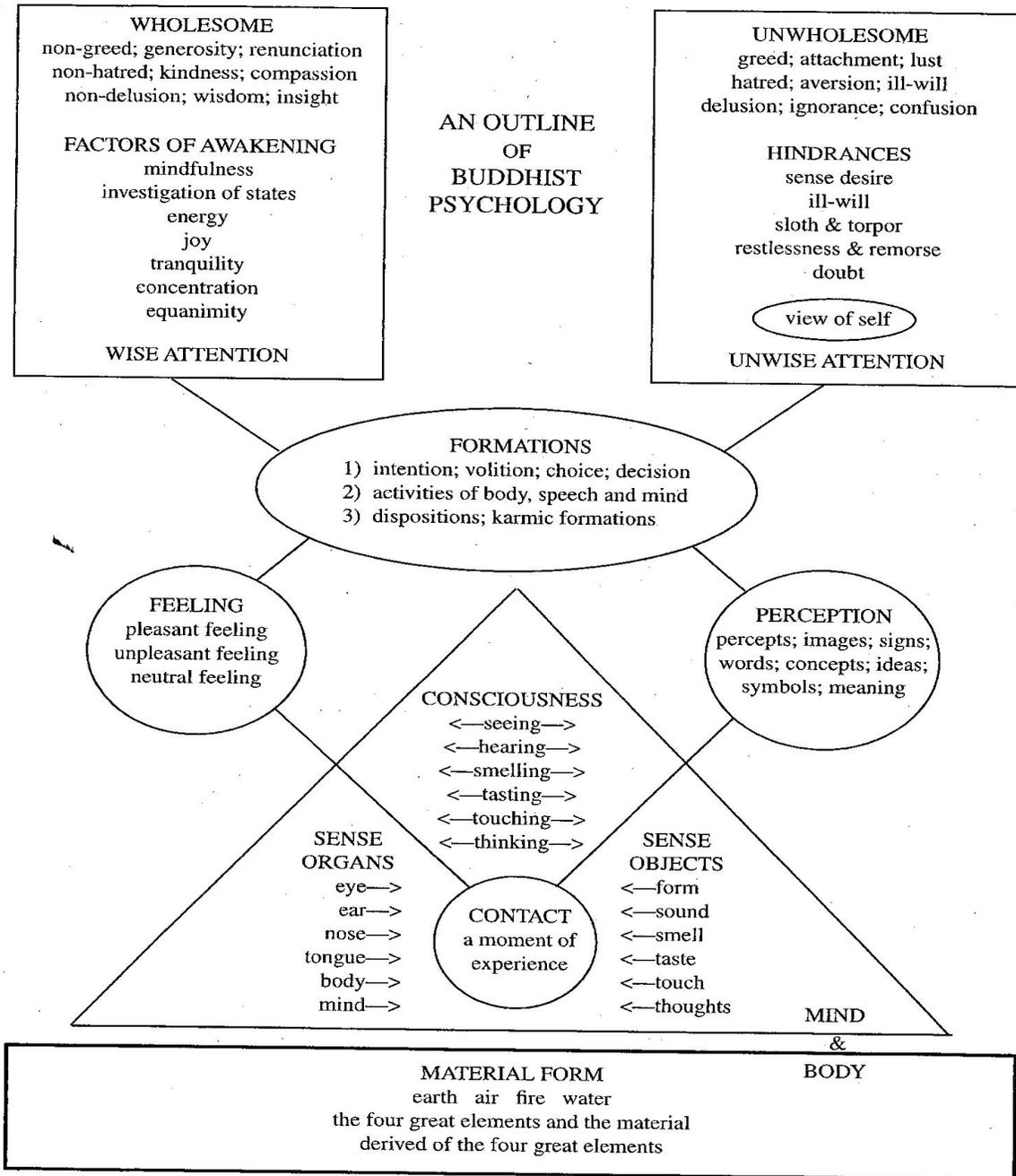


A Buddhist Psychology Workshop:

Material Compiled by Dave Smith: Against the Stream Buddhist Meditation Teacher

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(1). Introduction

The English language is rich in many ways, particularly when explaining the features of the material world, but it is remarkably clumsy when it comes to articulating the nuanced terrain of inner experience. This is one of the reasons why the current conversations about consciousness, meditation and psychology become rather confusing and confrontational. As we are now beginning to understand the inner workings of the mind-body process thru cognitive and neuroscience it is quite humbling to see that a detailed and highly developed map of the mind and body as a system of “lived” experience had been delineated by the Buddha and his immediate followers some 2500 years ago.

