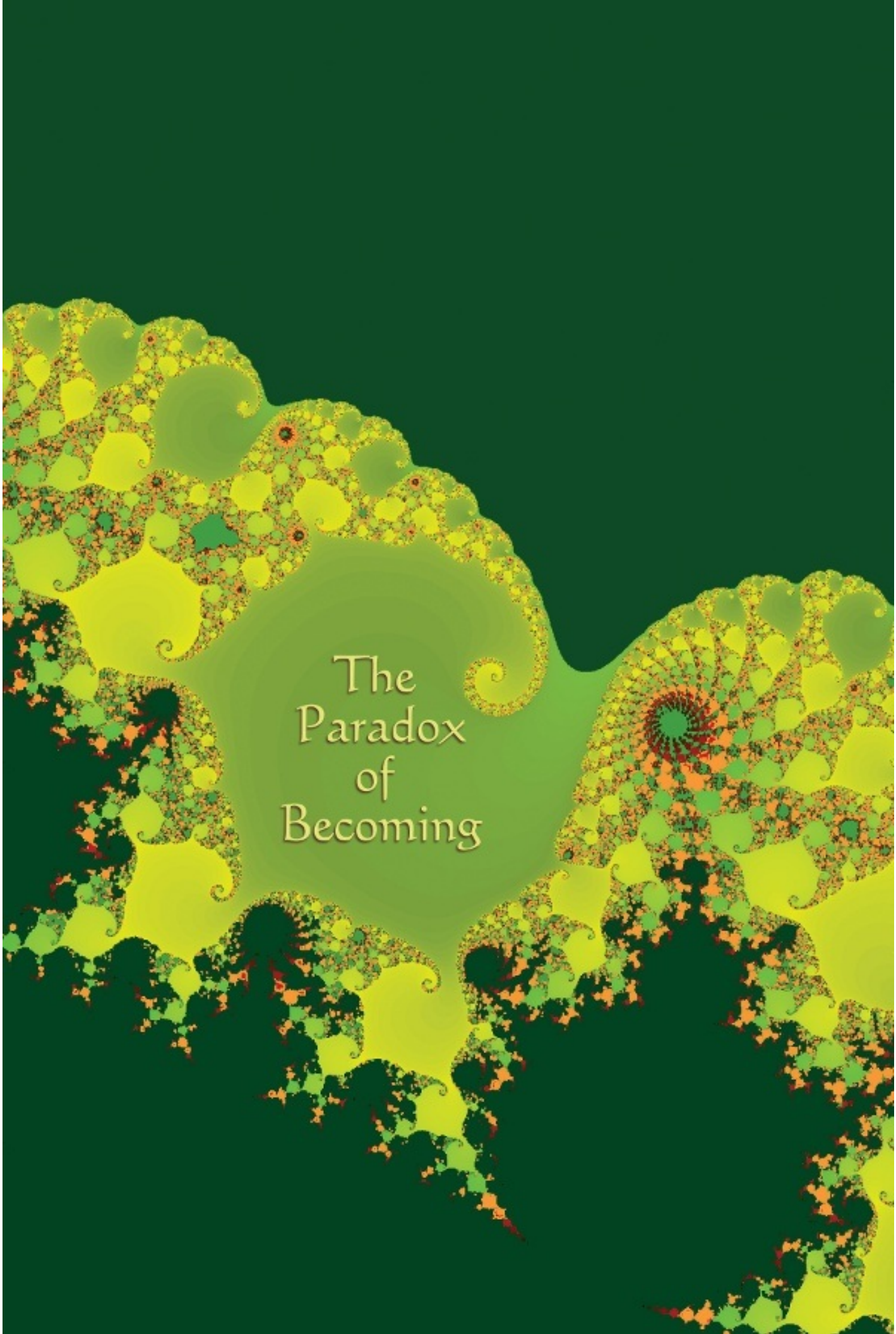
The
Paradox
of
Becoming

The Paradox of Becoming

Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu
(Geoffrey DeGraff)

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Look at this world:
Beings, afflicted with thick ignorance,
are unreleased
from passion for what has come to be.
All levels of becoming,
anywhere,
in any way,
are inconstant, stressful, subject to change.

Seeing this—as it has come to be—
with right discernment,
one abandons craving for becoming,
without delighting in non-becoming.
From the total ending of craving
comes dispassion & cessation without remainder:

Unbinding.

For the monk unbound,
through lack of clinging/sustenance,
there is no further becoming.
He has conquered Māra,
won the battle,
having gone beyond becomings—

Such. — Ud 3:10

Abbreviations

AN	*Aṅguttara Nikāya*
Dhp	*Dhammapada*
DN	*Dīgha Nikāya*
Iti	*Itivuttaka*
Khp	*Khuddakapāṭha*
MN	*Majjhima Nikāya*
Mv	*Mahāvagga*
SN	*Saṁyutta Nikāya*
Sn	*Sutta Nipāta*
Thag	*Theragāthā*
Thig	*Therīgāthā*
Ud	*Udāna*

References to DN, Iti, and MN are to discourse *(sutta).* Those to Dhp are to verse. Those to Mv are to chapter, section, and sub-section. References to other texts are to section *(saṁyutta, nipāta, or vagga)* and discourse.

All translations are based on the Royal Thai Edition of the Pali Canon (Bangkok: Mahāmakut Rājavidyālaya, 1982).

Preface

The topic of becoming, although it features one major paradox, contains other paradoxes as well. Not the least of these is the fact that, although becoming is one of the most important concepts in the Buddha's teachings, there is no full-scale treatment of it in the English language. This book is an attempt to fill that lack.

The importance of becoming is evident from the role it plays in the four noble truths, particularly in the second: Suffering and stress are caused by any form of craving that leads to becoming. Thus the end of suffering must involve the end of becoming. The central paradox of becoming is also evident in the second noble truth, where one of the three forms of craving leading to becoming is craving for non-becoming—the ending of what has come to be. This poses a practical challenge for any attempt to put an end to becoming. Many writers have tried to resolve this paradox by defining non-becoming in such a way that the desire for Unbinding *(nibbāna)* would not fall into that category. However, the Buddha himself taught a strategic resolution to this paradox, in which the fourth noble truth—the path to the end of suffering—involves creating a type of becoming where the mind is so steady and alert that it can simply allow what has come into being to pass away of its own accord, thus avoiding the twin dangers of craving for becoming or for non-becoming.

My first inkling that the resolution of the paradox of becoming was strategic—and paradoxical itself—rather than simply linguistic came from reading the following passage in *The Autobiography of Phra Ajaan Lee.* In this passage, Ajaan Lee is teaching meditation to a senior scholarly monk in Bangkok.

> One day the Somdet said, ... "There's one thing I'm still doubtful about. To make the mind still and bring it down to its basic resting level *(bhavaṅga):* Isn't this the essence of becoming and birth?"
>
> "That's what concentration is," I told him, "becoming and birth."
>
> "But the Dhamma we're taught to practice is for the sake of doing away with becoming and birth. So what are we doing giving rise to more becoming and birth?"
>
> "If you don't make the mind take on becoming, it won't give rise to

knowledge, because knowledge has to come from becoming if it's going to do away with becoming."

This book is essentially an attempt to explore in detail the ways in which the Buddha's own resolution of the paradox of becoming employs the very same strategy.

In the course of writing this book, I found it necessary to revisit themes treated in some of my earlier writings. For instance, the topics of clinging and Unbinding, treated in *The Mind Like Fire Unbound,* and kamma and causality, treated in *The Wings to Awakening,* had to be covered again to give a full picture of the causes of becoming along with a sense of the rewards that come when becoming is overcome. But even though there is some overlap between this book and those—in terms of points made and passages cited—I am treating these topics from a different angle, posing different questions and arriving at a different range of answers. Thus the discussion here, instead of being redundant, adds new dimensions to what was written in those earlier works.

Many people have read earlier incarnations of the manuscript for this book and offered valuable suggestions for improving its substance and style. In addition to the monks here at the monastery, I would like to thank the following people for their help: Ven. Pasanno Bhikkhu, Ven. Amaro Bhikkhu, Michael Barber, Peter Clothier, Peter Doobinin, Bok-Lim Kim, Nate Osgood, Xiao-Quan Osgood, Rose St. John, Mary Talbot, Ginger Vathanasombat, Barbara Wright, and Michael Zoll. Any mistakes, of course, are my own responsibility.

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Introduction

We live in the same world, but in different worlds. The differences come partly from our living in different places. If you live to the east of a mountain and I to the west, my world will have a mountain blocking its sunrises, and yours its sunsets. But—depending on what we want out of the world—our worlds can also differ even when we stand in the same place. A painter, a skier, and a miner looking at a mountain from the same side will see different mountains.

Our worlds are also different in the sense that each person can move from one world to another—sometimes very quickly—over time. If you're a painter, a skier, and a miner, you will see the same mountain in different ways depending on what you want from it at any given moment—beauty, adventure, or wealth. Even if you stay focused on nothing but the desire to paint, the beauty you want from the mountain will change with time—sometimes over years, sometimes from one moment to the next. Your identity as a painter will continue to evolve. Each and every desire, in fact, has its own separate world; and within those worlds, we take on different identities.

The Buddha had a word for this experience of an identity inhabiting a world defined around a specific desire. He called it *bhava,* which is related to the verb *bhavati,* to "be," or to "become." He was especially interested in bhava as process—how it comes about, and how it can be ended. So "becoming" is probably a better English rendering for the term than "being" or "existence," especially as it follows on doing, rather than existing as a prior metaphysical absolute or ground. In other words, it's not the source from which we come; it's something produced by the activity of our minds.

The Buddha's analysis of becoming as process throws a great deal of light on how imaginary, fictional, or dream worlds are created, but that was not his main concern. He was more interested in seeing how the process of becoming relates to the way suffering and stress are brought about and how they can be brought to an end. One of his first discoveries in analyzing the relationship between becoming and suffering was that the processes of becoming operate on different scales in space and time. The process by which the mind creates a psychological sense of location for itself in states of becoming within this lifetime is the same process by which it establishes a

location for itself in another world after death. The question of whether death was followed by rebirth was hotly debated in the Buddha's time, so in teaching the fact of rebirth he was not simply parroting the assumptions of his culture. The experience of his Awakening is what gave him proof that becoming has both psychological and cosmological dimensions—within the moment and stretching over lifetimes—with a parallel pattern in each. You can learn how the mind finds a place for rebirth by watching how it moves from one becoming to another here and now.

The Buddha's Awakening also taught him that the craving and clinging leading to stress are identical to the craving and clinging that lead to becoming. So becoming is inevitably stressful. This explains why the typical human way of avoiding suffering—which is to replace one state of becoming with another—can never fully succeed. If, to escape the sufferings of being a painter, you decide to become a miner instead, you simply exchange one set of sufferings for another. Regardless of what identity you take on, or however you experience the mountain of the world, it's going to entail some degree of stress.

Thus to put an end to suffering, it's necessary to put an end to becoming. And to do that, it's necessary to understand the process that gives rise to becoming, so that the problem can be attacked at its cause. This is why the Buddha focused on becoming as process. And he found that the process has three components, which he likened to the act of planting a seed in a field. The field stands for the range of possibilities offered by past and present kamma. The seed stands for consciousness, together with other kammic factors that nourish it. The water moistening the seed represents the present mental act of craving and clinging, which fixes on a specific spot in the range of possibilities offered by the field, allowing becoming to develop from the potentials offered by the seed.

This is where the Buddha ran into the central paradox of becoming, because the craving and clinging that provide the moisture do not have to delight in the field or the resultant becoming in order to bear fruit. If the mind fastens on a particular set of possibilities with the aim of changing or obliterating them, that acts as moisture for a state of becoming as well. Thus the desire to put an end to becoming produces a new state of becoming.

Because any desire that produces becoming also produces suffering, the Buddha was faced with a strategic challenge: how to put an end to suffering when the desire to put an end to suffering would lead to renewed suffering. His solution to this problem involved a paradoxical strategy, creating a state of becoming in the mind from which he could watch the potentials of kamma as they come into being, but without fueling the desire to do anything with

regard to those potentials at all. In the terms of the field analogy, this solution would deprive the seed of moisture. Eventually, when all other states of becoming had been allowed to pass away, the state of becoming that had acted as the strategic vantage point would have to be deprived of moisture as well. Because the moisture of craving and clinging would have seeped into the seed even of this strategic becoming, this would eventually mean the destruction of the seed, as that moisture and any conditioned aspects of consciousness the seed might contain were allowed to pass away. But any unconditioned aspects of consciousness—if they existed—wouldn't be touched at all.

This is precisely what the Buddha attempted, and he found that the strategy worked. Becoming could be allowed to end through creating a specific state of becoming—the condition of mental absorption known as *jhāna*—watered by specific types of craving and clinging. This type of becoming, together with its appropriate causes, is what constitutes the path he later taught. Once the path had done its work, he found, it could be abandoned through a process of perceptual deconstruction, and the quest for the end of suffering would be complete. Freed from both suffering and becoming, the mind would be totally released from the limitations of any identity or location—a freedom that beggars the imagination, but captures it as well.

This book is an attempt to analyze the Buddha's teachings on becoming, and in particular to probe the paradox of becoming and the Buddha's paradoxical strategy in response to it. It is organized as follows:

The first chapter explores two stories illustrating the process of becoming in both its psychological and cosmological dimensions, providing a broad sketch of the role played by past and present kamma in bringing it about.

The second chapter explores two versions of the field analogy, showing how they throw light on the broad sketch provided in Chapter One, and in particular on the way in which craving and clinging provide the sense of location—the "there"—at the center of any state of becoming.

The third chapter explores the three levels of karma—pertaining to sensuality, form, and formlessness—that provide openings for the three levels of becoming, both now and in future lifetimes.

