its petty pace from day to day,
 To the last syllable of recorded time;
 And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
 The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
 Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
 That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
 And then is heard no more; it is a tale
 Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
 Signifying nothing.

- *Shakespeare, MacBeth*

The poets say that Apollo tended the flocks of Admetus; so too each man is a God in disguise who plays the fool.

- *Ralph Waldo Emerson*

Both quotes found in "The Complete Short Stories of Marcel Proust" translated by Joachim Neugroschel



This is the essence of the "problem of existence" that perplexes thinkers not acquainted with Gotama's solution.

The "living being" is a self-awareness bound up in perception through the six senses: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind.

This identified-with living being is created by a previous living being identifying with the intent to create pleasure for itself through acts of thought, word, and deed.

Through this action, the eye comes into contact with a visible object and consciousness; visual consciousness carrying with it self-identification results.

Identified-with visual consciousness and the identified-with consciousnesses of ear, nose, tongue, body and mind are the sense-objects of the mind sense faculty.

The mind, perceiving (identifying) the consciousnesses of the senses puts together a picture of the world incorporating (as it were) the

intent to experience an identified-with self connected to the sense-consciousnesses, and then running multiple thousands of such pictures together creates an illusion of a story of a being living in a world that is identified as belonging to the mind that is doing the perceiving; and the mind doing the perceiving is identified as ‘me’. This is called a living being.

As long as there is wishing for pleasure, wishing to be or wishing of any sort, these phenomena will roll on without regard to the limits of the lifespan of an individual. What has been set going by the previously living being will roll on into renewed identified-with existences even after the death of the body.

Finding “one’s self” as this “me” in this phenomena, is being an individual identified with the senses.

An individual identified with the senses is not able to “see” beyond the senses. Such a mind has defined itself into a limited sphere. Once defined into the situation, to see, to even approach seeing beyond it is perceived as death’s door.

Not being able to see beyond the senses, the highest mental state attainable to the individual is the state where there is perception of the coming into existence and passing away of sensation; the very beginning and the very end of the state of being an existing an existing thing: the conjunction of name, form, and consciousness.

The perception there, without knowledge of Gotama’s system, is that the entry into existence of things is happening simultaneously with one’s personal identified-with consciousness of them. Identified with identified-with consciousness, the perception is that one is thinking things into existence.

Here is where the problems present themselves.

This self-manufactured world is as far as it can be said that things exist, and the perception is exactly that: that this self-manufactured world is “the real” – to not “do” this would be utter annihilation.

The decision that is invariably made at this point by anyone not having the vision and detachment taught in Gotama's Dhamma is that one must continue on "doing" this world.

The perception that follows varies according to one's cultural background and any learned point of view. In a society where people are raised to believe that there is one and only one creator God, one must conclude that one is that God.

Some people are happy to play around with that for a while. Pajapati, for one.

Others in this situation will find themselves reborn as cockroaches. Or they will work out some arrangements with the rest of the gang. "I'll just be one of the guys". "I'll pay for all your sins in the end by letting you nail me on a cross – after all, it was all my doing". "Put me on Trial³⁸, let's see where that goes".

The smart one plays the fool playing a fool. What is really ridiculous in this case is to try to "be someone". To boast and brag. Or complain. Imagine what some guy who worked all his life to become King of New York would feel like at the end when he found out he was God!

That's why the Bhikkhu is a Beggar. Why Sakka when he visits comes down as a beggar. Low profile! When you find out the story, you know that there is no bigger fool than the fool that thinks he is God. Only slightly less embarrassing at the end is thinking one is some kind of big deal high mucky-muck.

The worst pickle is the one where some fool claims to have found salvation, who can lead the way to salvation, who claims to be an Arahant but who has not solved this problem. We been at this since forever, guy, no solution in sight. Bliss, joy, ecstasy, tranquility, equanimity and freedom from anxiety in this world, rebirth in heaven, just doesn't cut it any more. How do you explain yourself? The wider your frame has spread, the more wrath you face.

³⁸ *Editor's note* : Reference to Franz Kafka's « The Trial »

Then, after a long long while, but sooner or later the fun begins to wear thin. It becomes harder and harder to bring down the fog of blindness masking one's awareness of one's "real" identity as God so as to be able to play the fool. Chris, Kafka, Frank Einstein, Knut Hamsen, Emerson, Shakespeare, Marcel Proust, Jack Kerouac, Rex Stout, Hofstadter, Lenard Levinson, Mara. You didn't know? Mara: another name for Pajapati.

It's true! There are those who decide to have fun at that role for a while too, but again, sooner or later it occurs to you that being reborn in Hell for being the Destroyer of the Created is just a little bit on the tiresome side.

That is Pajapati's Problem.

That is the problem of rebirth that is solved by Gotama's Dhamma.

That's the beginning of the journey to freedom whether you take as your vehicle just the Four Aristocratic Truths or the whole of the Sutta Pitaka. There is a solution. It is right here in front of you. You have only yourself to blame if you do not take advantage.

Pursuing Jhana

This can be anything. Escape from your worst fear is only a change of focus away. For most people studying the art of awakening that will be a major problem.

There is a pathway between any here and any there. One does not change 'this' to whatever one wants just by wishing. But a person with unbending intent, to use Don Juan's term, will discover the way, the path, if they persist at it. Where there is a will, there is a way.

The jhanas become a goal for the beginner. Attaining the jhanas becomes a mark of advancement in the system. But the jhanas are not to be attained. The jhanas are attained when what is obstructing them is removed.

What remains after one has rid one's self of the hindrances, the lust and the anger and the stupidity and tiredness and doubt, hesitation, losing heart and turning back, is a sense of freedom from the stress of these things which is felt as though it were a burning fire in one's innards, a bad case of gas.

But thinking to one's self remains. Talk and more talk and talk and talk and talk and following trains of thought that lead one away from focus on the larger picture painted by The Dhamma.

The Dhamma rides above talk and scenes and situations and scenarios and stories and hard-knock lessons and trains of thought. That 'riding above' is the control you fear you do not have that makes you fear jhana which makes you strive after jhana when you know in your heart that whatever it was that was promising you peace and freedom from pain could not be a thing that would be got by pursuing. How could a thing like that ever develop?

It could not. You know this. A thing you strive after you never get. What you get is something else. What you were striving after is something you invented in the past. It is there and whatever you have got is here. The two are not the same thing. But one thing

applies to both. Both things, having come to be, will come to an end.

So you know that jhana cannot be found that way. But you strive after it anyway. How come? To keep your fear under control. To convince yourself absolutely that you have nothing to fear from attaining jhana because you are never going to get it that way.

So on one level you feel more at ease. But on another level you are stiflingly yourself. Suffocating yourself. And when you have let go of the hindrances, it is the knowledge of that that you experience and there is a relief connected with that knowledge, and that relief is experienced as an ending of tension and the pleasant sensations of ease in freedom from the fear and the experience of riding on the Dhamma above thinking to one's self, talk and more talk and talk and talk and talk and and scenes and situations and scenarios and stories and hard-knock lessons and trains of thought that lead one away from focus on the larger picture painted by The Dhamma.

Which brings you back with a start because you can see that although there are temporary breaks from your fears, your fears remain and one of them, how easily you can be lead off the track, has just made itself known to your consciousness.

And that is the next issue. On and on until there are no more issues.

Is Nibbana Conditioned?

There is a big debate over whether or not Nibbana is 'conditioned'³⁹.

In English in the precise wording that needs to be used in order to see and understand this issue, independent from the Pali, and from the beginning:

'Being', 'existing', 'a living being', 'living', by definition⁴⁰, starts at the conjunction of consciousness with named form. Where there is no conjunction of consciousness with named form there cannot be said to be any 'being' there.

This conjunction of consciousness with named form is called own-making, con-founding (the 'founding with one' of some thing), or con-juration (the raising up of a thing by the 'joining of one with' some thing).

This own-making itself arises as a repercussion of blindness. Hence it is not the 'fabrication' or 'conditioning' or 'causing' of being or consciousness by some external force. It is the work of the self and is the projection of self, through action, into a future consciousness of self in connection with the experience of experience, that is, the perception of consciousness conjoined to named forms.

Nibbana is attained at such a time as having seen the point where the perception of sense experience ends, the knowledge arises that this very experience (seeing, perception, insight) is constructed by one's self (own-made) and is subject to change and is let go.

³⁹ Try a Google search for : « is nibbana conditioned »

⁴⁰ To this extent only, Ananda, is there birth, aging, death, disappearance and reappearance; to this extent is there verbal expression; to this extent is there getting to the root; to this extent is there knowing; to this extent is there scope for discriminating and drawing distinctions; to this extent is there this run'n round showing up as some sort of being this at some place of being at ... that is to say: only just as far as mentality/materiality with recognition. (DN15, Olds translation)

The result is complete and utter detachment from everything whatsoever. If, while experiencing this experience of the freedom of utter detachment one realizes that this is the freedom one has been seeking, then one may say one has eliminated blindness, ended own-making, and has attained Nibbana.

One can now see that according to the terminology just used, one can say that the attaining of Nibbana is conditioned but that it is not own-made.

The Debate introducing the Pali terminology and how translation of such is causing the misunderstanding

The problem is a consequence of mis-translating 'sankhara' as 'conditioning' (Rhys Davids, e.g.: DN 34 3s DN 33.1.2 n. 11, where he also translates ahara, 'food', as 'condition'), Acharya Buddharakkhita (Maggavagga: The Path), Nyanaponika Thera (Seeing Things as They Are), Bhk. Bodhi (Anicca Vata Sankhara Numerical Discourses, Ones #268,269) Bhk. Thanissaro (The Not-self Strategy)... which is confusing the idea of conditions with personalization.

Additionally, 'fabrication' (Bhk. Thanissaro), 'constructions' (Horner, Punnaaji), 'formations' (Bhks. Nanamoli, Bodhi, Soma Thera) while not being incorrect translations do not clearly indicate that what is being spoken of is something that is being made into the personal by the individual or has become as a consequence of having been made personal by an individual.

Nibbana is conditioned in the sense that it is a result of having followed the path, but it is not a thing that is experienced as personal or is an 'identified-with' state. It is not 'own-made' because it is a result of not own-making.

While Nibbana is un-sankharamed, its attainment is not said to be without antecedent conditions.

The Paticca Samuppada describes the process of 'conditioning', 'causing' 'creating the dependent or requisite conditions for', or the things downbound to which result in the repercussion known as existence.

Downbound blindness re-percusses bound up with own-making; downbound own-making re-percusses bound up with consciousness; downbound consciousness re-percusses bound up with nama/rupa ... and the rest.