When we begin to study or attempt to understand the psychology of present-moment consciousness from a Buddhist perspective, we need to have a foundation for what it is that we are actually hoping to accomplish. The study of “consciousness” thru the practice of Dharma is rich, fascinating, detailed, intellectually stimulating and can even give a sense of superiority if the interest is merely academic. To begin, I will outline some simple criteria as to the purpose of this exploration.

(1) The end result of this exploration is to know suffering, its cause, its end, and the path which leads to its end. The Buddha himself claims to teach just one thing- suffering and its end.

(2) The “knowing” of this process is to be developed within the framework and practice of mindfulness meditation, and then applied to all areas of our lives. The development of mindfulness plays a key role in the destruction of greed, hatred and delusion...that which puts an end to suffering.

(3) Study of the Dharma and the practice of meditation should go hand and hand, as one has the ability to inform the other and vice versa. A balanced approach will produce the best result.

-Here is what the Buddha has to say about the Dharma (dhamma).

“The Noble Quest” (from the pali canon)

“I considered: ‘This dhamma I have reached is deep, hard to see, difficult to awaken to, quiet and excellent, not confined by thought, unreachable by mere reason, subtle, sensed only by the wise. But people love their “place” they delight and revel in their place.

It is hard for people who love, delight and revel in their place to see this ground the this-conditioned, conditioned/dependant arising; and also hard to see this ground: the stilling of all formations, the relinquishing of all bases, the fading away of craving, desirelessness, stopping, nibbana. Were I to teach the dhamma and others were not to understand me; that would be tiring and vexing for me.” Why should I now reveal what I reached with difficulty? This dhamma is not easily awoken to by those in thrall to greed/lust and hate. Those dyed by desire, covered by a mass of darkness, will not see what goes against the stream, subtle, deep, hard to see and fine.

(2). Mindfulness

By applying the practice of mindfulness meditation we are able to understand the original teachings of Siddhartha Gotama (the Buddha). For the sake of ending suffering in our lives as it unfolds in real time, Buddhist Psychology works best only when it is concerned with the practice of the four noble truths as applied to living in this modern world. The four noble truths encourage a naturalistic and pragmatic approach to the Buddha's teachings thus providing a framework for deep personal and social growth. Through mindfulness meditation we are able to understand the Buddha's teachings, which allow us to better understanding ourselves.

The Four Noble Truths

1. The existence of suffering (dukkha)
2. The origin of suffering is craving (tanha)
3. The cessation of suffering is possible (nirodha)
4. The path that leads to the end of suffering is available (magga)

What is Mindfulness? (from the pali canon)

“What is the power of mindfulness? Here, monks, a noble disciple is mindful; he is equipped with the keenest awareness and circumspection; he remembers well and keeps in mind what has been said and done long ago.”

“Monks, this is the direct path for the purification of beings, for the surmounting of sorrow and lamentation, for the disappearance of pain and grief, for the attainment of the true way, for the realization of nibbana –namely, the four groundings of recollection. “A monk abides contemplating the body as a body, ardent, fully aware, and mindful, having put away desire and discontent for the world. He abides contemplating feelings as feelings, mind as mind, dhamma as dhamma.

The Four Foundations of Mindfulness (Satipatthana Sutta)

1. Mindfulness of body/breath
2. Mindfulness of feeling tone +,-, 0
3. Mindfulness of mind states (attitudes of mind)
4. Mindfulness of mind objects (dhammas)-(categories of experience)

-This is what is to be experienced, understood and cultivated.
(Satipatthana Sutta-Analayo commentary)

1. Direct experience of the fact that everything changes, if applied to all aspects of one's personality, can powerfully alter the habit patterns of one's own mind.
2. Not seeing the rising and passing away of phenomena is ignorance, while to regard all phenomena as impermanent-leads to clear knowledge and understanding.
3. One's volitional/intentional decision in the present moment is to a considerable degree amendable to personal intervention and control, each decision in turn shapes the habits, character traits, experiences, and perceptual mechanisms that form the content of future decisions.