The fourth chapter explores the four types of clinging—to sensuality, to views, to habits and practices, and to doctrines of self—again showing the consequences of these forms of clinging both now and after death. It also shows how all forms of clinging are based on clinging to a view, anticipating

the results of clinging, and how they also involve, explicitly or implicitly, attachment to certain habits and practices, together with doctrines of the self. The fact that every form of clinging incorporates these three types explains why the state of becoming that constitutes the path depends on these three types of clinging as well.

The fifth chapter explores three modes of practice taught in the Buddha's time that were unsuccessful in putting an end to becoming because they were based on an incomplete understanding of clinging.

The sixth chapter then explores the Buddhist path as an attempt to create a state of becoming that allows for the mind to view what has come to be simply as it has come to be, without watering the desire either to destroy it or to turn it into a further state of becoming. The first part of this chapter focuses on why jhāna, a strong meditative absorption free of sensuality, is the state of becoming suited to this task. The second part focuses on the types of perception used to undercut all clinging, even to the path itself.

The final chapter focuses on passages from the Canon describing the experience of a person who has gone beyond all the limitations of becoming to a freedom totally beyond identity and location.

In presenting this material, I have included many passages from the Pāli Canon, so as to provide direct access to the words of the Buddha and his awakened disciples. Seven passages in particular have provided the framework for the discussion. To keep them from getting lost in the plethora of other quotations, and to help the reader keep their importance in mind, I am giving them here. The book as a whole can be understood as an exploration of the first passage, with the remaining six passages providing guidance in the quest to make the hints given in the first passage clear.

The first passage—excerpts from the Buddha's first sermon—sets out the general terms of the thesis: The second noble truth states the paradox of becoming; the duty appropriate to the fourth noble truth hints at the Buddha's paradoxical strategy in finding a path around the original paradox; and his claim to Awakening hints at the type of knowledge beyond becoming and non-becoming that the path allows.

To expand on these points, the second and third passages give the two versions of the field analogy with which the Buddha explains the process of becoming, with the second passage also delineating the three levels on which becoming can take place. The fourth passage sets forth in more detail the strategy by which one can put an end to becoming without falling into the trap of craving either becoming or non-becoming. The fifth passage points to

the paradoxical element in the strategy: the state of becoming—concentration—that has to be developed for the strategy to function. The sixth passage details the mode of perception—the highest form of right view, freed from thoughts of being and non-being—that, based on concentration, carries through with the strategy. Finally, the seventh passage offers an analogy for understanding consciousness freed from the limitations of becoming after the Buddha's strategy has done its work.

§ 1. "And this, monks, is the noble truth of the origination of stress: the craving that makes for renewed becoming *(bhava)*—accompanied by passion & delight, relishing now here & now there—i.e., craving for sensuality, craving for becoming, craving for non-becoming….

"Vision arose, insight arose, discernment arose, knowledge arose, illumination arose within me with regard to things never heard before: 'This is the noble truth of the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress' …. 'This noble truth of the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress is to be developed *(bhāvetabba)*' …. 'This noble truth of the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress has been developed' ….

"As soon as this—my three-round, twelve-permutation knowledge & vision concerning these four noble truths as they have come to be *(bhūta)*—was truly pure, then I did claim to have directly awakened to the right self-awakening unexcelled in the cosmos with its devas, Maras & Brahmās, with its contemplatives & priests, its royalty & commonfolk. Knowledge & vision arose in me: 'Unprovoked is my release. This is the last birth. There is now no further becoming.'" — *SN 56:11*

§ 2. Ven. Ānanda: "This word, 'becoming, becoming'—to what extent is there becoming?"

The Buddha: "If there were no kamma ripening in the sensuality-property, would sensuality-becoming be discerned?"

Ven. Ānanda: "No, lord."

The Buddha: "Thus kamma is the field, consciousness the seed, and craving the moisture. The consciousness of living beings hindered by ignorance & fettered by craving is established in/tuned to a lower property. Thus there is the production of renewed becoming in the future.

"If there were no kamma ripening in the form-property, would form-becoming be discerned?"

Ven. Ānanda: "No, lord."

The Buddha: "Thus kamma is the field, consciousness the seed, and craving the moisture. The consciousness of living beings hindered by ignorance & fettered by craving is established in/tuned to a middling property. Thus there is the production of renewed becoming in the future.

"If there were no kamma ripening in the formless-property, would formless-becoming be discerned?"

Ven. Ānanda: "No, lord."

The Buddha: "Thus kamma is the field, consciousness the seed, and craving the moisture. The consciousness of living beings hindered by ignorance & fettered by craving is established in/tuned to a refined property. Thus there is the production of renewed becoming in the future. This is how there is becoming." — *AN 3:76*

§ 3. "Like the earth property, monks, is how the four standing-spots for consciousness should be seen. Like the liquid property is how delight & passion should be seen. Like the five means of (plant) propagation is how consciousness together with its nutriment should be seen.

"Should consciousness, when standing, stand attached to form, supported by form [as its object], landing on form, watered with delight, it would exhibit growth, increase, & proliferation.

"Should consciousness, when standing, stand attached to feeling, supported by feeling [as its object], landing on feeling, watered with delight, it would exhibit growth, increase, & proliferation.

"Should consciousness, when standing, stand attached to perception, supported by perception [as its object], landing on perception, watered with delight, it would exhibit growth, increase, & proliferation.

"Should consciousness, when standing, stand attached to fabrications, supported by fabrications [as its object], landing on fabrications, watered with delight, it would exhibit growth, increase, & proliferation.

"Were someone to say, 'I will describe a coming, a going, a passing away, an arising, a growth, an increase, or a proliferation of consciousness apart from form, from feeling, from perception, from fabrications,' that would be impossible." — *SN 22:54*

§ 4. "Overcome by two viewpoints, some human & divine beings adhere, other human & divine beings slip right past, while those with vision see.

"And how do some adhere? Human & divine beings delight in becoming, enjoy becoming, are satisfied with becoming. When the Dhamma is being taught for the sake of the cessation of becoming, their minds do not take to it, are not calmed by it, do not settle on it, or become resolved on it. This is how some adhere.

"And how do some slip right past? Some, feeling horrified, humiliated, & disgusted with that very becoming, delight in non-becoming: 'When this self, at the break-up of the body, after death, perishes & is destroyed, and does not exist after death, that is peaceful, that is exquisite, that is sufficiency!' This is how some slip right past.

"And how do those with vision see? There is the case where a monk sees what's come to be as what's come to be. Seeing this, he practices for disenchantment with what's come to be, dispassion for what's come to be, and the cessation of what's come to be. This is how those with vision see….

Those, having seen
what's come to be
    as what's come to be,
and what's gone beyond
    what's come to be,
are released in line
    with what's come to be,
through the exhaustion of craving for becoming.
If they've comprehended what's come to be—
    and are free from craving
    for becoming & not-,
            with the non-becoming
            of what's come to be—
monks come to no renewed becoming. — *Iti 49*

§ 5. "Develop *(bhāvetha)* concentration, monks. A concentrated monk discerns things as they have come to be. And what does he discern as it has come to be?

"'This is stress,' he discerns as it has come to be. 'This is the origination of stress… This is the cessation of stress… This is the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress,' he discerns as it has come

to be." — *SN 56:1*

§ 6. "By & large, Kaccāyana, this world is supported by/takes as its object a polarity, that of existence & non-existence. But when one sees the origination of the world [the six sense media] with right discernment as it has come to be, "non-existence" with reference to the world does not occur to one. When one sees the cessation of the world with right discernment as it has come to be, "existence" with reference to the world does not occur to one.

"By & large, Kaccāyana, this world is in bondage to attachments, clingings, & biases. But one such as this does not get involved with or cling to these attachments, clingings, fixations of awareness, biases, or obsessions; nor is he resolved on "my self." He has no uncertainty or doubt that mere stress, when arising, is arising; stress, when passing away, is passing away. In this, his knowledge is independent of others. It's to this extent, Kaccāyana, that there is right view." — *SN 12:15*

§ 7. "Where there is no passion for the nutriment of physical food, where there is no delight, no craving, then consciousness does not land there or grow. Where consciousness does not land or grow, name-&-form does not alight. Where name-&-form does not alight, there is no growth of fabrications. Where there is no growth of fabrications, there is no production of renewed becoming in the future. Where there is no production of renewed becoming in the future, there is no future birth, aging, & death. That, I tell you, has no sorrow, affliction, or despair.

[Similarly with the nutriment of contact, intellectual intention, and consciousness.]

"Just as if there were a roofed house or a roofed hall having windows on the north, the south, or the east. When the sun rises, and a ray has entered by way of the window, where does it land?"

"On the western wall, lord."

"And if there is no western wall, where does it land?"

"On the ground, lord."

"And if there is no ground, where does it land?"

"On the water, lord."

"And if there is no water, where does it land?"

"It does not land, lord."

"In the same way, where there is no passion for the nutriment of physical food… contact… intellectual intention… consciousness, where

there is no delight, no craving, then consciousness does not land there or grow. Where consciousness does not land or grow, name-&-form does not alight. Where name-&-form does not alight, there is no growth of fabrications. Where there is no growth of fabrications, there is no production of renewed becoming in the future. Where there is no production of renewed becoming in the future, there is no future birth, aging, & death. That, I tell you, has no sorrow, affliction, or despair." — *SN 12:64*

Chapter 1: Two Stories

In his first sermon, the Buddha begins his definition of the cause of stress and suffering with the phrase, "the craving that leads to renewed *bhava."* He ends his description of the fruits of his Awakening with the realization, "There is now no renewed *bhava."* These two statements show clearly that the concept of *bhava* is central to an understanding of suffering, its cause, and its cessation. And as we will see, it also plays a crucial role in the path to the cessation of stress and suffering. This means that it is central to all four of the four noble truths—truths lying at the heart of the Buddha's teaching as a whole. Yet the Buddha never gives an essential definition of what the word *bhava* means, so an understanding has to be pieced together from the way he uses it in his teachings.

Any Pāli dictionary will show that *bhava* is related to the verb *bhavati,* which means to "be" or to "become." This is why bhava is often translated as "being" or "becoming." But to see what kind of being or becoming is meant by the word, we have to look at it in context.

Bhava is included in a variety of lists describing mental states that an arahant—a fully awakened person—has overcome. Thus it is one of the three *āsavas,* or effluents; one of the four *oghas,* or floods; one of the four *yogas,* or burdens; and one of the seven *anusayas,* or obsessions. Although it does not occur in the standard list of ten *saṅyojanas*, or fetters, a standard formula describing the arahant states that he/she has "destroyed the fetter of becoming." Although these lists clearly indicate that bhava is regarded as something negative that has to be overcome for the sake of Awakening, they give no idea of what the term actually means.

For that, we have to look at a passage describing bhava in action. And the primary teaching supplying this context is dependent co-arising, the Buddha's most complete description of the factors leading to suffering and stress (see Appendix I). There, bhava is conditioned by craving and clinging; it acts as a condition for birth, which is followed by aging, illness, and death.

Two points stand out here. First, bhava is not "Being" in the sense of a primary metaphysical absolute. Instead, it is part of an on-going, dynamic process, something produced repeatedly in a complex network of cause and effect—what Sn 3:12 calls the "stream" of bhava. It's a type of being that follows on doing, a doing in anticipation of what will become. For this

reason, in choosing an English equivalent for bhava, "becoming" seems more appropriate than "being," in that it better captures bhava's conditioned, purposeful, dynamic nature.

Second, becoming acts as a transition point between two contexts in the stream of conditions leading to suffering. It is conditioned by such purely psychological factors as craving and clinging, and yet it provides the locus for processes that occur both on the psychological and cosmological level: birth, aging, illness, and death. In fact, one of the distinctive features of the Buddha's use of the notion of becoming is the ease with which he shifts the context of the term from the cosmological to the psychological and back. The reasons for this dual context are illustrated by two incidents from his accounts of how the cosmos evolves.

Although the Buddha famously said (SN 22:86) that all he taught was suffering and the end of suffering, the Pāli discourses occasionally portray him as using cosmological accounts to illustrate the underlying psychology of how suffering comes about and how it can be brought to an end. The accounts differ in their details, but the differences can be explained by the fact that the Buddha nowhere gives a master narrative on the origin of the cosmos. He always depicts the cosmos as a work in progress, showing how it develops not from the decisions of a single creator, but from the independent decisions of all the beings inhabiting it. Thus, he is free to choose from many diverse—sometimes simultaneous—story lines to teach different lessons. Still, his accounts share a common framework: The cosmos goes through repeated cycles of evolution or expansion, and devolution or contraction. The dual nature of becoming, both psychological and cosmological, appears clearly in two accounts that focus on how, after a period of contraction, the cosmos begins to evolve again.

The first account, told to explain how the idea of a creator god was first conceived, illustrates the change in becoming that occurs when a being leaves one level of the cosmos and reappears in another.

> "There ultimately comes a time when, with the passing of a long stretch of time, this world devolves. When the world is devolving, beings for the most part head toward the Radiant (brahmās). There they stay: mind-made, feeding on rapture, self-luminous, coursing through the air, established in beauty for a long stretch of time. Then there ultimately comes a time when, with the passing of a long stretch of time, this world evolves. When the world is evolving, an empty Brahmā palace appears. Then a certain being—from the exhaustion of his life span or the exhaustion of his merit—falls from the company of

the Radiant and re-arises in the empty Brahmā palace. And there he still stays mind-made, feeding on rapture, self-luminous, coursing through the air, established in beauty for a long stretch of time.

"After dwelling there alone for a long time, he experiences displeasure & agitation: 'O, if only other beings would come to this world!'