By the elimination of blindness, which is the elimination of the fact of not seeing this process, there is no repercussion bound up with own-making; by the elimination of own-making there is no repercussion bound up with consciousness; by the elimination of consciousness there is no repercussion bound up with nama/rupa ... and the rest with the end result being Nibbana. It is conditioned by not doing own-making; it is not own-made but it is conditioned.

Definitions:

- **Sankhara** [san= own, con, com, co, with; khara=making] Own-making, co-founding, confounding in the sense of founded with, conjuration in the sense of the joining together of this and that, you and the world, identified-with consciousness with nama/rupa.

This term is a near-synonym for 'kamma', but is applied to the personal. It is, like 'kamma', two-sided.⁴¹

It is the identification with the intent to produce experience of existing through acts of body, speech, and mind, and it is the identified-with result of that action. The term selected for its translation should clearly point to its nature as the force of personalization. This will clearly separate it from the process of 'conditioning' or 'causing'.⁴²

- **Nidana** [ni=down; dana=given]. Downbound, tied up with or in. The word is the word used for the first knot tied in the weaving process, hence its use as the introduction to 'weaving' a

⁴¹ Which is why Mrs. Rhys Davids' translation as 'activities' (SN 2.12.1) is incorrect: it is only one-sided.

⁴² For those who consider 'own-making' awkward, consider AN 3.32 and the following ahankara-mamankara. (I-making; mine-making); and also: SN 2.18.21 note 3.

spell (sutta). Later only does it become ‘foundation’, ‘basis’, ‘cause’, ‘condition’.

- **Paticca** Repercussion. Result. Rebound. The Paticca Samuppada does not imply ‘cause’, it describes mechanism of action, process, the result in ‘this’ of the presence of ‘that’.
- **Dhatu** This is our word ‘data’. It should probably be left at that. Turning it into ‘element’ turns it into an object rather than a piece of information. Characteristic, or attribute would be better.

Some quotes that bear on the discussion:

The Three Characteristics:

Sabba sankhara anicca Sabbe sankhara dukkha Sabbe dhamma anatta All own-made: unstable All own-made: painful All things: not-self.	
---	--

Translating *sankhara* as 'own-making' we can understand the meaning to be that by letting go of own-making, and the idea of 'self' '*atta*' the goal of escape from pain is accomplished. There is no need to read an implication of an 'actual' existing everlasting Nibbana in the change in terms from *sankhara* to *dhamma*.

The Buddha's last words:

Handa dani bhikkhave amantayami vo: "Vaya-dhamma sankhara, appamadena sampadethati." There you are, then, Beggars! I craft this counsel for you: The own-made is a flighty thing, I say get yourselves out of this sputtering madness! — <i>Olds translation</i>	
---	--

We hear: "All conditioned things come to an end." or "Transient are all conditioned things."

“All conditioned things are inconstant” — *Bhikkhu Thanissaro*

Cases where 'conditioned' is used by translators for *sankhara* that then use the same terms or the like for *nidana*. The source of the confusion.

Bhikkhu Bodhi claims support for his point of view in mention that:

“The Buddha also refers to Nibbana as an 'ayatana'. This means realm, plane or sphere. It is a sphere where there is nothing at all that correspond to our mundane experience, and therefore it has to be described by way of negations as the negation of all the limited and determinate qualities of conditioned things.”

The term 'ayatana' is not restricted to the description of a physical realm, plane or sphere. It can be realm, as in the realm of the senses, sphere as in sphere of influence. There is nothing in this term that requires of Nibbana that it be an 'actual' thing in some 'actual' place. Nibbana is described in negative terms precisely *because* it is not an actual thing.

“The Buddha also refers to Nibbana as a, 'Dhatu' an element, the 'deathless element'. He compares the element of Nibbana to an ocean. He says that just as the great ocean remains at the same level no matter how much water pours into it from the rivers, without increase or decrease, so the Nibbana element remains the same, no matter whether many or few people attain Nibbana.”

Neither the term 'dhatu' (see above definition) nor the simile of the level of the ocean require that Nibbana be an 'actual' thing.

“He also speaks of Nibbana as something that can be experienced by the body, an experience that is so vivid, so powerful, that it can be described as "touching the deathless element with one's own body.”

That a thing can be experienced by the body does not require that it be an 'actual' thing. Love is experienced by the body. The relief of freedom from disease or danger can be experienced by the body and neither of these things are 'actual' things.

“The Buddha also refers to Nibbana as a 'state' ('pada') as 'amatapada' - the deathless state - or acutapada, the imperishable state.”

'Pada' doesn't mean 'state'. It literally means 'foot' and comes down to 'path' or way. The deathless way. The imperishable way. Terms that do not imply an 'actual' thing.

Another word used by the Buddha to refer to Nibbana is 'Sacca', which means 'truth', an existing reality. This refers to Nibbana as the truth, a reality that the Noble ones have known through direct experience.

Although *sacca* does mean 'truth' or 'a true thing', and can be applied to Nibbana to mean that the Nibbana is an attainable thing, not a false trail, that does not translate to 'an 'actual' thing' or 'a thing existing in reality' i.e., visible, tangible, object.

“So all these terms, considered as a whole, clearly establish that Nibbana is an actual reality and not the mere destruction of defilements or the cessation of existence.”

I say no, all these terms, considered as a whole or in part do not establish any such thing.

Vinnana Anidassana, or: understanding the nature of Nibbana

What I will try and do below is to describe the issue of understanding the concept of Nibbana or the synonym for Nibbana: *vinnana anidassana*, dealing individually with the various arguments put forth concerning its nature. This results in a certain amount of redundancy as each approach requires at least a partial explanation of concepts vital to other approaches. The reader is asked to employ his patience and indulge me in this.

The discussion is a debate about the nature of the experience of Nibbana.

The debate swings back and forth concerning whether or not Nibbana exists or does not exist as a type of consciousness.

*Dvayamnissito kḥvayam Kaccayana loko yebbhuyyena atthitan c'eva
n'atthitan ca.*

Well, as to this, Kaccayana, the world is mostly split,
adhering to 'this exists'
or to 'this exists not'.

— *SN 2.12.15, Olds translation*

The debate hinges on the misunderstandings created by the mis-translation and conflation of 'sankhara' and 'paccaya' as per the previous part of this discussion. In addition, it turns on having overlooked the definition given to the idea of existence made by Gotama.

The definition given to the idea of 'being' or 'existing' is the single most important thing to grasp when trying to understand this debate: Gotama has put a meaning on the term 'existence' which is hard to hear (grasp).

Gotama is saying that it is *only in-so-far-as*
there is a conjunction of named shape with consciousness,
that there can be said to be an existing thing, or living being.
He has defined 'existence' as an experience limited to living beings.

To this extent only, Ananda,
is there birth,
aging,
death,
disappearance and reappearance
to this extent is there verbal expression
to this extent is there getting to the root
to this extent is there knowing
to this extent is there scope
for discriminating and drawing distinctions
to this extent is there this run'n-round
showing up as some sort of being 'this'
at some place of being 'at'
that is to say:
only just as far as named-form with consciousness.
— *DN 15, Olds translation*

bhava

"Bhante, it is said: 'existence, existence.' In what way, Bhante, is there existence?"

"If, Ananda, there were no kamma ripening in the sensory realm, would sense-sphere existence be discerned?"

'No, Bhante'

Thus, Ananda, for beings hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving, kamma is the field, consciousness is the seed, and craving the moisture for their consciousness to be established in an inferior realm. In this way there is the production of renewed existence in the future.

If, Ananda, there were no kamma ripening in the form realm, would form-sphere existence be discerned?"

...middling realm...

If Ananda, there were no kamma ripening in the formless realm, would formless-sphere existence be discerned?

...superior realm ...

It is in this way, Ananda, that there is existence.

— AN 3.76/77, *Bhikkhu Bodhi translation*

Bhikkhu Bodhi's footnote indicate: "*What is meant is a concrete state of individual existence in one of the three realms. Nibbana is called bhavanirodha, the cessation of individual existence.*"

But, *bhavanirodha* is 'existence-extinction' (ended, gone, kaput). The distinction is that to say 'the cessation of individual existence' in this way allows for existence other than individual existence. This is an assumption that must be avoided. Take the translation, chuck the interpretation.

Those discussing this issue are for the most part debating the existence or non-existence of Nibbana, or Nibbana as consciousness, using their pre-conceived notion of what existence is and consequently cannot conceive of something as possible to construct outside of experience cognizable by an individual.

With the correct translation of the terms 'sankhara' and 'paccaya' and an understanding of the limited scope of the meaning of the term 'existence' in Gotama's system, the nature of the experience of the Arahant, that is, Nibbana, can be understood.

Going to the beginning of the Paticca Samuppada we see:

- Downbound blindness rebounds bound up in **sankharaming...**

sankharaming = 'own-making', or if you wish 'confounding' or even 'fabrication'.

'Confounding' does not convey well the idea that the 'con' there means 'co' or 'with' meaning 'with you'.

Bhikkhu Thanissaro's 'fabrication' leaves out the aspect of personalization involved in this term except by implication (someone must fabricate).

Mrs. Rhys Davids and Ms. Horner's 'activities' ignores the aspect of sankhara that is contained in the word 'khara', 'to make'.

But, using 'conditioning' for 'sankhara' is an unequivocal translation error.

- ...own-making rebounds bound up in consciousness
- consciousness rebounds bound up in named form
- named form rebounds bound up in consciousness
- consciousness rebounds bound up in the six-sense experiences
- and so on down to the end result in Pain.

So it is blindness to the end result in pain that supports own-making;

own-making which is setting the ball rolling to the point where consciousness conjoins (conjures) named form —

and this is the beginning point of 'existence,' or 'being'.

In other words, own-making creates that which exists — that which exists is own-made.

In other words, if it has not been own-made, it is not said to exist.

This is substantially different than the understanding of the meaning of 'existing' as it is held by most people here today (USA Monday, December 24, 2012 6:16 AM) where it is believed by most that things can exist independent of a living observer⁴³.

This special, limited definition of 'existing' needs to be burned into your understanding of the issue.

Now we come to the proposition that whatsoever has been own-made (sankharamed!) comes to an end and results in pain and that by following the Ariya Atthangika Magga there is an end of pain.

At this point it is reasonable following Gotama's Dhamma to say that consciousness of an existing object always comes to an end.

“All sankharamed things are impermanent and painful.”

What is not reasonable from this,
remembering Gotama's definition of 'existing',
is to say that therefore consciousness always comes to an end.