(3). Understanding consciousness (awareness)

Ultimately, the entire practice, study and application of the Dharma is to understand the process of how suffering is created within human consciousness. Buddhist psychology offers a wide range of practices, ideas, useful hints and concepts that we can use to liberate the mind from unnecessary mental and emotion suffering. The Dharma breaks down c-ness into 5 components: Known as the 5 aggregates/bundles-(skandhas).

The five aggregates:

1. materiality-form (rupa)
2. Feeling (vedana)
3. Perception (sanna)
4. Mental formations/inclination-(sankara)
5. Consciousness/awareness-(vinyana)

Suffering and the 5 aggregates (from the pali texts)

"Now this, monks, is the Noble Truth of dukkha: Birth is dukkha, aging is dukkha, death is dukkha; sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, & despair are dukkha; association with the unbeloved is dukkha; separation from the loved is dukkha; not getting what is wanted is dukkha. **In short, the 5 clinging-aggregates are dukkha.**"

Dukkha, translated as stress (Than Jeff)

"And what are the five clinging-aggregates that, in short, are stressful? The clinging-aggregate of form, the clinging-aggregate of feeling, the clinging-aggregate of perception, the clinging-aggregate of inclinations, the clinging-aggregate of consciousness: These are called the five clinging-aggregates that are stressful.

1. Materiality (form): we make contact with the physical world thru the 5 senses. This creates the conditions for c-ness to arise-the moment that an organ comes into contact with an object. We can bring our attention to all or any of these experiences at any given time. Although we see that most of the time our attention is pulled in a particular direction and we habitually follow whatever experience is the most prominent or whatever seems to be the most interesting; or important and so on. Tuning into sensory awareness is a preliminary tool when developing mindfulness. We are encouraged to fully-embodiment the totality of our sensory experience.

2. Feeling: Once contact is made in the present moment a feeling "tone" will arise

1. Pleasant +
2. Unpleasant -
3. Neutral 0

This seems fairly obvious, but with further investigation we see that we almost always reach for what is pleasant and push away what is unpleasant. When things are neutral we usually just get bored and try to distract ourselves any way possible. Depending on the conditions we may have more than one feeling tone present at one time. If we look closely, there is usually a prominent feeling arising in each moment. Placing the attention on the feeling tone of the breathing body is very helpful because it is almost always pleasant or neutral. It is also always available and "only" available in the here and now.

3. Perception: The role of perception is to differentiate one object from another. It is thru the aggregate of perception that the world makes sense to us. This is where we can start to get ourselves into all types of trouble. The role of perception in our lives has tremendous value in some areas, but can be in-accurate in others. In some ways, all forms of Buddhist meditation can be seen as-perception-reorganizing. That is, to see the impermanent, unsatisfactory, and impersonal nature of experience-(the 3 marks of existence). We have so many perceptions about so many things and they come and go very quickly. We often don't really know what to do with them. Perceptions will often give rise to negative emotions or mind states. Based on our moment-to-moment perception we may begin to experience anger, fear, jealousy, doubt and some degree of craving. In mindfulness we are encouraged to begin to question and investigate our perceptions. Are they causing us peace or restlessness? Are they even true? Letting go of the perceptual tendencies of the mind and simply returning to the breath is an important and useful action to take while practicing mindfulness meditation.

4. Mental formations-inclinations/intentions: based on the info we receive from feeling and perception we are "inclined" to do something about what we perceive to be happening. For us, this can go many different ways. So if we take the time to pause and check out our motivating "pulls" we can actually intervene and take a different action. This is where mindfulness can really begin to make a difference in our lives. We see that we don't actually have to follow our initial reactivity, we can learn to re-train, and we can let go of harmful inclinations and work towards cultivating a better way to go about things. This is really the root of developing mindful awareness, the ability to try different things and to take another approach. This 4th aggregate which is translated from the term (sankhara). Sankhāra means 'that which has been put together' and 'that which puts together'. Other English translations for sankhāra include conditioned things, determinations, fabrications and 'formations' (or, particularly when referring to mental processes, 'volitional formations'). Buddhist scholar and academic Andrew Olendzki defines the term sankhara as: intention, volition, choice, decision, activities of body, speech, and mind, and dispositions. *Olendzki also adds that the term can also be seen to encompass the majority of what we know as "emotions"*. The full analysis of Buddhist psychology is found in comprehensive body of work known as the abhidharma. The abhidharma outlines 52 mental factors that arise in consciousness. It is stated that 50 of the 52 factors fall under the heading sankhara; which would make sense that many of us struggle, to a high degree in the realm of emotional experience; as our entire organism is bombarded with a wide and bewildering array of content that influences mind states, attitudes, emotions and so forth.