"Then other beings, through the ending of their life span or the ending of their merit, fall from the company of the Radiant and reappear in the Brahmā palace, in the company of that being. And there they still stay mind-made, feeding on rapture, self-luminous, coursing through the air, established in beauty for a long stretch of time.

"Then the thought occurred to the being who reappeared first: 'I am Brahmā, the Great Brahmā, the Conqueror, the Unconquered, the All-Seeing, All-Powerful, the Sovereign Lord, the Maker, Creator, Chief, Appointer and Ruler, Father of All That Have Been and Shall Be. These beings were created by me. Why is that? First the thought occurred to me, "O, if only other beings would come to this world!" And thus my direction of will brought these beings to this world.' As for the beings who reappear later, this thought occurred to them: 'This is Brahmā… Father of All That Have Been and Shall Be. We were created by this Brahmā. Why is that? We saw that he appeared here before, while we appeared after.' The being who reappeared first was of longer life span, more beautiful, & more influential, while the beings who reappeared later were of shorter life span, less beautiful, & less influential." — *DN 1*

Here a change in becoming happens because of the exhaustion of old kamma, in this case the meritorious kamma that kept these beings in the company of the Radiant. However, present kamma also plays a role in the shift from one lifetime to the next, in that one must cling to craving to make the shift.

"When a being sets this body aside and has not yet attained another body, I say that it is craving-sustained. Craving, Vaccha, is its sustenance at that time." — *SN 44:9*

In addition, a change in becoming also occurs after the new lifetime has begun. The mistaken perception that the Great Brahmā is a creator god, even though it does not change the physical details of the cosmos, does change the way he and the other beings experience the nature of the cosmos and their relationship to one another. This change in relationship will apparently

continue as long as the eon lasts. In this way, even though the change in becoming is more psychological than physical, its impact is no less lasting and strong.

The second cosmological account, however, describes how a change in becoming within the context of a single lifetime can actually alter the physical universe. This account, which carries allegorical overtones, was told to refute the racial pride of the brahmans, showing how racial pride, rather than any supposed racial inferiority in others, was what brought about the degeneration of the world.

> "There ultimately comes a time when, with the passing of a long stretch of time, this world devolves. When the world is devolving, beings for the most part head toward the Radiant (brahmās). There they stay: mind-made, feeding on rapture, self-luminous, coursing through the air, established in beauty for a long stretch of time. Then there ultimately comes a time when, with the passing of a long stretch of time, this world evolves. When the world is evolving, beings for the most part, falling from the company of the Radiant, come to this world. But they still stay mind-made, feeding on rapture, self-luminous, coursing through the air, established in beauty for a long stretch of time. And at that time there is just a single mass of water—blinding, a blinding darkness. No sun & moon are discernable, no asterisms or constellations, no day or night, no months or fortnights, no seasons or years, no male or female. Beings are reckoned simply as 'beings.'
>
> "Then ultimately, with the passing of a long stretch of time, a flavor-earth appeared on the water around those beings, just like the skin that appears on top of hot milk as it cools. It was consummate in color, consummate in aroma, consummate in flavor. Just like consummate ghee, consummate butter: Such was its color. Just like pure wild honey: Such was its taste.
>
> "Then a certain being of wanton nature, (thinking,) 'Now what might this be?' tasted the flavor-earth with his finger. On tasting the flavor-earth with his finger, he became enamored and his craving alighted. Then other beings, following his example, tasted the flavor-earth with their fingers. On tasting the flavor-earth with their fingers, they became enamored and their craving alighted. So those beings attacked the flavor-earth, tearing it to pieces with their hands to eat it. When they attacked the flavor-earth, tearing it to pieces with their hands to eat it, their self-luminosity vanished. With the vanishing of their self-luminosity, the sun & moon appeared. With the appearing of

> the sun & moon, the asterisms & constellations appeared. With the appearing of the asterisms & constellations, day & night appeared. With the appearing of day & night, seasons & years appeared. And to this extent did this world evolve again.
>
> "Then those beings, eating the flavor-earth, stayed for a long stretch of time with that as their food, with that as their nourishment. As they kept eating the flavor-earth… a coarseness grew in their bodies, and good & bad coloring were discernible. Some of them were endowed with good color, some with bad. At that point, those of a good color grew haughty toward those of a bad color: 'We are of a better coloring; those are of a worse.' Because of the color-haughtiness of those of a prideful & haughty nature, the flavor-earth disappeared." — *DN 27*

In this account, present kamma plays a predominant role in the change of becoming. As craving acquires a focus—this seems to be the meaning of "craving alights"—beings act on it. In acting on it, they themselves immediately change; and as they change, their experience of the world around them changes as well.

There is a familiar psychological truth here. People who have recovered from an addiction will recognize how their sense of themselves changed when the addiction began, how their perception of the world was also distorted while the addiction lasted, and how both they and the world around them changed when the addiction was finally overcome. If the addiction was for alcohol, they found themselves defined by the desire for alcohol, and the world around them defined by—and limited to—its ability or inability to provide them with the alcohol needed to satisfy that desire. Only when the addiction was overcome were they freed from those limitations. They are now different people, and the world a different place.

This connection between one's personal state and one's experience of the world—and the way in which both depend on the focal point of one's cravings—goes a long way toward explaining the combination of psychology and cosmology in the Buddha's concept of becoming. And although the cosmological passages depicting this connection are marked by a sly humor, the basic outlines of the picture they provide are confirmed by other discourses that treat the topic of becoming in more detail and earnestness. As that outline shows, becoming constitutes a sense of self-identity located in a particular world. The contours of that self and that world are determined by a combination of old kamma and new; their location is determined by an act of craving and desire.

Passages discussing the issue of becoming in more detail—to be discussed

in the following chapter—will show why this particular combination of elements necessarily leads to suffering. They will also show how these elements open a path to the end of suffering, and yet require that that path take several paradoxical turns.

Chapter 2: Two Analogies

AN 3:76 provides an analogy to describe how becoming is produced:

> "Kamma is the field, consciousness the seed, and craving the moisture."

The basic message of this analogy is relatively simple. Kamma provides the range of possibilities in which the seed of consciousness can be planted and on which it can feed. Craving is the moisture that keeps the seed alive and allows it to grow into a state of becoming.

The apparent simplicity of this analogy is complicated, however, by the fact that each of the three factors it covers—kamma, consciousness, and craving—is fairly complex.

Kamma, for instance, is complex both as a term and as a fact. As a term, it can mean different things in different contexts. In some, it means the intention motivating an action, along with the action itself.

> "Intention, I tell you, is kamma. Intending, one does kamma by way of body, speech, & intellect." — *AN 6:63*

In others, kamma means not only intentional action but also the results of that action.

> "Now what is old kamma? The eye is to be seen as old kamma, fabricated & willed, capable of being felt. The ear… The nose… The tongue… The body… The intellect is to be seen as old kamma, fabricated & willed, capable of being felt. This is called old kamma.
>
> "And what is new kamma? Whatever kamma one does now with the body, with speech, or with the intellect: This is called new kamma." — *SN 35:145*

As a fact, kamma is complex in that the relationship between old kamma and new kamma is more intertwined than a superficial reading of the above passage would indicate.

For example, the six sense media *(āyatana)* are old kamma in that they themselves and many of the objects that impinge on them are products of

past actions. However, this is not true of all the objects of the senses, for when a person does a present action, the action and its immediate results impinge on the senses as well. At the same time, one's experience of the input from the senses goes through many stages of mental filtering, as some sensory contacts are highlighted or elaborated on, while others are ignored or suppressed. This filtering is a form of present kamma, too, which means that all kamma—past or present—is experienced through the agency of present kamma.

Now, present kamma may often be influenced by past kamma, but it does not need to be. The mind can, if it wants to, make a break with old habits. A change in knowledge—new information, new standards of judging what is important and not—can lead to a change in one's present decisions. This means that past kamma does not absolutely determine one's experience of the present moment. This point needs to be emphasized strongly, for there is a common misperception that the Buddha's teachings on kamma are deterministic. Actually, the Buddha was a strong opponent of determinism.

> "Having approached the brahmans & contemplatives who hold that… 'Whatever a person experiences… is all caused by what was done in the past,' I said to them: 'Is it true that you hold that… whatever a person experiences… is all caused by what was done in the past?' Thus asked by me, they admitted, 'Yes.' Then I said to them, 'Then in that case, a person is a killer of living beings because of what was done in the past. A person is a thief… unchaste… a liar… a divisive speaker… a harsh speaker… an idle chatterer… greedy… malicious… a holder of wrong views because of what was done in the past.' When one falls back on what was done in the past as being essential, monks, there is no desire, no effort (at the thought), 'This should be done. This shouldn't be done.' When one can't pin down as a truth or reality what should & shouldn't be done, one dwells bewildered & unprotected. One cannot righteously refer to oneself as a contemplative. This was my first legitimate refutation of those brahmans & contemplatives who hold to such teachings, such views." — *AN 3:62*

> "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 & 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." — *AN 3:99*

In other words, there is a tendency for a certain type of kamma to lead to a certain type of result, but the intensity of that result is not a fixed thing. It is also influenced by a factor of present kamma: one's state of mind at the moment when a particular instance of past kamma ripens.

> "There is the case where a trifling evil act done by a certain individual takes him to hell. There is the case where the very same sort of trifling act done by another individual is experienced in the here & now, and for the most part barely appears for a moment.
>
> "Now, a trifling evil act done by what sort of individual takes him to hell? There is the case where a certain individual is undeveloped in the body [i.e., pleasant feelings can invade the mind and stay there—see MN 36], undeveloped in virtue, undeveloped in mind [i.e., painful feelings can invade the mind and stay there], undeveloped in discernment: restricted, small-hearted, dwelling with suffering. A trifling evil act done by this sort of individual takes him to hell.
>
> "Now, a trifling evil act done by what sort of individual is experienced in the here & now, and for the most part barely appears for a moment? There is the case where a certain individual is developed in the body [i.e., pleasant feelings cannot invade the mind and stay there], developed in virtue, developed in mind [i.e., painful feelings cannot invade the mind and stay there], developed in discernment: unrestricted, large-hearted, dwelling with the unlimited. A trifling evil act done by this sort of individual is experienced in the here & now, and for the most part barely appears for a moment.
>
> "Suppose that a man were to drop a lump of salt into a small amount of water in a cup. What do you think? Would the water in the cup become salty because of the lump of salt, and unfit to drink?"
>
> "Yes, lord…."
>
> "Now suppose that a man were to drop a lump of salt into the River Ganges. What do you think? Would the water in the River Ganges become salty because of the lump of salt, and unfit to drink?"
>
> "No, lord…."
>
> "In the same way, there is the case where a trifling evil act done by one individual [the first] takes him to hell; and there is the case where the very same sort of trifling act done by the other individual is experienced in the here & now, and for the most part barely appears for a moment." — *AN 3:99*

Thus the kamma of one's state of mind in the present moment plays a crucial role in influencing how the ripening of past kamma is experienced. In terms of the six senses, this means that past kamma offers a range of possibilities as to what might be experienced at a particular moment, while present kamma chooses among those possibilities to create an actual experience.

The territory covered by the six sense media is sometimes analyzed in an alternative mode, as the five aggregates *(khandha)* of form, feeling, perception, fabrication, and consciousness. And the same pattern of interaction between past and present kamma applies to this mode of analysis as well. A great deal of the raw material shaping the five aggregates comes from past kamma, while the intentional processes of fabrication operating in the present shapes this raw material into an actual experience of the aggregates:

> "Because they fabricate fabricated things, thus they are called 'fabrications.' What do they fabricate as a fabricated thing? For the sake of form-ness, they fabricate form as a fabricated thing. For the sake of feeling-ness, they fabricate feeling as a fabricated thing. For the sake of perception-hood… For the sake of fabrication-hood… For the sake of consciousness-hood, they fabricate consciousness as a fabricated thing. Because they fabricate fabricated things, they are called fabrications." *— SN 22:79*

In other words, there exists at any moment the potential for many different ways of experiencing the aggregates. In some cases, past kamma plays a role in limiting these potentials; in others, it opens opportunities. Fabrication—which SN 22:56 equates with intention—chooses from among these limitations and opportunities to shape the actual experience of a particular type of aggregate in the present moment.

Because new and old kamma are so intimately intertwined, it would appear that *kamma* in the field analogy is meant to cover kamma both past and present. This point is confirmed in two ways when we look at the way kamma functions in dependent co-arising as a factor leading to the arising of becoming.

First, the principle of causality underlying dependent co-arising involves the interaction of past and present causes in shaping any present experience. Thus it would follow that both past and present kamma can act as a precondition for any present state of becoming.

The causal principle is this:

"(1) When this is, that is.
(2) From the arising of this comes the arising of that.
(3) When this isn't, that isn't.
(4) From the ceasing of this comes the ceasing of that." — *AN 10:92*

This pattern is best understood as the interaction of two principles. The more obvious of the two, expressed in (2) and (4), connects events over time. The arising of A will, at some point in time, cause the arising of B. The ceasing of A will, at some point in time, cause the ceasing of B. An example here would be the relation between a physical feeling of pleasure or pain and a complex emotion (or, to use the Buddhist technical term, a fabrication) based on the feeling: There can be a lapse in time between the arising of the feeling and the arising of the emotion, just as there can be a lapse in time between their ceasing.

The second principle, expressed in (1) and (3), connects two events in the present moment. When A exists, B exists. When A stops existing, B stops existing. This principle operates primarily on the level of subtle mind states repeatedly arising and passing away, with the process—for example—of each moment of attachment's aging-and-death occurring simultaneously with the process of its taking birth. The Buddha stated that his ability to detect this level of causality was a "breakthrough of discernment" (SN 12:10; SN 12:65), which suggests how difficult it is to perceive. Nevertheless, the principle can be readily observed in the relation between contact and feeling: When contact arises at any of the senses, a corresponding feeling immediately arises; when the contact stops, the feeling immediately stops.