⁴³ But not by all! There is a branch of Quantum Physics which holds that a thing only exists upon it being observed, they say there is 'potential existence', in these terms, Gotama is saying that there is existence of non-existent existence: 'There is being unborn, un own-made ...' that exists in *potentiality* (the conditions for its arising must be made to become) that is a consciousness of consciousness free from consciousness bound to named shapes.

If there were a consciousness that was not bound to nama rupa, separating as it were the 'limbs' laden with mangos from the mango tree, that would no longer be subject to the rule that all own-made things come to an end — it would have broken the condition that qualified it as an own-made, existing thing.

And it is exactly this separation that is conditioned by following the Ariya Atthangika Magga. That is a consciousness that has not been conditioned by own-making, it has been conditioned by not own-making!



Following the Ariya Atthangika Magga is dealing with intentional actions such that the only intentional actions that are taken are intentions to end kamma. Not-doings, letting's go, moving on by a process of elimination.

For example: when an unpleasant sensation arises and the impulse is to act in some way to escape the unpleasant sensation, one consciously avoids taking any action that manifests individuality (one avoids seeing it as a threat to one's existence, intending for it to be destroyed, using lies to escape it, acting to destroy it and so forth – seeing it that way is not High View).

Gradually, following the Magga, that which has been the habit of creating that which manifests self in the world is worn away.

When that which manifests self in the world is worn away it is worn away with every action where the intent was to end kamma.

With every 'not doing' there results the potentiality of *consciousness* of freedom from the consequences that would have resulted from 'doing'.

It's only a 'potentiality' because it can be overlooked or not noticed at all or its implications may not be understood.

The experience of freedom from the consequences of an act is the experience of the sensation which is not-unpleasant-but-not-pleasant and that⁴⁴ is a tiny taste of Nibbana.

You can see and experience Nibbana for yourself in this temporary way and by so seeing and experiencing you can see that it is a consciousness of consciousness of freedom from consciousness connected to named form, that is:

its object is not an existing thing,
it has arisen in dependence on the not-doing of something so it is 'conditioned',
but it has not arisen as a consequence of the intent to create experience of existence for an individual,
so it is not own-made,
not personal,
not identified with an individual.

It is not 'born' in the sense that having no named form as its object it has not come into existence.

When that which manifests self is completely worn away that is complete Nibbana (pari-Nibbana). Consciousness of consciousness completely free from any consciousness of named form.



Imagine having burnt your hand in a fire. Then imagine yourself some time later after your hand has healed standing before a fire. And then imagine some fellow comes along saying: "Hello Good Friend! I have discovered a wonderful pleasure! Sticking one's hand

⁴⁴ DN 22

in a fire, results in happiness, long life, wealth, fame and power!"

What do you think?

Would you stick your hand again in the fire based on the word of that man who is only speaking from having heard reports or who is, you can see for yourself, in his pain, simply mistaking pain for pleasure?

Now stop and reflect on the object of your consciousness at this point.

On the one hand you have the vivid memory (*sati*) of the pain of having had your hand burnt in the fire.

On the other hand there is present in your consciousness the knowledge that because you thoroughly understand the consequences of putting your hand in the fire you will not do that again for as long, at least, as memory lasts.

There is present there a *consciousness* of freedom from the pain of having your hand burned by sticking it into a fire.

Consciousness of freedom from pain.

Consciousness of freedom from pain is consciousness that does not have an existing thing as its object.

And you have taken it one very important step further: you have become conscious of this consciousness free from consciousness of the consequences of putting your hand in the fire.

Consciousness of consciousness of freedom from consciousness connected to named form.

This consciousness has been conditioned by *nama-rupa* in the sense that it is the result of consciousness of being free from a consciousness of a named object. Without the original consciousness of a named object it would not have arisen.

This satisfies Gotama's statement that consciousness arises in dependence on named form.

One little instance of this freedom is subject to being forgotten or not even noticed.

Developed, made into an habitual practice per samma ajiva⁴⁵, it becomes known to the individual as a feasible alternative to 'existing'.



At the point where individuality has been completely removed through the abandoning of acts which create existing — which is described in absolutely reduced terms as having eliminated the corrupting influence of indulging in pleasure, the corrupting influence of being any sort of being in any place of being, and the corrupting influence of blindness to the way things end when they have become existing things (aka 'The Cattari Ariya Sakkani, The Four Aristocratic Truths') — making one's self conscious of this, one must go one step further and recognize that this is the state of freedom from Pain that is what one has been seeking. If this condition is not seen as freedom, then one is deluding one's self that the corrupting influences have been completely eradicated.

If this condition is seen as freedom:
In freedom, seeing freedom, one is free and one knows:
Being re-born is a thing of the past
Finished is living as Brahma (God)
Done is what should have been done

⁴⁵ Identifying an element of one's lifestyle that is clearly seen by one's self as low, harmful, detrimental to one's self or others one abandons it, lets it go, drops it, renounces it, restrains it, eradicates it.

There is no more: beyond. (or, sometimes: 'here or beyond')
 There is no more being any kind of an it at any place of at-ness.



Consciousness of consciousness free from consciousness with an existing thing as its object.

Not annihilation. What is annihilated is the own-made.

Not: No Consciousness. No consciousness as an individual.

Not: Having attained an awakened consciousness. Having created by eradicating own-making, the conditions necessary for consciousness of an awakened consciousness.

Aside from the confusion caused by not understanding the boundaries put on the idea of existence by Gotama, confusion surrounding this issue originates with the mis-translation of the term: sankhara as 'conditioned' as per the discussion that begins this thread.

This mis-translation causes a problem because Gotama states in no uncertain terms that
 all consciousness arises as a consequence of conditions, and that,
 all sankharamed things come to an end.

If the two terms are translated as 'conditioned',
 there can be no arriving at a
 'consciousness without an existing thing as an object'
 where it can then be said that that consciousness
 is not something that exists or will not come to an end.

How come?

Because Gotama states clearly that that which is sankharamed comes to an end.

Therefore, translating sankharamed as 'conditioned',
 and
 knowing that this 'consciousness without an existing thing as an
 object'
 was definitely conditioned by following the Magga,
 we are forced to say that this consciousness,
 because it is conditioned,
 must come to an end.

But the term, when it is being said that consciousness is always
 conditioned⁴⁶ is:

"paticcasamuppannam vinnanam"

not

"sankharasamuppannam". (I just made that word up! It's not a Pali
 word!)

Where it is being said that that which is own-made comes to an end
 the term is "sankhara", not "paticca".

Where it is said in the *Paticca Samuppada* that *Sankharapaccaya
 vinnanam* what is being taught is the arising and ending of the own-
 made. In this case one factor of which is the arising and ending of
 the own-made consciousness. The *Paticca Samuppada* is itself
 conditioned by its aim: to determine the mechanism of arising and
 ending of Pain, not the nature of Nibbana or the nature of the
 freedom resulting from the ending of Pain. These are two different
 discussions.

In this place it is not being said that 'all' consciousness arises as a
 consequence of own-making. Only that consciousness arises as a
 consequence of own-making. This is entirely consistent with the
 precision in speech always used by Gotama.

What is said is said in terms that directly serve the meaning of the
 topic under discussion. Any extrapolation made from that use needs
 to be confirmed by additional examples. Here in our ordinary world
 we can understand this in the simple proposition that although the

⁴⁶ MN 38

ground may be made wet by the rain, it may also be made wet by a man or a dog or a horse...

To summarize to this point:

There is consciousness of consciousness not connected to consciousness with named form that is conditioned by the following of the Magga.

That consciousness is Nibbana, or Vinnana Anidassana (invisible consciousness, or not-down-seen consciousness).

Saying that this consciousness is conditioned by following the Magga is the same thing as saying that consciousness is conditioned by named form. It meets that requirement:⁴⁷ that in this case the resulting consciousness cannot be said to be an existing thing, because it is not a consciousness that has been own-made but has arisen as a consequence, or in dependence on, not own-making.

Because this consciousness cannot be said to be an existing thing it cannot be said to be a thing that can pass out of existence.



So then the question may arise (although it should not, but will, in one who has not seen with consummate wisdom the arising and ending of the world as it actually is — that is, via own-making):

How is this consciousness sustained? How does it become: 'The Deathless'? Not a thing of 'Time.' Not subject to Ending?

For Gotama has said,
and we have allowed,
that consciousness is conditioned —
by what condition, then, is it supported?

⁴⁷ SN 3.22.53

First off, 'sustained' is really a misconceived question in this case.

This consciousness has freedom from consciousness of existing things as its object.

Consequently as long as there is no descending into existence (own-making) there is no limit to this freedom.

Freedom has no boundaries.

Consciousness of that is not therefore limited by Time and therefore needs no sustenance.

But nevertheless it may be said that it is freedom-fed, or freedom-sustained consciousness.

This is it!
 This is the culmination!
 That is, the calming of all own-making,
 the resolution of all involvements,
 the withering away of thirst,
 dispassion,
 extinction,
 Nibbana.
 — *AN 11.7, Olds Translation*

Now at this point what can be seen is the error in the position that this consciousness is a thing which is always there and must simply be attained.

This is the idea of Bodhi Mind as described by the Mahayanists and now by some world-oriented Theravadan bhikkhus. This is unfortunate because a simple translation of 'Bodhi Mind' as 'The Awakened Mind' would be a good term to have.

This Nibbana, this unseen consciousness is conditioned. It is dependent on an individual walking the Magga, eliminating the corrupting influences.

It does not 'exist.' It does not have an independent existence out there for everyone all the time which only needs to be attained. It is not attained: something that is 'attained' is something that is

'attained by so and so'. It is not 'awakened to': something that is awakened to is something that is awakened to by so-and so. It is what results when manifestation of self is ended. It is *the* consciousness of *the* awakened mind.

In a word: to describe Nibbana as being a thing that is always there and is to be attained is to describe it as existing, a consciousness bound to a named form: The Bodhi Mind. This would just be another way of describing the consciousness of an individual, or self. It would, by the definition of existence, be subject to Time and ending.

So what we have said is that the speculation as to the nature of Nibbana as an existing thing or as a non-existing thing is to not have understood the point of sammā ditthi, or high view, in its function of rising above the discussion of existence and non-existence which is making it impossible to see the boundaries of existence that would allow for it to be said that Nibbana is conditioned but because it has not been own-made, cannot be said to exist and because it cannot be said to exist, it cannot be said to pass out of existence, and because it has been conditioned it cannot be said to have been or to be there always and only needs to be attained.