5. Consciousness: Simply put, consciousness is the container that holds all of these Factors together. From the view of Buddhist psychology, c-ness is an event, it's an episode, and it arises and passes away one moment at a time. It is not a noun, it's not a thing. It's a verb, it's what is happening. It arises based on conditions that allow it to do so. It's really that simple.

(4). Dependant Origination/ Dependent Arising

Patticca Samuppada - By Bhikkhu Bodhi

The Buddha says "One who sees dependent arising sees the Dhamma and one who sees the Dhamma sees dependent arising". The Dhamma is the truth discovered by the Buddha. In his statement the Buddha makes an explicit equation between the profound truth he has realized and dependent arising. Again in describing his own quest for enlightenment, the Buddha says that immediately before his enlightenment, when he was sitting in meditation he began enquiring into the chain of conditioning, seeking the causal origination of suffering, and this inquiry led him to the discovery of dependent arising. So from one angle one can equate the discovery of dependent arising with the attainment of enlightenment itself.

The Buddha says this dependent arising is deep in truth and deep in appearance. It is through not understanding and not penetrating this truth of dependent arising that living beings have become entangled like a matted ball of thread, or have to become like grass and rushes, unable to pass beyond the woeful states of existence, unable to escape from samsara, the cycle of becoming. Thus dependent arising is not only the content of the Buddha's enlightenment, not only a philosophical doctrine, but it is also the truth that has to be realized to gain liberation from suffering. So this is the key not only to the intellectual understanding of the Dhamma, but to the attainment of liberation itself.

"Dependent Arising" (from the pali canon)

"Let be the past, Udayin, let be the future. I shall teach you the Dhamma: when this exists, that comes to be; with the arising of this, that arises. When this does not exist, that does not come to be; with the cessation of this, that ceases."

"This conditioned arising is profound and appears profound. It is through not understanding, not penetrating this Dhamma that people have become like tangled balls of string, covered with a blight, tangled like coarse grass, unable to pass beyond states of woe, ill destiny, ruin and repetition."

The teaching on D.A. is found within the context of the 2nd noble truth. The aim is to abandon craving and clinging as they arise and thus putting an end to the suffering that comes.

Let's take a look at craving: (from the pali canon)

"This is craving: it is repetitive, it wallows in attachment and greed, obsessively indulging in this and that: craving for stimulation, craving for existence, craving for non-existence."

That craving is what arises, is central the doctrine of Dependant Origination., it is said to be conditioned by feeling, which is conditioned by contact, which is conditioned by the six senses, which is conditioned by (nāmarūpa), which is conditioned by consciousness.

Together, the chain of conditions that culminates in the arising of craving describes in a linear sequence the totality of the human existential condition, commonly summarized by the “the 5 aggregates” (materiality, feelings, perceptions, inclinations and consciousness).

Now since The First Sermon regards these five aggregates as shorthand for what is meant by dukkha, then, according to the Twelve Links theory, it is clear that craving is what arises from dukkha. “Craving” describes all our habitual and instinctive reactions to the fleeting, tragic, unreliable and impersonal conditions of life that confront us. If something is pleasant, we crave to possess it; if something is unpleasant, we crave to be rid of it. The practice of mindfulness trains us to notice how this reactive pattern arises from our felt encounter with the world in such a way that we cease to be in thrall to its imperatives, and are thereby liberated to think and act otherwise.