These two causal principles intersect, so that any particular experience will be conditioned by both past and present events. This indicates that the field of kamma in which becoming can grow would also consist of kamma both past and present.

The second way in which dependent co-arising confirms that the field of kamma is composed of both past and present kamma is that kamma appears twice in the list of factors in dependent co-arising, once as intention and once as the results of past intentions. Its first appearance is under the factor of *name,* where it appears as the sub-factor of *intention.* Then, in the adjacent factor, it appears as the six sense media, i.e., old kamma. Because of the dual causal pattern underlying dependent co-arising as a whole, the relationship between intention and the six sense media can operate on two levels. On the one hand, *intention* can function as the past intention that ripens in the present as an experience of the raw data at the senses. An example would be an intention to follow the practices leading to a human rebirth, resulting in

the experience of human sensual pleasures in a later lifetime. On the other hand, *intention* can function as the present intention shaping the raw data at the senses into an intended direction or interpretation. An example here would be the intention to focus on attractive sights, etc., in order to provoke lust within the mind.

Thus, in terms of kamma's role in the field analogy, the field of possibilities for renewed becoming is clearly composed of both past and present kamma, both intentions and the results of intentional action. Because kamma is fabricated through mental activity, this means that—just as becoming is not a primary metaphysical absolute—neither is its ground. Becoming is not grounded in the unconditioned, or in the absolute of "singleness" or the All. This is why, in MN 1, the Buddha is highly critical of anyone who would try to posit any of these ideas as the source of being. At the same time, becoming does not arise inevitably from its ground. Instead, past and present kamma simply provide the range of possibilities in which the seed of consciousness, moistened by craving, can grow into renewed becoming.

The second factor in the field analogy—**consciousness** of the six senses—occurs, like kamma, both explicitly and implicitly in the list of factors comprising dependent co-arising. The simple fact of its appearance in this list is noteworthy. All of the factors listed in dependent co-arising are conditioned events, which means that sensory consciousness as a member of the list is not functioning as a metaphysical absolute or pure essence. It is a kammically active and productive function, neither experienced nor existing in and of itself. It is something that is done. It occurs and is experienced as part of a causal network, conditioned by the factors from which it is born, and conditioning other factors to which it gives birth. This is why the Buddha depicts it as a seed.

> "Just as fire is classified by the condition dependent on which it arises—fire burning in dependence on a log is classified as a log fire, fire burning in dependence on wood-chips is classified as a wood-chip fire, fire burning in dependence on grass is classified as a grass fire, fire burning in dependence on cow dung is classified as a cow dung fire, fire burning in dependence on chaff is classified as a chaff fire, fire burning in dependence on rubbish is classified as a rubbish fire—in the same way, consciousness is classified by the condition dependent on which it arises. Consciousness that arises in dependence on the eye and forms is classified as eye-consciousness. Consciousness that arises in dependence on the ear and sounds is classified as ear-consciousness.

Consciousness that arises in dependence on the nose and aromas is classified as nose-consciousness. Consciousness that arises in dependence on the tongue and flavors is classified as tongue-consciousness. Consciousness that arises in dependence on the body and tactile sensations is classified as body-consciousness. Consciousness that arises in dependence on the intellect and ideas is classified as intellect-consciousness." — *MN 38*

"It's in dependence on a pair that consciousness comes into play. And how does consciousness come into play in dependence on a pair? In dependence on the eye & forms there arises eye-consciousness. The eye is inconstant, changeable, of a nature to become otherwise. Forms are inconstant, changeable, of a nature to become otherwise. Thus this pair is both wavering & fluctuating—inconstant, changeable, of a nature to become otherwise.

"Eye-consciousness is inconstant, changeable, of a nature to become otherwise. Whatever is the cause, the requisite condition, for the arising of eye-consciousness, that is inconstant, changeable, of a nature to become otherwise. Having arisen in dependence on an inconstant factor, how could eye-consciousness be constant? [Similarly with ear-, nose-, tongue-, body-, and intellect-consciousness.]" — *SN 35:93*

For this reason, any state of becoming dependent on the seed of consciousness grows from an unstable seed. We have noted above that the basic principle of causality underlying dependent co-arising is inherently complex because it involves the interaction of many past and present causes and effects. It is also inherently unstable, for in addition to explaining how events cause other events to arise, it also shows that the passing away of causes will inevitably entail the passing away of their effects. This principle is so important that Ven. Assaji, one of the five brethren who listened to the Buddha's first sermon, declared it to be the essence of the Buddha's teachings.

"Whatever phenomena arise from cause:
their cause
and their cessation.
Such is the teaching of the Tathāgata,
the Great Contemplative." — *Mv.1.23*

Thus any state of becoming dependent on consciousness—which is liable to arise and pass away—is also liable to pass away. This inherent instability

is one of the prime reasons why becoming is inherently stressful.

This instability is compounded by the fact that consciousness occurs twice in the pattern of dependent co-arising, once explicitly and once implicitly. Its first occurrence, explicit, is prior to name and form—and thus to intention—and to the six sense media. This would seem to contradict the above passages from MN 38 and SN 35:93, as well as the field analogy, in which the past-kammic elements in the field exist prior to the seed. However, consciousness also occurs implicitly in dependent co-arising in the factor of contact, which follows the six sense media.

> "It's in dependence on a pair that consciousness comes into play. And how does consciousness come into play in dependence on a pair? In dependence on the eye & forms there arises eye-consciousness…. The coming together, the meeting, the convergence of these three phenomena is eye-contact. [Similarly with the ear, nose, tongue, body, and intellect.]" — *SN 35:93*

Thus consciousness, in its first and second occurrences in dependent co-arising, both precedes and follows the six sense media, both precedes and follows intention. In fact, the continuation of the above passage states that another level of intention follows on this second occurrence of consciousness as well.

> "Contacted, one feels. *Contacted, one intends.* Contacted, one perceives. These phenomena are both wavering & fluctuating—inconstant, changeable, of a nature to become otherwise. [Similarly with the ear, nose, tongue, body, and intellect.]" — *SN 35:93* (emphasis added)

This alternating pattern between consciousness and intention can be explained in two ways. First, the general complexity of the causal principle underlying dependent co-arising—with present causes interacting with past causes to shape the present moment—opens the door to many feedback loops of just this sort. Consciousness and feeling, for example, alternate in just this way, as do consciousness and perception. Second, the specific interaction of consciousness and intention here helps to explain the nested quality of becoming, in which one state of becoming can start within another one, which is nested in yet another one, much like a set of nested boxes or Russian dolls. For example, the seed of consciousness that led to one's birth on this physical plane of becoming is what has made possible one's experience of this world through the six senses. Based on intentions

interacting with that experience, other moments of consciousness have been conditioned, which serve as seeds for purely mental states of becoming within this lifetime: dreams, plans, and worlds of the imagination. Within those states of becoming, the mind produces further intentions and encounters another level of sensory experience, which conditions further moments of consciousness, and so on—dreams within dreams, stories within stories.

And, from the Buddha's point of view, instability within instability and—for the most part—suffering compounded by suffering.

Viewed in light of the field analogy, the interaction of consciousness with old and new kamma shows how the field of possibilities for renewed becoming is potentially infinitely renewable. Just as plants growing in soil fertilize the soil when they decay, so too acts of consciousness interacting with old and new kamma lead to further new kamma—which, on becoming old kamma, can continue to act as soil nourishing further seeds of consciousness well into the future.

However, this process requires one further element for those seeds to grow: the moisture of **craving,** the third factor in the field analogy. At first glance, craving would not seem to merit a separate function within the field analogy, for it is a type of present kamma, and as such could be included as part of the field. However, in the Buddha's definition of the craving that leads to renewed becoming, he states that one of the primary functions of craving is as a locator: choosing a location to relish, around which a state of becoming can form.

> "And this, monks, is the noble truth of the origination of stress: the craving that makes for renewed becoming—accompanied by passion & delight, relishing now here & now there…." *— SN 56:11*

Thus the moisture of craving is a type of kamma that chooses which seeds, planted where in the field, will grow. Only the seeds moistened in this way will develop into states of becoming. In other words, the mental qualities of passion, delight, and craving select a particular spot in experience to focus on, and in so doing provide a place for becoming to be produced. This is why discourses such as Sn 5:2 and Thag 14:2 describe craving as a "seamstress": It stitches the elements of becoming together, like a button on a piece of cloth, in a particular place. The story of flavor-earth illustrates this principle when it describes craving as "alighting" on the flavor-earth. We should keep in mind, though, that the notion of *place* here is not limited to a physical place. It can also denote a mental event, as when a feeling,

perception, or act of consciousness becomes the nucleus around which a state of becoming can grow.

As we have seen in the analysis of the field, this nucleus can be composed either of past or present kamma: either the raw materials provided by past kamma or the activity of present intentions shaping those materials into a desirable form. When the raw materials from the past are favorable, craving can focus on trying to extend them and squeeze as much pleasure out of them as possible. When they are unfavorable, it can focus on trying to destroy them or convert them into something better. In either case, craving requires a constant doing, in anticipation of the happiness to which the doing will lead. In using the word *anticipation* here, however, it is important to note that, with so much kamma focused on shaping the present, anticipation means not only a desire for the future but also a desire to mold a favorable present moment.

This anticipation is often accompanied by delight—either in the prospect of maintaining a pleasant situation or changing an unfavorable one. And as the Buddha points out, this delight is equivalent to clinging.

> "There is the case where one enjoys, welcomes, & remains fastened. And what does one enjoy & welcome, to what does one remain fastened? One enjoys, welcomes, & remains fastened to form. As one enjoys, welcomes, & remains fastened to form, there arises delight. *Any delight in form is clinging.* [Similarly with feeling, perception, fabrications, and consciousness.]" — *SN 22:5* (emphasis added)

This means that the origination of stress, as defined above, is not craving alone; it is craving plus clinging. When these two qualities land on any of the aggregates, they produce clinging-aggregates, which form the essence of suffering and stress in the context of the four noble truths. And because craving and clinging are the proximate causes of becoming, every state of becoming is thus permeated—either subtly or blatantly—with stress.

This stress is compounded by the fact that craving and clinging are so haphazard and erratic. As the standard definition of the origination of stress notes, they relish "now here, now there." They can change their focus at any moment, abandoning the construction of one state of becoming to start work on a new one.

In terms of the field analogy, the primary reason why craving and clinging focus on a particular spot in the field is to enjoy the potential happiness they anticipate that the spot has to offer. However, when the spot is fabricated, it is tied to other conditions—those on which it depends, and

those that depend on it. Craving and clinging are thus tied to those other conditions as well, whether they are desirable or not.

For example, a seed may be planted in a lovely spot, but if a drought, flood, or fire comes through the spot, the resulting plant could easily be killed. Even when craving and clinging try to avoid this drawback by moving their location from place to place—this is, in fact, their most common tactic for avoiding pain—the mind becomes exhausted from its inability to find genuine rest. Often, in rash desperation to escape an undesirable place, craving and clinging choose another place without careful consideration, landing in spots that quickly prove disastrous. And of course the mind is extremely fickle. Having decided that it likes a particular spot, it can immediately change its mind. This change can come so quickly that the Buddha—normally a master of the apt analogy—had to admit that he could not find an adequate analogy for it.

> "I don't envision a single thing that is as quick to reverse itself as the mind—so much so that there is no satisfactory simile for how quick to reverse itself it is." *— AN 1:48*

Thus the fluid changeability of the moisture of craving adds even more stress to the stress already inherent in the instability of the field and the seed.

In this way the field analogy shows how elements that are stressful and conditioned—kamma, consciousness, and craving—combine to form states of becoming that are inherently stressful and conditioned as well. "Being" is not an absolute state; it fluctuates as becoming, which in turn is based on unstable ground and given life by fleeting acts of consciousness and fickle acts of craving and clinging.

However, before we draw further lessons from this analogy, it is important to note that SN 22:54 contains another version of the analogy, with some interesting variations. Considering the two analogies together helps to bring some of their elements into fuller relief.

The second field analogy is this:

> "Like the earth property, monks, is how the four standing-spots for consciousness [the aggregates of form, feeling, perception, and fabrications] should be seen. Like the liquid property is how delight & passion should be seen. Like the five means of (plant) propagation [roots, stems, joints, cuttings, and seeds] is how consciousness together with its nutriment should be seen.
>
> "Should consciousness, when standing, stand attached to form,

supported by form, landing on form, watered with delight, it would exhibit growth, increase, & proliferation.

"Should consciousness, when standing, stand attached to feeling, supported by feeling, landing on feeling, watered with delight, it would exhibit growth, increase, & proliferation.

"Should consciousness, when standing, stand attached to perception, supported by perception, landing on perception, watered with delight, it would exhibit growth, increase, & proliferation.

"Should consciousness, when standing, stand attached to fabrications, supported by fabrications, landing on fabrications, watered with delight, it would exhibit growth, increase, & proliferation.

"Were someone to say, 'I will describe a coming, a going, a passing away, an arising, a growth, an increase, or a proliferation of consciousness apart from form, from feeling, from perception, from fabrications,' that would be impossible." — *SN 22:54*

Although this second field analogy differs in some details from the first, both share a common structure: ground, seed, and moisture. The ground in the first is kamma, whereas in the second it's the first four aggregates: form, feeling, perception, and fabrication. The seed in the first is consciousness, whereas in the second it's consciousness together with its nutriment. The moisture in the first is craving, whereas in the second it's delight.