Thinking in ethical terms

One of the most difficult hurdle for someone starting out on this path is to master thinking in terms of a set of Ethical Principles that is different than that under which one has been raised, or, for those raised with no ethical principles, restricts behavior where previously there were no constraints — "If it feels good, it's alright".

On the surface (and one of the reasons Buddhism is usually regarded as 'benign' by other religions and cultures) Buddhist ethics appear the same as most other religions:

"Abstain from harm to living beings" is automatically translated into "Thou shalt not kill." (And that is usually further distorted to mean thou shalt not kill human beings, except...).

"Abstain from taking what is not given" becomes "Do not covet thy neighbor's goods" or "Do not steal."

"Abstain from intentional untrue speech" becomes "Thou shalt not lie ... unless you are a police officer or politician or businessman... etc."

and so forth.

Right from the start, however, someone practicing this system should understand that in this system these "precepts" are distinguished from those of other religions:

1. These are not "commandments." These are in the form of advice, directed at one's own best interests as dictated by the law of kamma. Here "Do unto others as ye would be done by," is not a matter of kindly behavior nor a threat of punishment or offer of reward, but is a matter of practical advice.

2. Understanding that these precepts are advice and not commandments, *they are absolutes; permitting of no exception.* There is in this system no allowance for "white lies", "justifiable homicide" and the like. Nobody is telling you that you must obey the rules, but the rules have no exceptions: the smallest fault will have repercussions in terms of kamma.

Even these characteristics, which make the Buddhist system of Ethics unique, look simple enough until one begins to put them into practice. Putting them into practice is going to be one of the most difficult things you will ever have undertaken and will completely revolutionize your life. But the real challenge comes in when you begin to think in ethical terms.

This was a homework assignment which probably is no longer available; but a reasonable substitute is likely out there in television land. Another possible substitute is to obtain one of Dr. Phil's books.

Watch Dr. Phil on TV. Make no mistake, Dr. Phil is probably the first true voice of an Uniquely American Ethics; and in so far as the US is a melting pot, he is also probably the first voice of a World Wide US-based Pop Ethics. For Buddhists, however, this is just the slick voice of Mara. (No offence to Dr. Phil, he is clearly a brilliant, well-motivated man who has probably had no contact with the ethics proposed here. And the least that can be said for him is that he is a master of his subject matter.)

How is he the slick voice of Mara?

Because his system is based at its deepest root on the idea that "This is," and "I am," his orientation is towards attaining goals based on "becoming in the World"⁴⁸. His intent is to provide tools for living optimally in the world (do not misunderstand, even here I am not saying that the system he has devised is actually better than the Buddhist system at creating an optimal worldly lifestyle; I am

⁴⁸ While one would think that a system based on "This is" and "I am" would result in an ethical standard that served the best interests of "the being," in fact the result is precisely the opposite when seen from the perspective of the Buddhist proposition that it is, in fact the idea of "I am" and "mine" that is at the root of "dukkha". The standard based on the idea that "it is" does not take into consideration the implications of ending. Consequently, the restraint of the individual's impulses to self-indulgence, rather than being a matter of self-interest, becomes a matter of control by society. Society, for its part, extracts its payment for this service in the imposition of values which serve its ends over those of the individual. We can see the results of this very clearly in our society today, and in acute focus in the unjustified assumptions about what is wrong and right made by the lawmakers of the land and such pace-setters as Dr. Phil.

saying that this is Dr. Phil's intent — the difference is that the Buddhist system is oriented towards attaining the abandoning of the world, and that in the process, as a bye-bye-product, the worldly lifestyle of one so practicing is improved; the Buddhist system allows for the abandoning of the idea of "I am" and "This is" where Dr. Phil's system, because it is based on these ideas, makes them impossible to abandon, and in this way, he is taking Mara's part).

This is the homework assignment: Watch the program and *Think About* the stance that is being taken with regard to that program's theme and think about the full scope of results for all sides that will result from adopting his advice *From The Perspective of the Ethics of This System*.

When he tells someone: "Do you think this is a good idea?" Ask yourself: "is this a good idea in terms of Kamma? Will this person, doing this, violate any precept to even the smallest degree?"

Remember: Kamma (another word for "This world" and "I am") is the act and its consequences; without action there is no consequence. There is *no* "sin of omission" in terms of kamma; one is not required to act; one is only required to not act wrongly (which is sometimes described as an act of not-doing, which produces a special sort of result-less kamma and has the effect of resolving a kammic result into non-existence, but that is a different thing). If there were, in any way, a requirement to act, there could be no escaping kamma. So pay special attention to where Dr. Phil is saying: "Do such and such".

This is an unusual opportunity and should be taken advantage of because it is not often that the straight-up topic of an hour or so of public discussion is aimed so directly at the topic of ethics. It is a great chance to sharpen your wits.

At this time [Saturday, September 09, 2006 10:15 AM] I have for quite some time not watched television. I have no idea if Dr. Phil is even still on. If the reader is seriously interested in seeing this idea as it was presented, I believe CDs of the show are available from video stores and Amazon.com

Cure the Symptom or the Disease?

Last night I again revisited Dr. Phil. Again, please note that I am not coming down on this man as a person — my perception is that he is at least as strongly motivated by the desire to help people as he is for fame and fortune — but, for Buddhists, he represents a vehicle for a point of view that is contrary to Dhamma.

Case in point: One of last night's themes was how to deal with long-standing guilt and remorse.

Dr. Phil does not deal with the causes of the initial events.

Dr. Phil's perception is that individuals hold on to the reliving in memory of key events involving guilty acts as a means for self-punishment which is, itself, a means these individuals use to free themselves from guilt — The mechanism of action as he sees it is two-fold: (fear) “If I don't punish myself in this way, some *really* bad punishment will be visited on me by higher powers” and (the payoff: reward for punishing wrongdoing) “I am constantly being punished for this act, therefore I can go about doing what I want to do in other areas because that area is being taken care of.”

Dr. Phil's solution in these cases is:

- a. for the individual to accept the reality of the situation (the old bad act can't be undone),
- b. to decide for one's self that sufficient punishment has been meted out,
- c. and to choose to put it behind one's self for the sake of all concerned — the individual themselves and those who are being affected by the guilty behavior.

In other words, to achieve liberation from the punishment/reward cycle by elimination of the punishment — wouldn't it be lovely!

The Buddhist proposition is that harmful (guilt and remorse causing) acts are initially motivated by wanting, often of the nature of wanting to avoid the unpleasant. The indulgence in guilt, self-recrimination and remorse, having nothing to do with the actual

consequences of the original act, is motivated primarily by the desire to experience heightened emotions (i.e., to feel, i.e., to live; bhava — at best one might say that the mind is exploring the details of the action-complex (a little mind-drama we see being played out in front of us in the form of Dr. Phil and his subjects) in order to understand it; in either case this is a set of actions which needs to be separated from the initial harmful act).

The solution for Buddhists is to see the situation as it really is:

- a. to accept the reality of the situation (it can't be undone),
- b. understand that the consequences will take care of themselves (are not under one's control) and that indulging in guilt and remorse is indulging in **additional acts** which if they involve inflicting pain on self or others carry further kammic results of a painful nature,
- c. understand that the results cannot be escaped. Kamma as a whole can be escaped — in which case the individual is deemed by his success in his effort to escape to have endured the consequences in terms of that effort — or the subjective consequences can be mitigated by strengthening the ability of the individual to endure them such as by over-balancing with good deeds... remember the simile of the small amount of salt in the large barrel of water⁴⁹ (the salt does not just go away).
- d. by making the type of harmful behavior (and its causes in wanting/desire and its end in ending that desire, and the way to the end in the 8-Fold Way) conscious, if necessary by apology or confession,
- d. and to choose to make an effort to train one's self to abstain from such harmful behavior in the future.

Dr. Phil's solution is directed at making the individual and others happy in this world (even though this may be phrased as in the desire to eliminate painful behavior, it is with the idea of eliminating painful behavior to allow the experience of happiness in the world).

⁴⁹ AN 3.99

The Buddha's solution is directed at ending behavior that binds one to this world where pain is an unavoidable feature.

Dr. Phil's solution may or may not work in treating the symptom of the disease (indulging in guilt and remorse); The Buddha's solution treats the disease itself (the harmful behavior).

Pursued to its ultimate conclusion, Dr. Phil's solution will result in psychopathic behavior: guiltless self-indulgence — it is the nature of downbound-confounded rebounding conjuration (paticca samuppada) that until such time as the disease (blindness to the nature, cause, ending and way) is cured, the individual will go on performing the behavior that causes the symptoms. Pursued to its ultimate conclusion the Buddha's solution will result in the ending of behavior that results in pain.

Analyzing the idea of the Escape from Kamma

Anguttara Nikaya, The Book of the Threes #99

The difficult concept to understand is found in the first two paragraphs of this sutta:

"O priests, if any one says that a man must reap according to his deeds, in that case, O priests, there is no religious life, nor is any opportunity afforded for the entire extinction of misery.

But if any one says, O priests, that the reward a man reaps accords with his deeds, in that case, O priests, there is a religious life, and opportunity is afforded for the entire extinction of misery.

- *Warren trans.*

"Monks, if anyone should say: "Just as this man does a deed, so does he experience it," — this being so there is no living of the holy life, there is no opportunity manifested for the utter destruction of Ill.

But if one should say: "Just as this man does a deed that is to be experienced, so does he experience its fulfilment," — this being so, monks, there is living of the holy life, there is opportunity manifested for the utter ending of Ill.

- *Woodward trans.*

The remainder of Woodward's translation agrees in substance with that of Warren and illustrates with the much used by me and little cited simile of the lump of salt, and also the simile contrasting the punishments of the rich man and the poor man.

"Monks, for anyone who says, 'In whatever way a person makes kamma, that is how it is experienced,' there is no living of the holy life, there is no opportunity for the right ending of stress.

But for anyone who says, 'When a person makes kamma to be felt in such and such a way, that is how its result is experienced,' there is the living of the holy life, there is the opportunity for the right ending of stress.

- *Ven. Thanissaro trans.*

This is the Pali:

Yo bhikkhave evaṃ vadeyya — yathā yathāyaṃ puriso kammaṃ karoti tathā tathā taṃ paṭisaṃvediyatī ti — evaṃ santaṃ bhikkhave brahmacariyavāso na hoti okāso na paññāyati sammā dukkhassa antakiriyāya.