****A side note:** a clear distinction between desire, craving and clinging: (my view)

I have found it to be useful to understanding the distinctions that are made between wholesome and unwholesome desire; pain and suffering; clinging and not clinging to desire. It is extremely helpful, useful and skillful to see and to understand the difference. Intellectually and experientially. Knowing that you can have desire without clinging to it, that you can have goals, aspirations and plans and have a relationship to the results that is centered in non-clinging. You can have wholesome desire. Being able to hold your desire without craving you aren't identified and defined by your desire. Not paying attention and living in an unnoticed ocean of desire attached and identified by its outcome is the source of suffering because you don't know how to respond to it wisely. We can begin to let go without trying to annihilate, we can still practice a commitment to our goals without clinging to the outcome.**

(5). 12 link model of Dependant Origination

1. Ignorance- not understanding the meaning and full implication of the 4 noble truths.
2. Karmic formations- habitual activities of mind that are aligned to self-view.
3. Consciousness- the activation of the 6-senses; acting in a dualistic manor-defining the subject as distinct from the object.
4. Name and form- feeling, perception, inclination, attention and their objects.
5. Contact (6 sense base) - eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind.
6. Feeling (+ - 0) - painful, pleasant, or neutral bodily or mental experiences.
7. Craving- instinctual desire-to have, to attain, to get away from experiences.
8. Clinging, grasping- leaning in on, or feeding on sensual or mental experience.
9. Becoming- solidifying awareness into a fixed state of mind, one that seeks permanence.
10. Birth (“I”) - the experience of being a “separate entity”.
11. Decay, death- the sense of ego-loss, through the breaking up of the psychological foundation of self.
12. Suffering- the unsatisfactoriness of this entire process.

The above list is the traditional 12 link model recognized and practiced within the Theravada school of Buddhism. These 12 links take place within the schema of past and future lives which can only cause speculation and doubt because it can not be directly experienced. With that, we will drop the 1st 2 links (past lives) and the last 2 links (future lives) and investigate how suffering arises in our c-ness and how it can be abandoned.

(6). The 5 aggregates, nama-rupa and the universal mental factors (abhidharma)

Consciousness (from the pali texts)

“Monks, consciousness is reckoned by the particular condition dependent upon which it arises. When consciousness arises dependent on eye and forms, it is reckoned as eye consciousness, etc.... Just as fire is reckoned by the particular condition dependent on which it burns – when fire depends on logs, it is reckoned as a log fire, etc. “Then, monks, it occurred to me: ‘When what exists does consciousness come to be? By what is consciousness conditioned?’ Then, monks, through careful attention, there took place in me a breakthrough by wisdom: ‘When there is name-and-form, consciousness comes to be; consciousness has name-and- form as its condition.

“Then, monks, it occurred to me: ‘This consciousness turns back; it does not go further back than name-and-form. It is to this extent that one may be born and age and die, pass away and be reborn, that is, when there is consciousness with name-and-form as its condition, and name-and-form with consciousness as its condition....”

Name-form-consciousness (nama-rupa-vinyana)

<u>Name form</u>	<u>Consciousness:</u>
1. Contact	1. Materiality
2. Feeling	2. Feeling
3. Perception	3. Perception
4. Inclination	4. Inclination
5. Attention	5. Consciousness

Universal Mental Factors: An Abhidharma perspective.

According to the Abhidharma, c-ness arises and passes away each moment as a series of episodes in a continuing process-again and again- to yield to the subjective stream of c-ness. C-ness itself is rather simple and austere, consisting merely of the cognizing of a sense object by means of sense organ. This simple event serves as a seed around which a number of other mental factors crystallize to c-ness create meaning from the experience that we are having; this happens quite rapidly and relentlessly at the doors of all 6 senses. Like the classic image would say; just like a king with his entourage, c-ness never arises alone. It is always attended by a number of other mental factors that help to structure, shape and inform c’ness in a number of different ways. While the Abhidharma lists 52

mental factors that arise in c-ness; it is stated that there are 7 factors which are present in every single mind moment. These are called the Universal Mental Factors.

Universal Mental Factors:

1. Contact (phasso)
2. Feeling (vedana)
3. Perception (sanna)
4. Inclination-intention (sankara)
5. Attention (manisakaro)
6. One-pointedness (ekaggata)
7. Life Faculty (jivitindriya)

(7) Mindfulness and the Universals

The similarities between the aggregates, nama-rupa, and the universals is abundantly clear; but when we begin to look at the mechanics of mindfulness, the aim of its development and the factors available; a simply meditation on the universals is an amazing and fruitful mediation to perform.