As our discussion has already shown, some of these differences even in the details are not differences at all. The four aggregates are composed of both past and present kamma. Delight is conjoined with craving in the standard definition of the origination of stress. The main difference is that the seed of consciousness in the second analogy is supplied with nutriment—actually, with four kinds of nutriment. Even here, though, the difference is one more of emphasis than of substance, for the four nutriments of consciousness are simply versions of kamma past and present.

"Where there is passion, delight, & craving for the nutriment of physical food, consciousness lands there and increases…. Where there is passion, delight, & craving for the nutriment of contact… intellectual intention… consciousness, consciousness lands there and increases." — *SN 12:64*

Physical food becomes available through kamma past and present. *Contact* is listed twice in the description of dependent co-arising, once as a sub-factor

under name-&-form, and once as the intermediate link between the six senses and feeling. In the latter location, "contact" obviously means sensory contact. In the former, its meaning is less obvious but it apparently means contact among the various mental events and physical properties that make up name-&-form. Although the standard description of dependent co-arising lists name-&-form as dependent on consciousness—in which case consciousness would serve as food for contact—other versions of dependent co-arising (e.g., at DN 15 and SN 12:67) list name-&-form and consciousness side by side as mutually supporting. Thus "contact" in this context apparently means contact among mental events and the physical properties. Because these events and properties are shaped by kamma, contact is shaped by kamma as well.

Because kamma is defined as intention, the nutriment of *intellectual intention* is simply mental kamma in the present. *Consciousness* is listed as the fourth nutriment for consciousness because, as we have already seen, consciousness appears twice in the standard list of dependent co-arising, allowing the first occurrence of consciousness to act as food for the second. Consciousness in the role of nutriment apparently corresponds to the consciousness aggregate, which would explain why many discourses discuss all five aggregates, and not just the first four, as the ground for becoming.

Some passages in the Canon actually depict all four forms of nutriment as a ground for becoming, thus supporting the interpretation that they are essentially kamma with another name.

> "Where there is passion, delight, & craving for the nutriment of physical food, consciousness lands there and increases. Where consciousness lands and increases, there is the alighting of name-&-form. Where there is the alighting of name-&-form, there is the growth of fabrications. Where there is the growth of fabrications, there is the production of renewed becoming in the future. Where there is the production of renewed becoming in the future, there is future birth, aging, & death, together, I tell you, with sorrow, affliction, & despair. [Similarly with the nutriments of contact, intellectual intention, and consciousness.]" — *SN 12:64*

So the introduction of kamma as nutriment in the second field analogy adds nothing substantially new to the first. What it does add is an emphasis on an important aspect of conditionality as a whole, which is that causal dependency is best seen as an act of feeding. The Buddha underscores this point with his most fundamental teachings on the topic. In the Novice's

Questions, a short catechism for young people, he introduces the theme of conditionality in the very first question, under the image of feeding.

"What is one?—All beings subsist on nutriment." — *Khp 4*

Unlike later schools of Buddhism, which illustrate causal dependence with the image of light reflecting from jewels and mirrors—suggesting an innocent, dazzlingly beautiful process—the Buddha uses the image of feeding to portray causal dependence in a much more disturbing way, so as to induce dispassion for it.

"And how is *physical food* to be regarded? Suppose a couple, husband & wife, taking meager provisions, were to travel through a desert. With them would be their only baby son, dear & appealing. Then the meager provisions of the couple going through the desert would be used up & depleted while there was still a stretch of the desert yet to be crossed. The thought would occur to them, 'Our meager provisions are used up & depleted while there is still a stretch of this desert yet to be crossed. What if we were to kill this only baby son of ours, dear & appealing, and make dried meat & jerky. That way —chewing on the flesh of our son—at least the two of us would make it through this desert. Otherwise, all three of us would perish.' So they would kill their only baby son, dear & appealing, and make dried meat & jerky. Chewing on the flesh of their son, they would make it through the desert. While eating the flesh of their only son, they would beat their breasts, (crying,) 'Where have you gone, our only baby son? Where have you gone, our only baby son?' Now what do you think, monks: Would that couple eat that food playfully or for intoxication, or for putting on bulk, or for beautification?"

"No, lord."

"Wouldn't they eat that food simply for the sake of making it through that desert?"

"Yes, lord."

"In the same way, I tell you, is the nutriment of physical food to be regarded. When physical food is comprehended, passion for the five strings of sensuality is comprehended. When passion for the five strings of sensuality is comprehended, there is no fetter bound by which a disciple of the noble ones would come back again to this world.

"And how is the nutriment of *contact* to be regarded? Suppose a

flayed cow were to stand leaning against a wall. The creatures living in the wall would chew on it. If it were to stand leaning against a tree, the creatures living in the tree would chew on it. If it were to stand exposed to water, the creatures living in the water would chew on it. If it were to stand exposed to the air, the creatures living in the air would chew on it. For wherever the flayed cow were to stand exposed, the creatures living there would chew on it. In the same way, I tell you, is the nutriment of contact to be regarded. When the nutriment of contact is comprehended, the three feelings [pleasure, pain, neither pleasure nor pain] are comprehended. When the three feelings are comprehended, I tell you, there is nothing further for a disciple of the noble ones to do.

"And how is the nutriment of *intellectual intention* to be regarded? Suppose there were a pit of glowing embers, deeper than a man's height, full of embers that were neither flaming nor smoking, and a man were to come along—loving life, hating death, loving pleasure, abhorring pain—and two strong men, having grabbed him by the arms, were to drag him to the pit of embers. To get far away would be that man's intention, far away would be his wish, far away would be his aspiration. Why is that? Because he would realize, 'If I fall into this pit of glowing embers, I will meet with death from that cause, or with death-like pain.' In the same say, I tell you, is the nutriment of intellectual intention to be regarded. When the nutriment of intellectual intention is comprehended, the three forms of craving [for sensuality, for becoming, and for non-becoming] are comprehended. When the three forms of craving are comprehended, I tell you, there is nothing further for a disciple of the noble ones to do.

"And how is the nutriment of *consciousness* to be regarded? Suppose that, having arrested a thief, a criminal, they were to show him to the king: 'This is a thief, a criminal for you, your majesty. Impose on him whatever punishment you like.' So the king would say, 'Go, men, and stab him in the morning with a hundred spears.' So they would stab him in the morning with a hundred spears. Then the king would say at noon, 'Men, how is that man?' 'Still alive, your majesty.' So the king would say, 'Go, men, and stab him at noon with a hundred spears.' So they would stab him at noon with a hundred spears. Then the king would say in the evening, 'Men, how is that man?' 'Still alive, your majesty.' So the king would say, 'Go, men, and stab him in the evening with a hundred spears.' So they would stab him in the evening with a hundred spears. Now what do you think, monks: Would that man,

being stabbed with three hundred spears a day, experience pain & distress from that cause?"

"Even if he were to be stabbed with only one spear, lord, he would experience pain & distress from that cause, to say nothing of three hundred spears."

"In the same way, I tell you, monks, is the nutriment of consciousness to be regarded. When the nutriment of consciousness is comprehended, name & form are comprehended. When name & form are comprehended, I tell you, there is nothing further for a disciple of the noble ones to do." — *SN 12:63*

Thus the inherent stress of becoming lies not only in the instability of the factors on which it depends, but also on the stress and pain involved in those factors—pain felt not only by the person creating those states of becoming, but also by any beings who provide nourishment for that person's physical existence. Viewed in this way, the two field analogies show why becoming offers no lasting happiness, and why that happiness is rarely blameless. This means that becoming, when looked at objectively, is not a desirable process in which to be engaged. Because these analogies also suggest why renewed becoming is potentially an infinitely renewable process, they show why anyone looking for true happiness would want to search for a way to bring becoming to an end.

At the same time, the field analogies indicate why there would be a paradox inherent in the desire to put an end to becoming: The desire to deprive the seed of moisture would function as a form of moisture as well.

The Buddha expresses this point in his full description of the origination of stress:

"And this, monks, is the noble truth of the origination of stress: the craving that makes for renewed becoming—accompanied by passion & delight, relishing now here & now there—i.e., craving for sensuality, craving for becoming, craving for non-becoming." — *SN 56:11*

Like bhava, "non-becoming"—*vibhava*—is a term that the Buddha does not define. It is related to the verb *vibhavati,* which means to stop becoming, to stop being, to go out of existence. Iti 49 gives an example of how delight in non-becoming would be expressed:

"When this self, at the break-up of the body, after death, perishes & is destroyed, and does not exist after death, that is peaceful, that is

exquisite, that is sufficiency!"

Thus craving for non-becoming would mean a desire for something already existing to perish or be destroyed.

In terms of the field analogies, this craving could focus on the destruction of the ground or the nutriment in the seed. Now, the desire to interact kammically with these factors in any way is the moisture that nurtures the seed of kammically active consciousness, thus causing renewed becoming to grow. When the desire aims at destroying a particular spot in the field, all the elements for producing becoming are nevertheless in place: the ground of past and present kamma, the kammically active seed, and the moisture of clinging and craving. In this case, the clinging and craving are focused in anticipation on present kamma—as the desire to do whatever is necessary to bring about the destruction of the field—and thus these factors function as moisture nevertheless.

MN 106 shows that another form of craving for non-becoming would be the desire to maintain equanimity in the face of a particular spot in the field, in anticipation of the peace to be experienced in merely letting it pass. This, too, contains all the elements needed to produce becoming: The act of trying to maintain equanimity is present kamma; and the delight in the equanimity itself, or in anticipation of a higher peace it will lead to, the moisture. The result, while peaceful, is still a state of becoming.

Because becoming inherently involves suffering, these facts present a strategic challenge to anyone who wants to bring suffering to an end: how to put an end to renewed becoming without falling into the trap of craving for subtle becoming or craving for non-becoming.

However, in addition to pointing to this strategic challenge, the field analogies also point to a possible solution to that challenge. The ground provided by past kamma in no way determines that the plants of becoming will have to grow, or that suffering will have to continue without end. It only opens the possibility that these events can happen. If, however, present kamma in the form of the moisture is withheld or allowed to run dry, the potentials offered by the field and seed will not have to be actualized. For this approach to work, though, there must be a particular type of becoming that can supply the mind with an appropriate identity in a particular location where it can develop dispassion for all types of kamma, clinging, and craving. Once that dispassion has allowed all other locations of moisture to run dry, it can then turn to allow the moisture providing its own location to run dry as well. In other words—and this is the practical corollary to the paradox of becoming—there must be a state of becoming that can act as a

preliminary stage of the path that leads ultimately to the end of all becoming. The Buddha's main strategic discovery was to find that such a state of becoming actually exists, and that—with proper discernment—it can actually be used to bring suffering to an end.

But before we examine his approach in detail, we should understand in terms of the field analogies what this second paradox entails. Putting the mind in a skillful location where it can experience dispassion for all states of becoming necessarily entails some present kamma. This present kamma is ground and nutriment for a seed. For it to grow, this seed must be watered with delight and moistened by craving. At the same time, this seed must grow in supportive soil, within the context of a mind that is still producing repeated becoming. Thus the path to the end of becoming requires all the factors underlying becoming—the field of kamma, the seed of consciousness together with its nutriment, and the moisture of clinging and craving. In other words, becoming and its supporting factors are not only part of the problem. They must also be part of the solution.

However, not just any state of becoming is conducive to this purpose, nor is every type of clinging, craving, or kamma a potential means to Awakening. In some states of becoming—such as a life devoted to sexual pursuits—the pleasure is so distracting that it steals all the moisture from the path. In others—such as a life trapped in a war zone or in severe depression—the moisture is stolen by the desperate need to find relief from the anguish and pain. In most states of becoming the mind is so befuddled with sensual longing or mistaken views that it cannot observe the components of becoming with enough clarity to work effectively with them. And in many states of becoming, one's existence can be maintained only by feeding on other beings in a way that causes harm.

So the first order of business in developing a path to the end of becoming is to identify which types of becoming, kamma, clinging, and craving are helpful to the path and which ones are not. This further requires a thorough knowledge of the many forms that becoming and its causal factors can take. Thus, before examining the role of becoming in the path, we must make a more detailed survey of the various types of becoming and the factors that give rise to them. In terms of the field analogies, this will entail looking in more detail at the possibilities offered by the ground and nutriment provided by kamma—the topic of Chapter Three—and at the moisture provided by clinging and craving for actualizing those possibilities—the topic of Chapter Four.

Chapter 3: Three Levels

When analyzing becoming as a factor in dependent co-arising, the Buddha does not define it. Instead, he simply notes that it can occur on three levels.

> "Which becoming? These three becomings: sensuality-becoming, form-becoming, & formless-becoming. This is called becoming." — *SN 12:2*

Elsewhere he notes that these three levels can be ranked on ascending levels of refinement, and that they are produced by levels of kamma that grow successively more refined.

> The Buddha: "If there were no kamma ripening in the sensuality-property, would sensuality-becoming be discerned?"
>
> Ven. Ānanda: "No, lord."
>
> The Buddha: "Thus kamma is the field, consciousness the seed, and craving the moisture. The consciousness of living beings hindered by ignorance & fettered by craving is established in/tuned to a lower property. Thus there is the production of renewed becoming in the future.
>
> "If there were no kamma ripening in the form-property, would form-becoming be discerned?"
>
> Ven. Ānanda: "No, lord."
>
> The Buddha: "Thus kamma is the field, consciousness the seed, and craving the moisture. The consciousness of living beings hindered by ignorance & fettered by craving is established in/tuned to a middling property. Thus there is the production of renewed becoming in the future.
>
> "If there were no kamma ripening in the formless-property, would formless-becoming be discerned?"
>
> Ven. Ānanda: "No, lord."
>
> The Buddha: "Thus kamma is the field, consciousness the seed, and craving the moisture. The consciousness of living beings hindered by ignorance & fettered by craving is established in/tuned to a refined property. Thus there is the production of renewed becoming in the

future. This is how there is becoming." — *AN 3:76*

An underlying principle in the relationship between kamma and becoming is that kammic seeds can vary widely in the amount of time they take to sprout.