Yo ca kho bhikkhave evaṃ vadeyya — yathā yathā vedanīyaṃ ayaṃ puriso kammaṃ karoti tathā tathāssa vipākāṃ paṭisaṃvediyatī ti — evaṃ santaṃ bhikkhave brahmacariyavāso hoti okāso paññāyati sammā dukkhassa antakiriyāya

Which I hear this way:

If, bhikkhus it is said thus: — suchas suchis the kamma made by a man thus and thus it rebounds — in this case, bhikkhus, the

real living of the Brahma life, the clearly encompassed perceiving of the utter termination of dukkha, could not be had.

But if, beggars, what is said is thus: — suchas such sensation is created by a man's kamma thus and thusly will be the resultant rebound — in this case, bhikkhus, the real living of the Brahma life, the clearly encompassed perceiving of the utter termination of dukkha, is able to be had.

- *M. Olds trans.*

Warren, Thanissaro and Woodward's translations all sound as though the first and second statements are the same. Bhk. Thanissaro comes closest to the meaning.

The idea is that when someone says that when you hit someone, you will be hit back, then there is no way to escape kamma because there is no way to change the form of the rebound of unknown past deeds. You're stuck and time may run out before you are able to ware out the old kamma (you will have no room for strategizing escape, etc.), and everything you do in the meantime will have rebounds, etc.

But if a person says when you hit someone with the intention of inflicting pain, that is, create a kammic deed to be experienced as painful, then the rebound to be expected is that of the experience of pain, then there is escape from kamma because the form in which the rebound occurs can be changed. The pain does not have to be experienced as the consequence of being hit back, but it can be experienced in some other form that has what we might call an equal measure of the pain to be experienced. In this way, for example, one who is going from an ordinary individual to Arahant in one lifetime can burn off all their old bad kamma by contriving by way of getting high or what we might describe as being open to the experience, to just sit there and take the experience of intense pain (or whatever) and get it over with.

What we might call kamma to be experienced as physical pain can be transmuted to kamma to be experienced as mental pain, kamma to be experienced as mental pain can be condensed and reclassified to the point where the pain is experience as merely a passing

thought... Sometimes, because we begin ignorant and do not often understand our own intentions, the painful deed may actually be experienced as pleasant sensation from a different perspective.

We rebel against the idea that someone could “get off” so easily because we do not really believe. We show our disbelief by our lack of understanding that this individual who has escaped the kamma of endless previous time in a shrug has done so **by letting go of the endless future** to which we so desperately cling and cannot imagine ever giving up — and cannot as a consequence, imagine the karmic weight such renunciation carries.

The burning off of old kamma can be so contrived (reference to the end of the Satipathana Sutta) that the whole process from start to finish could be over within a matter of a half a day.

Mara's Daughters

Here's one I hope nobody else has to face: somebody dumped three calico kittens on my property. What do I do?

Facts and Groundrules:

Calico cats are always female. Cats eat birds, and these kittens are no exception; one bird a day at the least is being eaten... as well as some rodents I am sure... but there is the king-snake for that as well.

I am looking ahead to the time when I can find a location where there is absolutely no "upkeep" required with regard to property... not the case in my current location (where there are neighbor's opinions and fire considerations to deal with at the bottom line); and I am, and have been, with regard to the present time reducing that upkeep that is necessary here to the absolute minimum.

I like cats. I have had quite a few cats as pets in my life, and these cats are very “cute”.

The law states that if you (presumably intentionally) feed a homeless cat for five consecutive days you are considered the owner; and as the owner of a menagerie of cats you must get a

license, meet certain standards, and get the cats neutered and checked for certain diseases. If you do not feed them there is no responsibility.

The various humane societies and animal control centers will do nothing about the situation unless somebody traps the animal and brings it to them.

So again, what do I do? (Make no mistake I know Mara is just figuring out how to give me grief here. I see his three daughters in those kittens, no doubt about it!)

If I feed the cats they will immediately become dependent on me (this distinguishes the situation from that of feeding a hungry human) and I will need to figure out what to do with them, when I have become much more attached, should the time come when I move on, or it will, given my age, delay for this life any effort at complete detachment. They will not stop killing birds.

If I trap the cats and take them to the “humane” society, they will be spade and then put up for adoption. The likelihood is that they will be adopted because they are attractive kittens (that is if I act fast... something Mara, Spammers, and Telephone Marketers all have in common in their pitches), but if they are not adopted they will be euthanized.

This would absolutely amount to doing to another what I would not want done to myself.

If I ignore them (not easy, as they learned early on that I was throwing out old bread for the birds and they were able to eat bread and birds as a consequence of me so when I stopped putting out bread when I figured this out, they started hanging out... just looking at me...waiting...yaaag!) the likelihood is two will die of starvation, the strongest may survive but will have kittens of her own in a year. Start over from the beginning.

Answer: This is not my problem, and my problem is my kamma if I should do to another being what I would not want done to myself. If it came to me starving and someone else facing the alternatives of watching me starve to death or trapping, incarcerating, castrating, putting me out for slavery (being owned by another, however benign or free of work) or being euthanized, I would understand the decision to allow me to starve...or at least I would hope that I would understand that decision.

Their kamma is their own. I will ignore the kittens plight, thinking of them as wild animals about which I have no concerns to speak of. The consequences in terms of decimation of the bird population and the increase in the cat population I will have to live with until such time as I can put a wall around this place in some kind of attempt to control what populations occupy it (or at least stop my neighbors from dumping their cat problems on me). If their kamma is such that they have the power to live some one of my neighbors may intervene.)

It's 5:58 in the morning. I have not gone outside yet. I'll go outside soon. Maybe. Maybe there is more work I need to do inside..."

Epilogue

It's been a while. I stuck to my guns and did not feed the cats deliberately at all. The two weaker calicos died off. The stronger lived on and produced her first litter within six months. One kitten survived. A male that she brought to my front door and who told me in no uncertain terms that I was to feed him. I did not feed him more than 4 days in a row. A second litter produced a second survivor, also a male.

The first male, in a very uncharacteristic way for male cats, introduced his little brother as another I was to serve. Spring came and the first male left for the hills. (He was the smartest cat I have ever known!) His younger brother hung out for a while and was killed by a car crossing the street. The next litter was one giant black and white longhair and one tiny all black nearly dying placed on the back porch while the next litter was brewing up. Interesting family. The giant black and white would always wait to eat until after the

all-black had eaten. The all-black was killed when he licked up the Freon that was spilled from a radiator in an accident that occurred on the street in front of the house. My neighbor trapped the calico and took her to the humane society where the predictable occurred. Somehow a generation was skipped by me. A big brother appeared. A real tough. He chased off the big black and white. Spring came and he left for the hills. No more cats.

Still Later:

Well the big brother had not really left, nor had the big black and white. The big brother hung out and dominated the area for a time, got feline aids and died and the territory was taken over by the black and white who has been hanging out to this time [Thursday, December 24, 2009 4:43 AM]. Male cats don't have litters.

Attaining Nibbana without Jhana

This is the fundamental argument of those who contend that the jhanas are necessary for attaining Nibbana: that is, that it is the jhana that is effecting the attaining. This is an incorrect perception: it is the insight into impermanence and the letting go that is the fundamental tool for attaining Nibbana.

Bottom Line, Simple

To insist that jhana is necessary to attain Nibbana is the same thing as to insist on an explicit statement with regard to existence. There is no more an ultimate 'jhana' there than there is an ultimate 'self'.

What we can see is that it is necessary to abandon the hindrances *and* have the insight into the ending nature of things to attain Nibbana.

One person could come along and say: Abandoning the hindrances is the entry-point of the First jhana. By definition then whatever they may call it, abandoning the hindrances and taking up high view, one has entered the first burning⁵⁰ and therefore the first burning is necessary for the attainment of Nibbana.

This is reasoning based on the assumption of a 'real' thing there called a 'jhana', and that is a thing that depends on view, not on reality.

As a secondary matter, the reason it is necessary to refute the argument that the jhanas are necessary to attain Nibbana is that those who hold this view also contend that the jhanas are no longer possible to attain by persons born at this time. A very discouraging (and flawed) argument that needs to be trounced (without getting angry!).

⁵⁰ *Editor's note* : one of Michael's translations of jhana is « burning », as in « burning with knowledge »

Still another twist on this issue has been raised recently, that is that it takes all four jhanas to attain arahantship. This group making the argument that "there is no support in the suttas for the idea that arahantship can be attained from the first jhana." and when confronted with a sutta by Ananda⁵¹ that states just this, the argument is made that this is not a statement by the Buddha and must be dismissed.

So here is one by the Buddha which states the same thing: To Malunkyaputta⁵². And for reasons why an argument should not be made using the "no sutta evidence is found to support" construction in the first place⁵³.

The Sphere of Limitless Space

In this sutta three pairs of individuals are shown:
two who attain and make a habit of the Sphere of Limitless Space,
two who attain and make a habit of the Sphere of Limitless Consciousness,
and two who attain and make a habit of the Sphere of No Things There.

In each case of the six individuals the rebirth subsequent to this one is in the sphere where they have made a habit of residing... Space, Consciousness, No Things There.

Of each of these pairs,
one is an ordinary man and
one is a student of the Aristocrats.

In the case of the ordinary man, his good kamma done used up, he is reborn, subsequent to that rebirth, in Hell or as an Animal or as a Ghost. The student of the Aristocrats attains Nibbana before even reaching death in that rebirth (i.e., they are Non-Returners⁵⁴).

⁵¹ See p. 106, "Discourse to a citizen of Attahaka"

⁵² See p. 107, "To Malunkyaputta"

⁵³ See "One more time" p. 114

⁵⁴ Retain this reference in mind when encountering discussions which assert that Non-Returners always enter the Pure Abodes.

There is no mention here of either of the two groups entering any of these states as a consequence of attaining the Four jhanas⁵⁵.

In the case of the case of the student of the Aristocrats who attains the Sphere of Limitless Space, there is no mention of attaining the Sphere of Limitless Consciousness, No Things There, or Neither-Perception-nor-Non-Perception.

In the case of the case of the student of the Aristocrats who attains the Sphere of Limitless Consciousness, there is no mention of attaining the Sphere of No Things There, or Neither-Perception-nor-Non-Perception.

In the case of the case of the student of the Aristocrats who attains the Sphere of No Things There, there is no mention of attaining the Sphere of Neither-Perception-nor-Non-Perception.

There is no mention of the Sphere of Neither-Perception-nor-Non-Perception, period.

This is the way I see it: While, in other systems, it is necessary to go from point "A" to point "Z" to attain the promised goal; here the goal is attained by letting go and letting go is something that can be done at any point from "A" to "Z".