Let's walk thru this process.

1- As we begin our practice we come into contact with the felt sense of our experience as it arises and passes away. 2- We begin to notice that the world/life feels a certain way to us-(+0). 3- Our experience also make perceptual sense to us-(it appears intelligent)-we can differentiate one object from another-(we have names-for-forms). 4- We are inclined to take a stance or disposition towards all that we experience-(a sense that something can be done). 5- We have attention: Attention manifests as a "confrontation" with any particular object- it literally means "making in the mind"-its characteristic is the conducting of the mental factors towards an object. 6. One-pointedness is the unification of the mind onto its particular object. The abhidharma states that one-pointedness has non-wandering and non-distraction as its characteristic; its function is to unify whatever mental factors are present; it manifests as peace, ease and contentment and its proximate cause is happiness. 7- I will not say much about the life faculty as it is doesn't play a crucial role in the practice of satipatthana/mindfulness. Suffice is to say that a lifestyle that leads to ease and happiness is the aim of the entire Buddhist endeavor.

The Four Foundations of Mindfulness with the Universals (practice).

1. Mindfulness of body/breath (contact-concentration-attention-onepointedness)
2. Mindfulness of feeling tone (feeling-investigation-attention)
3. Mindfulness of mind states (perception-investigate-cultivate view)
4. Mindfulness of mind objects (inclination-investigate-cultivate intention)

Mindfulness meditation is often taught as a practice that balances concentration and investigation. Using the faculties found within the universal factors allows us to do just that. We can also bring confidence knowing that these factors are available in every single mind-moment. We can employ the concentrative practices of attention and one-pointedness to the contact of the present moment. As we do this, we begin to investigate the ways we are relating to feeling, perception and inclinations. As we do this we begin to

develop the first 2 factors on the 8-fold path. As our mindfulness practice deepens we begin to cultivate “right view” around the aggregate of perception, and begin to cultivate “right intention” around the aggregate of inclination. We begin to develop a psychic shift in the ways that we relate to our lives and our experience. As our practice and understanding deepens we begin to see how our lives can be informed and lived from the foundation of the 4 noble truths.

(7). The role of the 4 Noble Truths

“Such is dukkha. It can be fully known. It has been fully known.’

“Such is craving. It can be let go of. It has been let go of.’

“Such is cessation. It can be experienced. It has been experienced.’

“Such is the path. It can be cultivated. It has been cultivated.’

“There arose in me illumination about things previously unknown”.

“As long as my knowledge and vision was not entirely clear about the twelve aspects of these four noble truths, I did not claim to have had a peerless awakening in this world with its humans and celestials, its gods and devils, its ascetics and priests. Only when my knowledge and vision was clear in all these ways, did I claim to have had such awakening. “The freedom of my mind is unshakable. There will be no more repetitive existence.”

“And what, bhikkhus, are dhammas that should be fully understood? Form, bhikkhus, is a dhamma that should be fully understood; feeling-perception-inclination-consciousness- (are dhammas that should be fully understood).- The 5 aggregates.

“Whoever in the past, the present or the future becomes fully awakened to things does so by becoming fully awakened to the four noble truths”.

(1) Suffering

“This is dukkha: birth is dukkha, ageing is dukkha, sickness is dukkha, death is dukkha, encountering what is not dear is dukkha, separation from what is dear is dukkha, not getting what one wants is dukkha. This psycho-physical condition is dukkha. (the 5 aggregates)

(2) Craving

“This is craving: it is repetitive, it wallows in attachment and greed , obsessively indulging in this and that: craving for stimulation, craving for existence, craving for non-existence.

(3) Cessation/Freedom

“This is cessation: the traceless fading away and cessation of that craving, the letting go and abandoning of it, freedom and independence from it.

(4) Path/Cultivation

“And this is the path: the path with eight branches: right view, intention, speech, acting, livelihood, effort, mindfulness and concentration.

Special thanks to: Andrew Olendzki, Stephen Batchelor and Bikkhu Bodhi

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