> "The result of kamma is of three sorts, I tell you: that which arises right here & now, that which arises later, and that which arises following that." — *AN 6:63*

This passage can be read in two ways: "Here and now" can mean either this very moment or in this very lifetime. In the first case, "later" would mean later in this lifetime; in the second, in the next lifetime. In either case, "following that" would mean in lifetimes to come. Thus the results of a particular type of action may come immediately, or perhaps not for many lifetimes. Sometimes they may come both immediately and repeatedly for a long time to come.

An important point to remember is that, in talking about kammic results, we are talking about tendencies. Because a person performs kamma with every choice—virtually with every moment—many acts of kamma are performed in a single day. As days full of kamma get added together into weeks, months, and years, the resulting lines of causality can become hopelessly intertwined, leading to unexpected results. Although the following discussion will touch briefly on the complications of conflicting kammic threads, its main focus will be on the general tendencies for each of the three types of kamma to produce a corresponding type of result. These tendencies will be viewed in two time frames: cases in which the results appear in this lifetime and those in which they appear later.

They will also be viewed within the framework of the categories of sensuality, form, and formlessness into which the Buddha divides kamma and becoming in AN 3:76. These categories are apparently derived from meditative experience. The mind enters first jhāna, or mental absorption, by secluding itself from sensuality. It leaves the fourth jhāna and enters the dimension of the infinitude of space—the first of the four "formlessnesses," or in the words of the commentaries, the four formless jhānas—by dropping all perceptions of form, resistance, and diversity. Thus, when the mind has not entered jhāna it experiences the level of sensuality; from the first through the fourth jhāna it experiences the level of form; and in the four formless jhānas it experiences the formless level.

The terms "sensuality," "form," and "formless" each have a precise range

of meanings.

"Sensuality" *(kāma)* has two ranges of meaning in the Pāli discourses. In what was apparently its general meaning in the Buddha's time, it denotes sensual pleasures. However, the Buddha—where precision was required—also gave it a different and more specific meaning.

> "There are these five strings of sensuality. Which five? Forms cognizable via the eye—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, accompanied by sensuality, enticing; sounds cognizable via the ear… aromas cognizable via the nose… flavors cognizable via the tongue… tactile sensations cognizable via the body—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, accompanied by sensuality, enticing. But these are not sensuality. They are called strings of sensuality in the discipline of the noble ones.
>
> "The passion for his resolves is a man's sensuality,
> not the beautiful sensualities
> found in the world.
> The passion for his resolves is a man's sensuality." — *AN 6:63*

Notice that sensuality here does not simply mean sensual passions. It means passion for sensual thoughts and desires—the mind's tendency to be more addicted to sensual desire *per se* than to specific sensual pleasures. A common example would be the man who quickly tires of his latest sexual conquest and finds more enjoyment in the search for his next.

This technical meaning is apparently the one intended in reference to levels of becoming, for "sensuality-becoming" applies not only to experiences of sensual pleasure but also to experiences of sensual pain, where one's passion for sensual resolves is thwarted.

The word "form" *(rūpa)* similarly carries two meanings. In some contexts it denotes visual forms—those visible to the eye of the flesh or to the inner eye of the mind. In others it denotes the kinesthetic sense of the body—the sense of the body as felt from within. In meditation practice, either meaning can be relevant. On the one hand, the standard similes for jhāna practice depict a fully inhabited inner sense of the whole body.

> "Then, quite secluded from sensuality, secluded from unskillful mental qualities, he enters & remains in the first jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. He permeates & pervades, suffuses & fills this very body

with the rapture & pleasure born of seclusion. Just as if a skilled bathman or bathman's apprentice would pour bath powder into a brass basin and knead it together, sprinkling it again & again with water, so that his ball of bath powder—saturated, moisture-laden, permeated within & without—would nevertheless not drip; even so, the monk permeates… this very body with the rapture & pleasure born of seclusion. There is nothing of his entire body unpervaded by rapture & pleasure born of seclusion….

"Then, with the stilling of directed thoughts & evaluations, he enters & remains in the second jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of concentration, unification of awareness free from directed thought & evaluation—internal assurance. He permeates & pervades, suffuses & fills this very body with the rapture & pleasure born of concentration. Just like a lake with spring-water welling up from within, having no inflow from the east, west, north, or south, and with the skies supplying abundant showers time & again, so that the cool fount of water welling up from within the lake would permeate & pervade, suffuse & fill it with cool waters, there being no part of the lake unpervaded by the cool waters; even so, the monk permeates… this very body with the rapture & pleasure born of concentration. There is nothing of his entire body unpervaded by rapture & pleasure born of concentration….

"Then, with the fading of rapture, he remains equanimous, mindful, & alert, and senses pleasure with the body. He enters & remains in the third jhāna, of which the noble ones declare, 'Equanimous & mindful, he has a pleasant abiding.' He permeates & pervades, suffuses & fills this very body with the pleasure divested of rapture. Just as in a lotus pond, some of the lotuses, born & growing in the water, stay immersed in the water and flourish without standing up out of the water, so that they are permeated & pervaded, suffused & filled with cool water from their roots to their tips, and nothing of those lotuses would be unpervaded with cool water; even so, the monk permeates… this very body with the pleasure divested of rapture. There is nothing of his entire body unpervaded with pleasure divested of rapture….

"Then, with the abandoning of pleasure & pain—as with the earlier disappearance of joys & distresses—he enters & remains in the fourth jhāna: purity of equanimity & mindfulness, neither-pleasure-nor-pain. He sits, permeating the body with a pure, bright awareness. Just as if a man were sitting covered from head to foot with a white cloth so that there would be no part of his body to which the white cloth did not

extend; even so, the monk sits, permeating the body with a pure, bright awareness. There is nothing of his entire body unpervaded by pure, bright awareness." — *MN 119*

On the other hand, there are some meditators whose experience of concentration involves the internal perceptions of visual forms and light.

"As I was remaining heedful, ardent, & resolute, I perceived light without seeing forms, or saw forms without perceiving light for a whole day, a whole night, a whole day & night. The thought occurred to me, 'What is the cause, what is the reason…?' Then it occurred to me, 'When I attend to the theme of light without attending to the theme of forms, I perceive light without seeing forms. When I attend to the theme of forms without attending to the theme of light, I see forms without seeing light for a whole day, a whole night, a whole day & night.'

"As I was remaining heedful, ardent, & resolute, I perceived limited light & saw limited forms; I perceived unlimited light & saw unlimited forms for a whole day, a whole night, a whole day & night. The thought occurred to me, 'What is the cause, what is the reason…?' Then it occurred to me, 'When my concentration is limited, my sense of (inner) vision is limited. When my concentration is unlimited, my sense of (inner) vision is unlimited. With an unlimited sense of vision I perceive unlimited light & see unlimited forms for a whole day, a whole night, a whole day & night.'" — *MN 128*

Thus, because the most stable and skillful type of "form-becoming" consists of concentration of either sort, the word "form" here can mean either forms visible to the mind's eye or the inner sense of the form of the body.

As for "formless" *(arūpa)*, it is used primarily to denote four stages of concentration based on the equanimity of the fourth jhāna:

"Then there is the case where a monk, with the complete transcending of perceptions of form, with the disappearance of perceptions of resistance, and not heeding perceptions of diversity, (perceiving,) 'Infinite space,' enters & remains in the dimension of the infinitude of space….

"Then there is the case where a monk, with the complete transcending of the dimension of the infinitude of space, (perceiving,) 'Infinite consciousness,' enters & remains in the dimension of the

infinitude of consciousness….

"Then there is the case where a monk, with the complete transcending of the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness, (perceiving,) 'There is nothing,' enters & remains in the dimension of nothingness….

"Then there is the case where a monk, with the complete transcending of the dimension of nothingness, enters & remains in the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception." — *AN 9:34*

These states of concentration—whether based on a perception of form or formlessness—are simply stable versions of mental states that the human mind can traverse more fleetingly when not so firmly concentrated. Thus when the mind focuses on abstract notions in a less stable way, it is also experiencing brief tastes of the form and formless levels. In fact, this seems to be one of the distinctive features of the human mind: its ability to move freely through the levels of sensuality, form, and formlessness in a short span of time.

Note that each of these three levels of becoming is shaped by the mental kamma of an act of perception.

"It is with a cause, monks, that sensual thinking occurs, and not without a cause…. And how, monks, does sensual thinking occur with a cause and not without a cause? In dependence on the property of sensuality there occurs the perception of sensuality. In dependence on the perception of sensuality there occurs the resolve for sensuality… the desire for sensuality… the fever for sensuality… the quest for sensuality. Questing for sensuality, monks, an uninstructed, run-of-the-mill person conducts himself wrongly through three means: through body, through speech, & through mind." — *SN 14:12*

"For one attaining the first jhāna, the perception of sensuality is ceased…. For one attaining the dimension of the infinitude of space, the perception of form is ceased." — *DN 32*

Sensuality consists of a passion for sensual resolves and perceptions; the experience of form builds from a perception of form; and the formless experiences build from such perceptions as the perception of the infinitude of space and the perception of the infinitude of consciousness. Thus these acts of perception shape both the immediate actions they inspire and the field of opportunities that those actions allow the mind to "tune-in" to. Because these

opportunities constitute the full range of the cosmos that can be experienced, this means that the range of opportunities offered by the cosmos for all possible states of becoming depends primarily on mental kamma, past and present—thus the close connection between psychology and cosmology in the Buddha's teachings. This principle of the primacy of mental kamma in shaping one's experience of the cosmos applies not only to the production of becoming in the present life, but also to the production of becoming in lives after death.

Buddhist texts postdating the Canon provide complete and detailed maps of the cosmos, classifying the different levels of birth according to the threefold classification of sensuality, form, and formlessness. In these maps, the sensual levels include hell, the level of common animals, the level of hungry ghosts, the human level, and the sensual heavens. The form level includes the lower brahmā worlds; while the formless level includes the higher brahmā worlds.

The Pāli discourses, on the other hand, contain no maps based on this classification. In fact, they contain no comprehensive maps of the cosmos at all. Various discourses mention different levels of the cosmos—sometimes in an orderly progression, sometimes in a more haphazard way—but the Buddha apparently never intended to provide a complete cosmology. Instead, he gave fragments of a cosmology here and there only when such fragments were necessary to explain suffering and its cessation.

Nevertheless, these fragments show clearly that the levels of the cosmos do have features that correspond to the threefold classification of sensuality, form, and formlessness; and that future rebirths on these levels are connected to the type of kamma developed in this life. At the same time, however, kamma in the present life can influence one's experience of the present life on any of these levels as well.

To begin with, **sensuality.** Kamma ripening on the level of sensuality can either be unskillful—motivated by greed, aversion, or delusion—or skillful, motivated by a lack of these qualities. Skillful sensual kamma manifests in acts of generosity and virtue; unskillful sensual kamma, in their opposite.

When generosity and virtue bear fruit in the present life, that fruit is pleasant.

> "One who is generous, a master of giving, is dear & charming to people at large. And the fact that one who is generous, a master of giving, is dear & charming to people at large: This is a fruit of generosity visible in the here & now.
>
> "Then again, good people, people of integrity, admire one who is

generous, a master of giving…. This, too, is a fruit of generosity visible in the here & now.

"Then again, the fine reputation of one who is generous, a master of giving, is spread far & wide…. This, too, is a fruit of generosity visible in the here & now.

"Then again, when one who is generous, a master of giving, approaches any assembly of people—noble warriors, brahmans, householders, or contemplatives—he/she does so confidently & without embarrassment…. This, too, is a fruit of generosity visible in the here & now." — *AN 5:34*

"There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones, abandoning the taking of life, abstains from taking life. In doing so, he gives freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings. In giving freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings, he gains a share in limitless freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, and freedom from oppression….

"Then again, abandoning taking what is not given [stealing], the disciple of the noble ones abstains from taking what is not given. In doing so, he gives freedom from danger… to limitless numbers of beings. In giving freedom from danger… to limitless numbers of beings, he gains a share in limitless freedom from danger….

"Then again, abandoning illicit sex, the disciple of the noble ones abstains from illicit sex. In doing so, he gives freedom from danger… to limitless numbers of beings. In giving freedom from danger… to limitless numbers of beings, he gains a share in limitless freedom from danger….

"Then again, abandoning lying, the disciple of the noble ones abstains from lying. In doing so, he gives freedom from danger… to limitless numbers of beings. In giving freedom from danger… to limitless numbers of beings, he gains a share in limitless freedom from danger….

"Then again, abandoning the use of intoxicants, the disciple of the noble ones abstains from taking intoxicants. In doing so, he gives freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings. In giving freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings, he gains a share in limitless freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, and freedom from oppression." — *AN 8:39*

"There is the case where the disciple of the noble ones recollects his own virtues, thus: '(They are) untorn, unbroken, unspotted, unsplattered, liberating, praised by the wise, untarnished, conducive to concentration.' As he is recollecting virtue, his mind is calmed, and joy arises; the defilements of his mind are abandoned, just as when a mirror is cleansed through the proper technique. And how is a mirror cleansed through the proper technique? Through the use of oil & ashes & chamois & the appropriate human effort. This is how a mirror is cleansed through the proper technique. In the same way, the defiled mind is cleansed through the proper technique. And how is the defiled mind cleansed through the proper technique? There is the case where the disciple of the noble ones recollects his own virtues…. As he is recollecting virtue, his mind is cleansed, and joy arises; the defilements of his mind are abandoned. He is thus called a disciple of the noble ones undertaking the virtue-uposatha. He lives with virtue. It is owing to virtue that his mind is calmed, that joy arises, and that whatever defilements there are in his mind are abandoned." — *AN 3:71*

When the results of unskillful sensual kamma are experienced in the present life, they are painful. Not only that, they can also encourage further unskillful kamma.