Again: at what point are you going to be satisfied? How detailed and comprehensive description of this heap of shit do you need before you see that there is not one scrap of it that is permanent, that does not carry with it pain as a consequence of that impermanence, and is not "You" or "Yours"?

What does it take for you to get the joke? (I am not being critical of anyone or anyone's style here, I am just saying "It's like this.")

⁵⁵ For those who would assert that attaining the four jhanas is implied, recollect the statement that it was only when Gotama recollected his first encounter with the First jhana, that he first figured out a way to Nibbana. Then recollect that Gotama's previous teachers were able to attain, and taught Gotama how to attain the arupa jhanas up to the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception. In other words, Gotama figured out the jhanas after having attained the arupa-jhanas.

H: *"So then, what is involved in being satisfied? It is obviously more than just an intellectual understanding and agreement with the fact that the Dhamma is true. What is necessary in order to unlock the "knowledge" within a person in order to connect the mental acknowledgement of the truth with the total giving into it? I tend to believe that it is within the learning of the Dhamma, the practicing of the Dhamma, and the elimination of all downbound activities of the world that is the connection that is needed. Once one practices enough detachment then one is able to see the impermanence of it all.*

So then, what is it that makes being involved in the world a hindrance to letting go? Why can't someone, just like the three pairs of aristocratically trained beggars, go only as far as acknowledging the fact that the Dhamma is true and let go then? Couldn't one simply know that everything around him or her is uselessness in order to escape? If it be true that these men could escape the endless cycle by attaining the sphere of unlimited consciousness, etc., then one must also be able to escape the endless cycle by attaining the first or second jhana. It must be that one who has never attained any other state than a slight detachment from the world has not yet fully convinced himself in its impermanence.

So then, at what point are we going to be satisfied? How much of a description of this confounded, double ended shitbag does it take in order for us to see that not even one scrap of it is permanent?

I have fixed on this word, "satisfied" because it fits. We tend, wrongly, to think of "satisfaction" as the state of enjoyment during the orgasm; what satisfaction is, in fact, is the state after the orgasm: the state of having had enough; not desiring any more.

You are correct in stating it is more than just an intellectual understanding and agreement with Dhamma. Three things are needed:

one does need the intellectual framework (The Four Truths);
 one also needs to see that it is true (Vipassana); and
 one needs to have let go (Pahana, Nekkamma, Upekkha, whatever word you want to use for letting go, dumping it, getting rid of it, being free from it)

... and all of this to the degree of complete detachment from everything conceivable whatsoever, including the Dhamma itself.

I believe the difficulty you may be having with this lies in the mental construction: "unlock the knowledge within".

This construction carries some baggage with it. Here we can speak of no "knower" of the knowledge; hence there is no "knowledge within" to be "unlocked." The idea has been likened to a curtain, or veil; when it is removed, there is then nothing obstructing the knowing and seeing of what lies behind the curtain.

I would modify the idea of "practicing detachment". What one is doing when one is practicing detachment is one is practicing "poise" (*passadhi*, impassivity), which can lead to detachment, but detachment is the accomplished state, not something that can be practiced. One is detached or one is not.

"Being Involved". There is the clue to your question as to what it is that makes being involved in the world a hindrance to letting go.

"Being" is the state of being; the state being one who is subject to time, coming to an end.

"Involved" means "wrapped up in".

Beings are involved because of motives; motives are the symptoms of attachment, desires; they are the hindrances themselves. Imagine a huge pile of shit and some Beggar inside that pile saying: "Although I am involved in eating and drinking and enjoying the sights, there is no hindrance to me in this." Clearly, whatever he may think, he does not see the true nature of what it is that he is involved *in*.

Backing off, as in the method described in the Emptiness suttas, is a way of allowing for objectivity about what has been left behind.

The reason someone cannot just go as far as acknowledging the Dhamma and let go is because "acknowledging" is not what we need here. What we need is to have actually seen the truth of the Four Truths, and to have managed the actual fact of detachment.

What you need to do to see how intellectual understanding actually isn't sufficient is to practice giving up something to which you are

really attached (in the case of this exercise, it is not precisely necessary to see that what you are attached to is a potential source of pain; but in the case where this insight is not present you will find your willpower greatly diminished... and it's no easy job even when one is highly motivated by the knowledge that one is getting away from pain).

You might just try giving up sex for a year; try giving up sleep for one night, as on Uposatha; try quitting smoking; drinking; eating more than the body requires. Try this and you begin to see the nature of the enemy. Mere intellectual knowledge won't do the trick.

I do not see how you arrive at the "must" when you say: *"If it be true that these men could escape the endless cycle by attaining the sphere of unlimited consciousness, etc., then one must also be able to escape the endless cycle by attaining the first or second jhana."*

But let's put it this way: it isn't the attaining of the sphere that is giving them the liberation; it is the letting go of the rest. In a case such as this, what has happened is that the individual has given up all else but the particular jhana; then they reach an end of that and they are able to give that up also.

That said, there are examples of Beggars attaining Nibbana after only the first jhana⁵⁶ and even before attaining any jhana.

The jhana is only a tool to be used to produce sufficient vision to convince the individual to let go of it all. The simile of the mountain is given. The idea is, at the base of the mountain it is not easy to see a vast horizon, but from the top one is able to see in all directions.

Again, when you say: *"It must be that one who has never attained any other state than a slight detachment from the world has not yet fully convinced himself in its impermanence."* I need to underscore that this is not a matter of convincing one's self; it is a matter of seeing things as they are.

⁵⁶ See, for example, The Little Spell of Emptiness (MN 121), the statement "tidy up and liberate the mind," is a statement indicating achievement of arahantship

Some are able to do this with only a very small nudge; others need to climb to the top of the mountain.

And again, when you say: "*How much of a description of this confounded, double ended shit bag DOES it take in order for us to see that not even one scrap of it is permanent?*", this is a case where every individual is unique. But it is not any kind of "description" that does it. I could describe to you in minute detail the taste of some exotic food and in the end you would have no idea. One needs the description like a map to plot the course, but there is no attaining the goal without actually walking the walk.

A sutta indicating the attaining of arahantship after only the First Burning:

Discourse to a Citizen of Atthaka

Dasama: "...is there, revered Ananda, any one thing pointed out by that Lord who knows, who sees, perfected one, fully Self-Awakened One, whereby if a monk dwell diligent, ardent, self-resolute, his mind, not (yet) freed, is freed; or the cankers, not (yet) completely destroyed, go to complete destruction; or he attains the matchless security from the bonds, not (yet) attained?"

Ananda: "There is..."

"As to this, householder, a monk, aloof from pleasures of the senses, aloof from unskilled states of mind, enters and abides in the first meditation, which is accompanied by initial thought and discursive thought, is born of aloofness and is rapturous and joyful. He reflects on this and comprehends: 'This first meditation is effected and thought out. But whatever is effected and thought out, that is impermanent, it is liable to stopping.' Firm in this, he attains the destruction of the cankers. If he does not attain the destruction of the cankers, then by this attachment to dhamma, by this delight in dhamma, by the destruction of the five fetters binding to this lower (shore), he is of spontaneous uprising, one who attains Nibbana there, not liable to return from that world. This, householder is one thing..."

[MN 52] PTS: *Middle Length Sayings, II, #52: Discourse to a Citizen of Atthaka*, Horner, pp 15

Ananda goes on to say that the same formula applies for the Second Burning, Third, Fourth, each of the 4 Brahmaviharas (never, as far as I can remember have these been termed "jhanas" - they are sometimes said to be developed to the degree of jhana), and 3 of the four arupa-jhanas (I do not know why he left out the *n'evassannanasanna*).

Also, along the same lines I would point to the formula that precedes each of the "Ten Lessons" (10 Questions): What One (Two, Three...) Concept(s), when seen to the Root with Penetrating Knowledge, and understood to the broadest limits, such that it's repellant nature is seen as it really is and one has released it in its entirety, can bring one to the *Uttermost Freedom of Detachment?*

Another sutta that describes attaining Nibbana after only the First Burning:

MN64: To Malunkyaputta (Greater)

"And what, Ananda, is the path, the way to the abandoning of the five lower fetters? Here, with seclusion from objects of attachment, with the abandoning of unwholesome states, with the complete tranquilization of bodily inertia, quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, a bhikkhu enters upon and abides in the first jhana, which is accompanied by applied and sustained thought with rapture and pleasure born of seclusion.

Whatever exists therein of material form, feeling, perception, formations, and consciousness, he sees those states as impermanent, as suffering, as a disease, as a tumor, as a barb, as a calamity, as an affliction, as alien, as disintegrating, as void, as not self. He turns his mind away from those states and directs it towards the deathless element thus: 'This is the peaceful, this is the sublime, that is, the stilling of all formations, the relinquishing of all attachments, the destruction of craving, dispassion, cessation, Nibbana.' Standing upon that, he attains the destruction of the taints. But if he does not attain the destruction of the taints, then because of that desire for the Dhamma, that delight in the Dhamma, with the destruction of the five lower fetters he becomes one due to reappear spontaneously (in the

Pure Abodes) and there attain final Nibbana without ever returning from that world. This is the path, the way to the abandoning of the five lower fetters.

- *Nanamoli/Bodhi translation*

This sutta also goes on to repeat the same thing for the second, third, fourth, the Spheres of Space, Consciousness and No Thing...and, interestingly, also does not go on to the *n'evassannanasanna*

So what is the idea here?

Without having to dig into the details of their mechanisms of action (dig at the Abhidhamma), one looks at the components of life (the Khandhas, the Five stockpiles of Dukkha) making oneself conscious of their nature as impermanent, suffering, a disease, a cancer, a thorn, a disaster, a sickness, strange, decaying, not-self.

In the act of so seeing one is turning one's mind away from the five lower fetters, and one is directing it towards the deathless element.

But it should be done this way, thinking: "This is the better way, the peaceful way, the high way. What is? Stilling, calming, tranquilizing body, sense experience, perception, the personal worlds, and consciousness. Letting Go of Attachments. Destroying lust. Dispassion, ending, Nibbana".

Taking a stand on this idea, on this position means taking a stand against all the influences that might try to convince you otherwise.

Taking a stand on this position one will attain the destruction of the asavas, which is Nibbana.

Falling short one becomes a non-returner.

So then we must ask ourselves: "Are we going to be prevented from attaining the goal because some people who were not the Buddha and whom we do not know or have any reason to trust, has said that even attaining the First Burning is impossible these days?"