"Greed itself is unskillful. Whatever a greedy person fabricates by means of body, speech, or intellect, that too is unskillful. Whatever suffering a greedy person—his mind overcome with greed, his mind consumed—wrongly inflicts on another person through beating or imprisonment or confiscation or placing blame or banishment, (with the thought,) 'I have power. I want power,' that too is unskillful. Thus it is that many evil, unskillful qualities/events—born of greed, caused by greed, originated through greed, conditioned by greed—come into play.

[Similarly with aversion and delusion.]

"And a person like this is called one who speaks at the wrong time, speaks what is unfactual, speaks what is irrelevant, speaks contrary to the Dhamma, speaks contrary to the Vinaya. Why…? Because of having wrongly inflicted suffering on another person through beating or imprisonment or confiscation or placing blame or banishment, (with the thought,) 'I have power. I want power.' When told what is factual, he denies it and doesn't acknowledge it. When told what is unfactual, he doesn't make an ardent effort to untangle it (to see), 'This is

unfactual. This is baseless.' That's why a person like this is called one who speaks at the wrong time, speaks what is unfactual, speaks what is irrelevant, speaks contrary to the Dhamma, speaks contrary to the Vinaya.

"A person like this—his mind overcome with evil, unskillful qualities born of greed… born of aversion… born of delusion, his mind consumed—dwells in suffering right in the here-&-now—feeling threatened, turbulent, feverish—and at the break-up of the body, after death, can expect a bad destination.

"Just as a sal tree, a birch, or an aspen, when smothered & surrounded by three parasitic vines, falls into misfortune, falls into disaster, falls into misfortune & disaster, in the same way, a person like this—his mind overcome with evil, unskillful qualities born of greed… born of aversion… born of delusion, his mind consumed—dwells in suffering right in the here-&-now—feeling threatened, turbulent, feverish—and at the break-up of the body, after death, can expect a bad destination." *— AN 3:69*

Unskillful sensual kamma can also prevent the opportunity of mastering kamma on the level of form.

"Without abandoning these five qualities, one is incapable of entering & remaining in the first jhāna… the second jhāna… the third jhāna… the fourth jhāna…. Which five? Stinginess as to one's monastery (lodgings)… one's family (of supporters)… one's gains… one's status, and stinginess as to the Dhamma [being unwilling to share one's knowledge of the Dhamma]." *— AN 5:255-256 [AN 5:257-258 repeats this list, replacing "stinginess as to the Dhamma" with "ingratitude."]*

The results of sensual kamma in the present life can also extend to future lives in other levels of the cosmos, which are described in sensual terms.

"I have seen a hell named 'Six Spheres of Contact.' Whatever form one sees there with the eye is undesirable, never desirable; displeasing, never pleasing; disagreeable, never agreeable. Whatever sound one hears there with the ear… Whatever aroma one smells there with the nose… Whatever flavor one tastes there with the tongue… Whatever tactile sensation one touches there with the body… Whatever idea one cognizes there with the intellect is undesirable, never desirable; displeasing, never pleasing; disagreeable, never agreeable….

"I have seen a heaven named 'Six Spheres of Contact.' Whatever

form one sees there with the eye is desirable, never undesirable; pleasing, never displeasing; agreeable, never disagreeable. Whatever sound one hears there with the ear… Whatever aroma one smells there with the nose… Whatever flavor one tastes there with the tongue… Whatever tactile sensation one touches there with the body… Whatever idea one cognizes there with the intellect is desirable, never undesirable; pleasing, never displeasing; agreeable, never disagreeable." *— SN 35:135*

Rebirth in the lower realms—or an unpleasant human birth—is the result of having acted in harmful ways.

"Monks, the taking of life—when indulged in, developed, & pursued—is something that leads to hell, leads to rebirth as a common animal, leads to the realm of the hungry ghosts. The slightest of all the results coming from the taking of life is that, when one becomes a human being, it leads to a short life span.

"Stealing—when indulged in, developed, & pursued—is something that leads to hell, leads to rebirth as a common animal, leads to the realm of the hungry ghosts. The slightest of all the results coming from stealing is that, when one becomes a human being, it leads to the loss of one's wealth.

"Illicit sexual behavior—when indulged in, developed, & pursued—is something that leads to hell, leads to rebirth as a common animal, leads to the realm of the hungry ghosts. The slightest of all the results coming from illicit sexual behavior is that, when one becomes a human being, it leads to rivalry & revenge.

"Telling falsehoods—when indulged in, developed, & pursued—is something that leads to hell, leads to rebirth as a common animal, leads to the realm of the hungry ghosts. The slightest of all the results coming from telling falsehoods is that, when one becomes a human being, it leads to being falsely accused.

"Divisive tale-bearing—when indulged in, developed, & pursued—is something that leads to hell, leads to rebirth as a common animal, leads to the realm of the hungry ghosts. The slightest of all the results coming from malicious tale-bearing is that, when one becomes a human being, it leads to the breaking of one's friendships.

"Harsh speech—when indulged in, developed, & pursued—is something that leads to hell, leads to rebirth as a common animal, leads to the realm of the hungry ghosts. The slightest of all the results coming

from harsh speech is that, when one becomes a human being, it leads to unappealing sounds.

"Frivolous chattering—when indulged in, developed, & pursued—is something that leads to hell, leads to rebirth as a common animal, leads to the realm of the hungry ghosts. The slightest of all the results coming from frivolous chattering is that, when one becomes a human being, it leads to words that aren't worth taking to heart.

"The drinking of fermented & distilled liquors—when indulged in, developed, & pursued—is something that leads to hell, leads to rebirth as a common animal, leads to the realm of the hungry ghosts. The slightest of all the results coming from drinking fermented & distilled liquors is that, when one becomes a human being, it leads to mental derangement." *— AN 8:40*

"Monks, there are animals that feed on grass. They eat dried grass or fresh, cropping it with their teeth. And which animals feed on grass? Horses, cattle, donkeys, goats, deer, or any other animals that feed on grass. A fool who formerly delighted in flavors here and did evil actions here, on the break-up of the body, after death, appears in the company of animals, animals that feed on grass.

"There are animals that feed on excrement. Smelling excrement from afar, they come running, (thinking,) 'We'll eat there! We'll eat there!' Just as brahmans run to the smell of a sacrifice, (thinking,) 'We'll eat there! We'll eat there!' In the same way, there are animals that feed on excrement…. And which animals feed on excrement? Fowls, pigs, dogs, jackals, or any other animals that feed on excrement. A fool who formerly delighted in flavors here and did evil actions here, on the break-up of the body, after death, appears in the company of animals, animals that feed on excrement.

"There are animals that are born in darkness, age in darkness, and die in darkness….

"There are animals that are born in water, age in water, and die in water….

"There are animals that are born in filth, age in filth, and die in filth. And which animals are born in filth, age in filth, and die in filth? Those animals that are born, age, and die in rotten fish… in a rotten corpse… in spoiled porridge… in a cesspit… in a sewer, or any other animals that are born in filth, age in filth, and die in filth. A fool who formerly delighted in flavors here and did evil actions here, on the break-up of the body, after death, appears in the company of animals, animals that

are born in filth, age in filth, and die in filth.

"In many ways, monks, I could tell you the story of the animal birth —so much so that it would not be easy to finish with the description of how painful the animal birth is." — *MN 129*

The various hells are the most painful locations of the level of sensuality. Among their special torments is the induced anticipation of respite and release—an anticipation repeatedly thwarted.

"Then the hell-wardens torture him [an evil-doer] with what's called a five-fold imprisonment. They drive a red-hot iron stake through one hand, they drive a red-hot iron stake through the other hand, they drive a red-hot iron stake through one foot, they drive a red-hot iron stake through the other foot, they drive a red-hot iron stake through the middle of his chest. There he feels painful, racking, piercing feelings, yet he does not die as long as his evil deed is not exhausted.

"Then the hell-wardens lay him down and slice him with axes… they hold him feet up & head down and slice him with adzes… they harness him to a chariot and drive him back & forth over ground that is burning, blazing, & glowing… they make him climb up & down a vast mountain of embers that is burning, blazing, & glowing… they hold him feet up & head down and plunge him into a red-hot copper cauldron that is burning, blazing, & glowing….

"Then the hell-wardens throw him into the Great Hell…. The flame that leaps from the eastern wall of the Great Hell strikes the western wall. The flame that leaps from the western wall strikes the eastern wall. The flame that leaps from the northern wall strikes the southern wall. The flame that leaps from the southern wall strikes the northern wall. The flame that leaps from the bottom strikes the top. The flame that leaps from the top strikes the bottom….

"There ultimately comes a time when, with the passing of a long stretch of time, the eastern gate of the Great Hell opens. He runs there, rushing quickly. As he runs there, rushing quickly, his outer skin burns, his inner skin burns, his flesh burns, his tendons burn, even his bones turn to smoke…. When he finally gets there, the door slams shut…. [Similarly with the western gate, the northern gate, & the southern gate.] ….

"There ultimately comes a time when, with the passing of a long stretch of time, the eastern gate of the Great Hell opens. He runs there, rushing quickly…. He gets out through the gate. But right next to the

Great Hell is a vast Excrement Hell. He falls into that…. Right next to the Excrement Hell is the vast Hot Ashes Hell… the vast Simbali Forest Hell… the vast Sword-leaf Tree Forest Hell. He enters that….

"Then the hell-wardens pull him out with a hook and, placing him on the ground, say to him, 'Well, my good man, what do you want?' He replies, 'I'm hungry, venerable sirs.' So the hell-wardens pry open his mouth with red-hot iron tongs, burning, blazing, & glowing, and throw into it a copper ball, burning, blazing, & glowing…. Then the hell-wardens say to him, 'Well, my good man, what do you want?' He replies, 'I'm thirsty, venerable sirs.' So the hell-wardens pry open his mouth with red-hot iron tongs, burning, blazing, & glowing, and pour into it molten copper, burning, blazing, & glowing…. There he feels painful, racking, piercing feelings, yet he does not die as long as his evil deed is not exhausted.

"Then the hell-wardens throw him back into the Great Hell once more….

"I tell you this, monks, not from having heard it from another contemplative or brahman. On the contrary, I tell you this just as I have known for myself, seen for myself, penetrated for myself." *— MN 130*

Rebirth in the higher sensual realms—in the more pleasant forms of human birth and in the sensual deva worlds—is the result of generosity and virtuous behavior.

"Then there is the case where a woman or man, having abandoned the killing of living beings, abstains from killing living beings, and dwells with the rod laid down, the knife laid down, scrupulous, merciful, & sympathetic for the welfare of all living beings. Through having adopted & carried out such actions, on the break-up of the body, after death, he/she reappears in a good destination, in the heavenly world. If, on the break-up of the body, after death—instead of reappearing in a good destination, in the heavenly world—he/she comes to the human state, then he/she is long-lived wherever reborn….

"Then there is the case where a woman or man is not one who harms beings with his/her fists, with clods, with sticks, or with knives. Through having adopted & carried out such actions, on the break-up of the body, after death, he/she reappears in a good destination…. If instead he/she comes to the human state, then he/she is healthy wherever reborn….

"Then there is the case where a woman or man is not ill-tempered or easily upset; even when heavily criticized, he/she doesn't grow offended, provoked, malicious, or resentful; doesn't show annoyance, aversion, or bitterness. Through having adopted & carried out such actions, on the break-up of the body, after death, he/she reappears in a good destination…. If instead he/she comes to the human state, then he/she is beautiful wherever reborn….

"Then there is the case where a woman or man is not envious. He/she does not envy, begrudge, or brood about others' gains, honor, respect, reverence, salutations, or veneration. Through having adopted & carried out such actions, on the break-up of the body, after death, he/she reappears in a good destination…. If instead he/she comes to the human state, he/she is prominent wherever reborn….

"Then there is the case where a woman or man is a giver of food, drink, cloth, sandals, scents, ointments, beds, dwellings, & lighting to priests & contemplatives. Through having adopted & carried out such actions, on the break-up of the body, after death, he/she reappears in a good destination…. If instead he/she comes to the human state, then he/she is wealthy wherever reborn….

"Then there is the case where a woman or man is not obstinate or arrogant; he/she pays homage to those who deserve homage, rises up… gives a seat… makes way… worships… respects… reveres… honors those who should be honored. Through having adopted & carried out such actions, on the break-up of the body, after death, he/she reappears in a good destination…. If instead he/she comes to the human state, then he/she is highborn wherever reborn….

"Then there is the case where a woman or man, when visiting a contemplative or brahman, asks: 'What is skillful, venerable sir? What is unskillful? What is blameworthy? What is blameless? What should be cultivated? What should not be cultivated? What, having been done by me, will be for my long-term harm & suffering? Or what, having been done by me, will be for my long-term welfare & happiness?' Through having adopted & carried out such actions, on the break-up of the body, after death, he/she reappears in a good destination…. If instead he/she comes to the human state, then he/she is discerning wherever reborn." — *MN 135*

"Sāriputta, there is the case where a person gives a gift seeking his own profit, with a mind attached (to the reward), seeking to store up for himself (with the thought), 'I'll enjoy this after death.' He gives his

gift—food, drink, clothing, a vehicle; a garland, perfume, & ointment; bedding, shelter, & a lamp—to a contemplative or brahman. What do you think, Sāriputta? Might a person give such a gift as this?"