When the Buddha says "It can be done", who is it but Mara that is saying "It can't be done"? Even in pre-Buddha ages, there are the so-called 'Silent-Buddhas' men who attain Nibbana for themselves (that is, they are Arahants) who are not able to teach large groups.

Look at what is involved in attaining the First Burning:

Here is the formula found throughout the suttas:

Here a beggar ...

- (1) upadhiviveka
- (2) akusalanam dhammanam
- (3) pahana
- (4) sabbaso

(1) free of, detached from (Viveka is always a woman out of reach)
"going after getting",

- (2) unskillful things,
- (3) passhand, letting go
- (4) all

- (5) kayadutthulanam
- (6) patippassaddhiya
- (7) vivicc'eva kamehi
- (8) vivicca akusalehi dhammehi

(5) lewd acts of body

(6) subsidence, calming (you remember passadhi?) becoming
impassive

- (7) detached from pleasure (kama, remember the Kama Sutra)
- (8) detached from unskillful things

- (9) savitakkam savicaram
- (10) vivekajam
- (11) piti-sukham
- (12) pathamam
- (13) jhanam
- (14) upasampajja
- (15) viharati

- (9) sa: with, with vitakka and with vicara "thinking and reflection" (it's not talking about you "reach" vitakka and vicara, it's talking about you still have vitakka and vicara, so don't worry about what these are, you're already doing them, although I tell you they are just terms for thinking)
- (10) ja: born of, viveka: detachment (solitude, aloneness)
- (11) piti: enthusiasm, sukha: sweet
- (12) first "earth" #1
- (13) Burning/Shining with knowledge
- (14) upa: up-pass, sam: one's own or with, pa: pass, jati: born...essentially: "getting"
- (15) residing, sitting down beside, visiting, revisiting

So: "Here, a beggar, detached from trying to make things happen, letting all unskillful things pass from the hand, not acting lewdly with the body, becoming impassive, detached from pleasure, detached from the unskillful, still thinking and reflecting, enjoying enthusiasm, enters the First Burning for a visit."

Who can say: "I can't do that!"?

Horner:

Here... a monk, by aloofness from 'clinging' by getting rid of unskilled states of mind, by allaying every bodily impropriety, aloof from pleasures of the senses, aloof from unskilled states of mind, enters and abides in the first meditation which is accompanied by initial thought and discursive thought, is born of aloofness and is rapturous and joyful.

Nanamoli/Bodhi:

Here, with seclusion from objects of attachment, with the abandoning of unwholesome states, with the complete tranquilization of bodily inertia, quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, a bhikkhu enters upon and abides in the first jhana, which is accompanied by applied and sustained thought with rapture and pleasure born of seclusion.

"What is supposed to be done for his students by a Teacher, Beggars, I have done for you. Here are the roots of trees, solitary

places! Meditate! Do not give yourselves grounds for self-reckrimination later!"

That's it.

Attainment while listening to a sutta

A possible clue (likely explanation) about this business of attaining arahantship while listening to a Sutta.

Here we have the Brahman Brahmayu sitting before the Buddha listening to a discourse (MN91), and we are told:

"...Then the Lord gave a talk to Brahmayu the brahman on various topics: talk on giving, talk on moral habit, talk on heaven; he explained the peril, the vanity, the depravity of the pleasures of the senses, the advantage in renouncing them. When the Lord knew that the mind of Brahmayu the brahman was ready, malleable, devoid of the hindrances, uplifted, pleased, then he explained to him that teaching on dhamma that the Awakened Ones have themselves discovered: anguish, uprising, stopping, the Way. And as a clean cloth without black specs will easily take dye, even so as Brahmayu the brahman was (sitting) on that very seat did Dhamma-vision, dustless and stainless, arise in him: that "whatever is liable to origination all that is liable to stopping." Then Brahmayu the brahman, having seen Dhamma, attained Dhamma, known Dhamma, plunged into Dhamma, having crossed over doubt, put away uncertainty and attained without another's help to full confidence in the Teacher's instruction spoke thus to the Lord: "It is excellent, good Gotama..."

- *Horner translation*

A couple of paragraphs later the brahman has died and is declared to have been a non-returner by Gotama. Certainly he is a Streamwinner before he rises from his seat, and I do not think it is stretching things to infer that a similar process is at work for those who attain arahantship under such circumstances.

So what is the important point here? It is in the phrase: "devoid of the hindrances". The accompanying words may mean the same thing, but it is this phrase that tells us absolutely that the brahman is, at the very least, **at the level of the first jhana** (the final step prior to entering the First Burning is letting go of the hindrances).

Since we have been told that attaining arahantship is possible from the first jhana, we need know no more to understand at least one mechanism described in the suttas for attaining arahantship while listening to the Buddha.

Here is no mention of jhana, but the description is otherwise the description of the First Burning. So is that attainment without jhana or not?

My concern has always been to eliminate the discouraging effect of the statements that:

1. arahantship can only be attained via (usually the Fourth Burning), and
2. that the Burnings are not possible to attain in this day and age.

So I ask you, at that moment when your attention is completely focused on an issue of Dhamma, or on the attributes of the Buddha, or even when you have attained a fair to middl'n focus on your breathing, is that not, if even for only so short a time as it takes to snap the fingers, a moment free from the hindrances? And if that is so, did you then attain the First jhana?

Who would say "no, that is not attaining the first jhana" would needs say that Brahman Brahmayu attained Streamentry without jhana; he who would say that it was the First jhana would say that most of us are able to attain the First jhana without too much trouble.

I'm just debating this to get rid of a stumbling block that exists for some; I think with this description of attaining Streamwinning, we are not out of line to say: the important thing is not the jhana or getting the jhana, it is so working with your mind that dhamma-vision, dustless and stainless, arises such that you see for yourself that **"whatever is liable to origination all that is liable to stopping,"** and that this, being "seeing the Dhamma, attaining Dhamma, knowing Dhamma" is made the way to plunge into Dhamma, and the way to cross over doubt, put away uncertainty, and attain for yourself full confidence in the Teacher's instruction.

Dasama, the housefather

In this sutta (a different version/translation of the one cited above), Dasama, a householder, asks Ananda:

"... is there any one condition enunciated by that Exalted One who knows, who sees, that Arahant who is a perfectly enlightened one -- a condition whereby a monk who lives in earnest, ardent, with the self established, can get release for his heart yet unreleased; or whereby the cankers not yet destroyed will come to an end — a condition whereby he wins the unsurpassed peace from bondage not yet won?"

"There is ... Herein, housefather, a monk aloof from sense-desires, aloof from unprofitable states, enters upon the first musing, which is accompanied by thought directed and sustained, born of seclusion, zestful and easeful, and abides therein. He thus ponders: This first musing is just a higher product, is produced by higher thought. Then he comes to know: Now even that which is a higher product, produced by higher thought, is impermanent, of a nature to end. Fixed on that he wins destruction of the cankers; and, if not that, yet by his passion for dhamma, by his delight in dhamma, by utterly making an end of the five fetters belonging to this world, he is reborn spontaneously, and in that state passes utterly away, never to return (hither) from that world.

- *Anguttara Nikaya: V: Ekadasaka-Nipata V #17, V.342*

PTS: The Book of the Gradual Sayings V: The Book of the Elevens:

Dasama, the housefather, 17.219 (Hare, trans)

This is enough to state categorically that in the suttas the statement is made that it is possible to attain arahantship, Nibbana at the level of the first burning.

But this sutta goes on to repeat this formula for the second, third, fourth burnings...and then makes the same statement for those who have developed the heart possessed by Friendly Vibrations or Sympathetic Vibrations, etc. and then goes on to state the same thing with regard to attaining of the sphere of akasa, vinanna, and akincanna where he stops.

And this is the importance of this: This is the method: One cultivates a concentrated state of mind sufficient to reach a position from which one has attained *satisfaction* with one's knowledge that *all, every confounded thing* is of the same nature, and then one lets go.

This may happen for some at the mere hearing of the idea that things change (as it was with Sariputta) or it may take going through mastering all the jhanas and all the magic powers to convince one. What we all need to do is to keep flexible about this. There is One Way, but there is no *Only One Way*.

One More Time

There is a whole mess of wrong-headed thinking going on around this subject.

First of all, at the lowest level, is thinking that is looking for evidence in the suttas *for* attaining arahantship without jhana. This represents a fundamental misunderstanding of the construction of the Dhamma (the suttas).

The Dhamma is not set up to provide all the cases "for." It's very nature is generalization. Virtually every Dhamma (basic unit on which the teachings are built) is highly generalized: the Buddha teaches "Do not harm," not "Do not kill kings and queens or powerful individuals or your neighbor or men or animals or rabbits, etc". And it is not constructed to describe "sight" as it were, it is constructed so as to provide the methodology for getting rid of blindness (avijja) what is obstructing the attainment of the goal.

The argument: "There is no evidence in the suttas for the attainment of arahantship without jhana" is based on the assumption that there is in the suttas a positive statement concerning every manner of attaining arahantship. I would suggest that there was no evidence in the suttas to suggest that such a thing should be sought in the suttas.

At the next level the thinking is similarly mis-oriented. Here the arguments are concerned with "getting" the jhanas in order to "get" arahantship. Again, Nibbana is not something that is "got", it is what remains when what is obstructing it is got rid of.

Take a look: The hindrances are got rid of the result is the first jhana, thinking is got rid of, the result is the second jhana, excitement is got rid of, the result is the third jhana, enjoyment of ease is let go, the result is the fourth jhana, paying attention to materiality is let go, the result is the sphere of space, the sphere of space is let go the result is the sphere of consciousness, the sphere of consciousness is let go the result is the sphere of no-thing there, the sphere of no-thing there is let go, the result is the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception is let go, the result is the ending of perception and sense experience, the ending of perception and sense experience is let go and, if at this point freedom is recognized as freedom, the result is Nibbana.

The meditator who thinks that he has let go of the hindrances and has got the first jhana, thinking "I have let go of the hindrances and have got the first jhana!" not only has not let go of the hindrances, but has not got the first jhana; if he similarly progresses through the four jhanas and the four arupajhanas and the ending of perception and sense experience and "gets" Nibbana, he has not got "Nibbana" at all. This is the meaning of "miccha vimutti" wrong freedom. He has not even started. He suffers from 'the maha blindness element'.

At the next level the orientation is correct: based on the understanding that the jhanas are what results when one lets go off what is obstructing them, this individual states that to attain Nibbana one needs to: Let go the hindrances which will result in the first jhana, let go of thinking resulting in the second jhana, let go of excitement resulting in the third jhana, let go of enjoyment of ease resulting in the fourth jhana, let go of perception of materiality resulting in the sphere of space, let go of the sphere of space resulting in the sphere of consciousness, let go of the sphere of consciousness resulting in the sphere of no-thing there, let go of the sphere of no-thing there resulting in the sphere of neither-perception-nor non-perception, let go of the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception resulting in the ending of perception and sense experience, let go of the ending of perception and sense experience, recognize freedom as freedom and realize Nibbana.

Nothing wrong with that. But then this person says: It is necessary to go from the letting go of the hindrances stepwise through the jhanas and arupa jhanas to attain Nibbana. The thinking here is linear and the world is not.

That which comes to be comes to be relative to that which does not come to be. Another way of saying that is that Nibbana is never more than one step away from any confounded thing (a thing that has come to be that is identified with): that one step is letting it go.

So the perception needs to be not that the jhanas are needed to attain Nibbana, there is really nothing there that can be said to be a jhana, any more than it can be said that there is anything there that can be said to be Nibbana, it is just that the jhanas as they are understood are likely to be attained on the way to Nibbana by most individuals.

But here's the real scoop: those people who are engaging in this endless debate and indulgence in speculation are doing so to escape the actual setting up of starting out on the path. This is thinking of the future and is based on fear; a needing to be certain of the goal before starting out. But the focus is on the wrong object. The goal is clearly visible if you listen: it is the end of pain. To be certain that the goal is worth working towards, the thing that needs to be given this sort of scrutiny is the First Truth.

Can you actually see how it is that every confounded thing, every thing that comes to be to which one is attached will inevitably result in pain? Once that is seen, the goal is clear, the only thing that needs to be understood then is the simple logic of the Second Truth: that pain is caused by thirst, and the third truth: get rid of that thirst and you will get rid of that pain. The Way is simply a detailing of an encompassing set of generalizations of those areas in life where this thirst exists and needs to be let go. Worrying about and arguing over the jhanas is missing the point completely.

Green Tea

*On the Invisible Consciousness
and about
Knowing when It's Time to Quit*

Tracing things back from our visible world by way of finding its essential dependencies, we see that growing old and dying depend on the fact of birth. Without birth there would be no getting old and dying.

Birth depends on the fact of life itself. If there were no such thing as "Life" in any form anywhere, then there could be no birth.

Life depends on the animation known as "going after getting" and "going after getting away from." This includes concepts such as 'getting bound up', 'involvement', 'grasping', 'clinging', 'upkeep'... If there were no activity in the form of attempting to get or get away, then there would be no living.

Activity in the pursuit of getting and getting away depends on the fact of wanting. If there were no wanting to get or wanting to get away, there would be no attempting to get or attempting to get away.

Wanting depends on sense experience in the form of pleasant sensation, unpleasant sensation, and sensation that is neither pleasant nor unpleasant. If there were no sensations, there would be no wanting to get or wanting to get away.

Sensations depend on the mechanisms of sensation-production: the organ of sense, the object of sense, the contact of the two, and the sensation, perception, and consciousness that arises from the conjunction of the three (sense organ, sense object, and mechanism of consciousness). If there were no mechanism of sensation-production, then there would be no sense experience.

The mechanisms of sensation-production depend on the interoperation of the mental and the material. If there were no interoperation of the mental and the material, there would be no mechanism for sensation production.

The interoperation of the Mental and Material depends on the ability to re-know knowing (to be conscious, self-consciousness, individualized consciousness, consciousness attached to nama/rupa). If there were no ability to re-know knowing, then there would be no interoperation of the Mental and Material.

The ability to re-know knowing depends on the interoperation of the Mental and Material. If there were no interoperation of the Mental and Material, there would be no re-knowing knowing. So it can be seen at this point that re-knowing knowing depends on the interoperation of the mental and the material, and the interoperation of the mental and the material depends on re-knowing knowing. The one doubles back on the other.

It is because individuals do not see the outcome in aging and death, and because they do not see the origin of that aging and death in the wanting that is connected to the re-knowing of knowing sense experiences, and because they do not see the ending of that aging and death in the ending of that wanting that is connected to the re-knowing of knowing sense experiences, that they take action to get or get away from in the form of identification with intentional acts (to get or get away from) of body, speech and mind. If individuals saw the outcome as aging and death, if they saw the origin as wanting, if they saw the ending as the ending of that wanting, there would be no taking action to get or get away from and there would be no resultant identification found in the outcome. This is the meaning of: Depending on Blindness [a = not; vijja = vision], Confounded Identification [sangkhara = sang = own, with; khara = making].

This blindness takes the form of points of view about existence and non-existence. Put in first-level terms, it is the point of view that "I am" or "It is my".

The inter-operation of the mental and the material in what is subjectively understood to be the present moment is producing sensations, perceptions, and re-knowing knowing carrying with it (from its previously having been implanted there by identification with intentional acts of body, speech and mind) the notion "I am" or "It is my." Re-knowing the knowing of that, depending on the now current point of view of the individual, this notion is accepted or not accepted. Accepted it produces a tendency to react. Reacting, it produces another "round." Rejected, it does not produce any tendency to react. Not reacting, nothing is produced.

This "re-knowing the knowing" of the personalized (carrying with it the notion of "I am" from the point of it's being previously intentionally set rolling), "re-knowing knowing" produced by the inter-operation of the mental and the material in the present moment (aka: a distinct consciousness separate from, but whose object is awareness of, consciousness of the personal mind/mater phenomena) is what is known as "Vinnana Anidassananam", the re-knowing knowing that cannot be seen or pointed out.

It is essential to this notion of a re-knowing knowing that cannot be pointed out that it remain without "descriptors". This is because that which is used as a descriptor is made in the "mental" side of the two-sided beast that is the interoperation of the mental and the material that is the basis for the senses. Like a mirror, when a thing is conceptualized in the mental side, there is automatically formed a corresponding "thing" in the material side. In other words, conceptualized through the senses (in this case "the mind" of the individual), that is, described as a "thing" (and a "state" is a "thing") the re-knowing knowing of the Arahant is always (must always be) being wrongly described. Since there is no other way to describe a thing, it must remain undescribed.

Attempting a description of the re-knowing knowing of the Arahant is the error of those who maintain an on-going "Pure Mind", or "Buddha Mind": they have conceptualized the unconceptualizable.

They have made the Unborn, Unmade, Undying, etc into existing states and have consequently bound themselves to the attainment of such a "thing".

Attaining such a thing is attaining a "state" and as such is attaining something that will end and as such is not the goal.

We must be satisfied to let well-enough alone. Let go of what we can know is going to result in Pain, and the rest will take care of itself. We can know when we cannot know any more by way of conceptual thought.

Say I.

High Objective Detachment

To the degree you are able to see Downbound Confounded
Rebounding Conjunction

or The Four Aristocrats of Truths
at work in the world around you
to that degree you will have attained freedom.

Then, after a long long time,
but sooner or later
there's going to come a time
when the end is in sight for you.

At that time you need to understand
that that ability to see
Downbound Confounded Rebounding Conjunction
or The Four Aristocrats of Truths
at work in the world around you,
comes by way of a vehicle,
a device constructed to bring you
from your ordinary life
to the higher life.

And that vehicle,
for the last leg of this journey,
must be let go.

Here, this system is that vehicle
and that vehicle would have brought you
to this point
by one or perhaps more than one
of a limitless number
of paths
and this point would be
just a tad up passed
the First Knowing,
Second Knowing,
Third Knowing,

Fourth Knowing,
 The Realm of Space,
 The Realm of Consciousness,
 The Realm of No Things There,
 The Realm of Neither-perception-nor-non-perception,
 and a passel of delightful heavens.

From there you would enter
 upon a state of mind called
 'The Ending of Sensation and Perception'.

Then, sooner or later
 you will need to emerge from that one too.

And reflecting on this state of mind,
 which was higher
 and deeper
 and broader
 and more exquisite
 and sublime
 than any of those states that came before,
 thinking:
 'but all those states were products of mind,
 constructions, things that were put together,
 and what I know from having seen for myself
 is that whatsoever has been put together,
 is constructed, is a product of mind,
 whatsoever it is, it comes to an end
 ... but this mental state too,
 this 'Ending of Sensation and Perception'
 is also a product of mind,
 is also constructed,
 has also been put together
 ... and as such it too
 will come to an end
 ... but as for me,
 I push this thing much further
 and I'm likely to end up
 more bound up than I was before,

how about if I just quit
all this constructing of mental states?'

Do just that.

And see:

This is the mind.

This is consciousness.

This body, born of mother and father,
sustained by milk and rice,
subject to wearing away,
breaking up
and breaking down
whose destiny is the charnel ground;
this consciousness
of 'me'
is bound up in that.

In the same way
as a man with eyes in his head that can see
could see it
if there were a perfectly translucent,
perfectly clear
multi-faceted gem
strung on a brightly colored string.
He could see
that that string
was bound up in that gem
that gem
downbound by that string.

In the same way, see:

This body, born of mother and father,
sustained by milk and rice,
subject to wearing away,
breaking up
and breaking down

whose destiny is the charnel ground;
this consciousness
of 'me'
is bound up in that.

And in this way know:

'This is being free.'

And in freedom
recognizing freedom
is freedom.

And recognize that
birth has been left behind, and

Duty's doing has been done, and

There is no more this side or that, and

There is no more being any kind of an "it"
at any place of "atness" left for you.

It's something like
a clear deep pool
in a high mountain crag
and taking his stand next to it,
a man with eyes in his head that can see,
and there he sees
small pebbles
and shellfish
and small creatures
and small schools of fish
and once in a while
even some big fish swimming around.

And there is no stand
that is higher or deeper
or broader
or more exquisite
or more sublime
than this stand.

Closing Words

Rebirth has been going on since time beyond recollection,
 everyone has
 experienced virtually everything,
 knows virtually everything,
 except how
 to escape this thing.

Old Beggar Olds



There you are then, Beggars! I craft this counsel for you:

The own-made is a flighty thing, I say
 get yourselves out of this sputtering madness!

DN 16

The final words of the Lucky One

Olds Translation

Appendix

More essays can be found at:

http://obo.genaud.net/dhammatalk/dhammatalk_forum/df_toc.htm

Generally, if you navigate to **<http://obo.genaud.net>** you will find tons of helpful resources (including Michael's own translations of the suttas).

The mirror **<http://buddhadust.net>** is also available in case these links are dead at the time you are reading this book.

If you wish to get the PDF or docx versions of this book, they are available for free download at:

http://buddhadust.net/Essential_Dhamma.pdf

http://buddhadust.net/Essential_Dhamma.docx