"Yes, lord."

"Having given this gift seeking his own profit—with a mind attached (to the reward), seeking to store up for himself, (with the thought), 'I'll enjoy this after death'—on the break-up of the body, after death, he reappears in the company of the Four Great Kings. Then, having exhausted that action, that power, that status, that sovereignty, he is a returner, coming back to this world.

"Then there is the case of a person who gives a gift not seeking his own profit, not with a mind attached (to the reward), not seeking to store up for himself, nor (with the thought), 'I'll enjoy this after death.' Instead, he gives a gift with the thought, 'Giving is good.' He gives his gift—food, drink, clothing, a vehicle; a garland, perfume, & ointment; bedding, shelter, & a lamp—to a contemplative or brahman….

"Having given this gift with the thought, 'Giving is good,' on the break-up of the body, after death, he reappears (in the next higher realm,) in the company of the devas of the Thirty-three. Then, having exhausted that action, that power, that status, that sovereignty, he is a returner, coming back to this world.

"Or, instead of thinking, 'Giving is good,' he gives a gift with the thought, 'This was given in the past, done in the past, by my father & grandfather. It would not be right for me to let this old family custom be discontinued'… on the break-up of the body, after death, he reappears (in the next higher realm,) in the company of the devas of the Hours. Then, having exhausted that action, that power, that status, that sovereignty, he is a returner, coming back to this world.

"Or, instead… he gives a gift with the thought, 'I am well-off. These are not well-off. It would not be right for me, being well-off, not to give a gift to those who are not well-off'… on the break-up of the body, after death, he reappears (in the next higher realm,) in the company of the Contented devas. Then, having exhausted that action, that power, that status, that sovereignty, he is a returner, coming back to this world.

"Or, instead… he gives a gift with the thought, 'Just as there were the great sacrifices of the sages of the past… in the same way will this be my distribution of gifts'… on the break-up of the body, after death, he reappears (in the next higher realm,) in the company of the devas who delight in creation. Then, having exhausted that action, that

power, that status, that sovereignty, he is a returner, coming back to this world.

"Or, instead… he gives a gift with the thought, 'When this gift of mine is given, it makes the mind serene. Gratification & joy arise'… on the break-up of the body, after death, he reappears (in the next higher realm,) in the company of the devas who have power over the creations of others. Then, having exhausted that action, that power, that status, that sovereignty, he is a returner, coming back to this world." *— AN 7:49*

Then Ven. Nanda went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, the Blessed One said to him, "Is it true, Nanda, that you have told a large number of monks, 'I don't enjoy leading the holy life, my friends. I can't keep up the holy life. Giving up the training, I will return to the common life.'?"

"Yes, lord."

"But why, Nanda, don't you enjoy leading the holy life? Why can't you keep up the holy life? Why, giving up the training, will you return to the common life?"

"Lord, as I was leaving home, a Sakyan girl—the envy of the countryside—glanced up at me, with her hair half-combed, and said, 'Hurry back, master.' Recollecting that, I don't enjoy leading the holy life. I can't keep up the holy life. Giving up the training, I will return to the common life."

Then, taking Ven. Nanda by the arm—as a strong man might flex his extended arm or extend his flexed arm—the Blessed One disappeared from Jeta's Grove and reappeared among the devas of the Thirty-three. Now on that occasion about 500 dove-footed nymphs had come to wait upon Sakka, the ruler of the devas. The Blessed One said to Ven. Nanda, "Nanda, do you see those 500 dove-footed nymphs?"

"Yes, lord."

"What do you think, Nanda: Which is lovelier, better looking, more charming—the Sakyan girl, the envy of the countryside, or these 500 dove-footed nymphs?"

"Lord, compared to these 500 dove-footed nymphs, the Sakyan girl, the envy of the countryside, is like a cauterized monkey with its ears & nose cut off. She doesn't count. She's not even a small fraction. There's no comparison. The 500 dove-footed nymphs are lovelier, better

looking, more charming."

"Then take joy, Nanda. Take joy! I am your guarantor for getting 500 dove-footed nymphs."

"If the Blessed One is my guarantor for getting 500 dove-footed nymphs, I will enjoy leading the holy life under the Blessed One." — *Ud 3:2*

"Monks, if one speaking rightly were to say of anything, 'It's utterly desirable, utterly charming, utterly appealing,' one speaking rightly would say that just of heaven: 'It's utterly desirable, utterly charming, utterly appealing'—so much so that it's not easy to make a comparison for how pleasant heaven is."

When this was said, a certain monk said to the Blessed One, "But, lord, is it possible to make a comparison?"

"It is," the Blessed One said. "Monks, suppose that a universal emperor were endowed with the seven treasures and four powers, and because of that would experience pleasure & joy."

[Here the Buddha gives a detailed description of these treasures and powers, which briefly stated are these: The seven treasures consist of the wheel-treasure, which magically and peacefully establishes the emperor's rule over all four directions; the elephant-treasure and the horse-treasure, either of which—leaving the palace at dawn—can take him to the ocean and back before his morning meal; the jewel-treasure that can turn night into day; the woman-treasure—his queen—who is lovely and faithful to him; the steward-treasure, who provides him with all the gold and bullion he needs; and the counselor treasure, who teaches him what is right and wrong, and rules wisely in his stead. The four powers are the power of a supremely attractive appearance, a supremely long life, supremely good health, and supreme popularity among his subjects.]

" …. Then the Blessed One, taking a small stone the size of his hand, said to the monks, "What do you think, monks? Which is greater, this small stone I have taken, the size of my hand, or the Himalayas, the king of mountains?"

"It's next to nothing, lord, the small stone you have taken…. It doesn't count. It's not even a small fraction. There's no comparison."

"In the same way, monks, the pleasure & joy experienced by a universal emperor because of his seven treasures and four powers doesn't count next to the pleasures of the heavenly world. It's not even

a small fraction. There's no comparison." — *MN 129*

Despite the general correspondence of action and result, the complexity of kamma sometimes creates conditions where skillful and unskillful sensual actions seem to provide results directly opposite to what they should, either in the present life or in the next. This, however, does not negate the principle of correspondence. It simply means that the full fruits of these actions have been delayed to a later time.

"There is the case where a certain person is seen garlanded & adorned, freshly bathed & groomed, with hair & beard trimmed, enjoying the sensualities of women as if he were a king. They ask about him: 'My good man, what has this man done that he has been garlanded & adorned… as if he were a king?' They answer: 'My good man, this man attacked the king's enemy and took his life. The king, gratified with him, rewarded him. That is why he is garlanded & adorned… as if he were a king.'

"Then there is the case where a certain person is seen bound with a stout rope with his arms pinned tightly against his back, his head shaved bald, marched to a harsh-sounding drum from street to street, crossroads to crossroads, evicted through the south gate, and beheaded to the south of the city. They ask about him: 'My good man, what has this man done that he is bound with a stout rope… and beheaded to the south of the city?' They answer: 'My good man, this man, an enemy of the king, has taken the life of a man or a woman. That is why the rulers, having had him seized, inflicted such a punishment upon him.'" — *SN 42:13*

"There are four kinds of persons to be found in the world. Which four? There is the case where a certain person takes life, takes what is not given [steals], engages in illicit sex, lies, speaks divisively, speaks abusively, engages in idle chatter; is covetous, malevolent, & holds wrong views. On the break-up of the body, after death, he reappears in the plane of deprivation, the bad destination, the lower realms, in hell.

"But there is also the case where a certain person takes life… holds wrong views, (yet) on the break-up of the body, after death, he reappears in the good destinations, in the heavenly world.

"And there is the case where a certain person abstains from taking life, abstains from taking what is not given… is not covetous, not malevolent, & holds right views. On the break-up of the body, after

death, he reappears in the good destinations, in the heavenly world.

"But there is also the case where a certain person abstains from taking life, abstains from taking what is not given… is not covetous, not malevolent, & holds right views, (yet) on the break-up of the body, after death, he reappears in the plane of deprivation, the bad destination, the lower realms, in hell….

"In the case of the person who takes life… (yet) on the break-up of the body, after death, reappears in the good destinations, in the heavenly world: either earlier he performed fine kamma that is to be felt as pleasant, or later he performed fine kamma that is to be felt as pleasant, or at the time of death he adopted & carried out right views. Because of that, on the break-up of the body, after death, he reappears in the good destinations, in the heavenly world. But as for the results of taking life… holding wrong views, he will feel them either right here & now, or later (in this lifetime), or following that….

"In the case of the person who abstains from taking life… but on the break-up of the body, after death, reappears in the plane of deprivation, the bad destination, the lower realms, in hell: either earlier he performed evil kamma that is to be felt as painful, or later he performed evil kamma that is to be felt as painful, or at the time of death he adopted & carried out wrong views. Because of that, on the break-up of the body, after death, he reappears in the plane of deprivation, the bad destination, the lower realms, in hell. But as for the results of abstaining from taking life… holding right views, he will feel them either right here & now, or later, or following that." — *MN 136*

As for kamma on the level of **form,** it offers even greater pleasure than skillful sensual kamma.

"And what is the development of concentration that, when developed & pursued, leads to a pleasant abiding in the here & now? There is the case where a monk enters & remains in the first jhāna… the second jhāna… the third jhāna… the fourth jhāna…. This is the development of concentration that, when developed & pursued, leads to a pleasant abiding in the here & now." — *AN 4:41*

The pleasures of jhāna grow increasingly more refined with each stage.

"Now there is the case where a monk—quite secluded from

sensuality, secluded from unskillful qualities—enters & remains in the first jhāna…. If, as he remains there, he is beset with attention to perceptions dealing with sensuality, that is an affliction for him. Just as pain arises as an affliction for a healthy person, even so the attention to perceptions dealing with sensuality that beset the monk is an affliction for him….

"Then again, there is the case where a monk… enters & remains in the second jhāna…. If, as he remains there, he is beset with attention to perceptions dealing with directed thought, that is an affliction for him….

"Then again, there is the case where a monk… enters & remains in the third jhāna…. If, as he remains there, he is beset with attention to perceptions dealing with rapture, that is an affliction for him….

"Then again, there is the case where a monk… enters & remains in the fourth jhāna…. If, as he remains there, he is beset with attention to perceptions dealing with equanimity, that is an affliction for him." — *AN 9:34*

Jhāna not only provides pleasure in the here-&-now, but can also supply the basis for a refined state of becoming after death.

"There is the case where an individual… enters & remains in the first jhāna…. He savors that, longs for that, finds satisfaction through that. Staying there—fixed on that, dwelling there often, not falling away from that—then when he dies he reappears in the company of the devas of Brahmā's retinue. The devas of Brahmā's retinue, monks, have a life span of an eon….

"Again, there is the case where an individual… enters & remains in the second jhāna…. He savors that, longs for that, finds satisfaction through that. Staying there—fixed on that, dwelling there often, not falling away from that—then when he dies he reappears in the company of the Abhassara [Radiant] devas. The Abhassara devas, monks, have a life span of two eons….

"Again, there is the case where an individual… enters & remains in the third jhāna…. He savors that, longs for that, finds satisfaction through that. Staying there—fixed on that, dwelling there often, not falling away from that—then when he dies he reappears in the company of the Subhakiṇha [Beautiful Black] devas. The Subhakiṇha devas, monks, have a life span of four eons….

"Again, there is the case where an individual… enters & remains in

the fourth jhāna…. He savors that, longs for that, finds satisfaction through that. Staying there—fixed on that, dwelling there often, not falling away from that—then when he dies he reappears in the company of the Vehapphala [Sky-fruit] devas. The Vehapphala devas, monks, have a life span of 500 eons." — *AN 4:123*

The same pleasures in the afterlife can also be attained through the cultivation of the four awareness-releases, also called the brahma-vihāras.

"There is the case where an individual keeps pervading the first direction [the east]—as well as the second direction, the third, & the fourth—with an awareness imbued with good will. Thus he keeps pervading above, below, & all around, everywhere & in every respect the all-encompassing cosmos with an awareness imbued with good will: abundant, expansive, limitless, free from hostility, free from ill will. He savors that, longs for that, finds satisfaction through that. Staying there—fixed on that, dwelling there often, not falling away from that—then when he dies he reappears in the company of the devas of Brahmā's retinue….

"Again, there is the case where an individual keeps pervading the first direction—as well as the second direction, the third, & the fourth—with an awareness imbued with compassion…. He savors that, longs for that, finds satisfaction through that. Staying there—fixed on that, dwelling there often, not falling away from that—then when he dies he reappears in the company of the Abhassara [Radiant] devas….

"Again, there is the case where an individual keeps pervading the first direction—as well as the second direction, the third, & the fourth—with an awareness imbued with empathetic joy…. He savors that, longs for that, finds satisfaction through that. Staying there—fixed on that, dwelling there often, not falling away from that—then when he dies he reappears in the company of the Subhakiṇha [Beautiful Black] devas….

"Again, there is the case where an individual keeps pervading the first direction—as well as the second direction, the third, & the fourth—with an awareness imbued with equanimity. Thus he keeps pervading above, below, & all around, everywhere & in every respect the all-encompassing cosmos with an awareness imbued with equanimity: abundant, expansive, limitless, free from hostility, free from ill will. He savors that, longs for that, finds satisfaction through that. Staying there—fixed on that, dwelling there often, not falling away from that—then

when he dies he reappears in the company of the Vehapphala [Sky-fruit] devas." — *AN 4:125*

Kamma on the level of **formlessness** offers even more refined pleasures than these, both in the present and in future lives.

"Then again, there is the case where a monk… enters & remains in the dimension of the infinitude of space. If, as he remains there, he is beset with attention to perceptions dealing with form, that is an affliction for him….

"Then again, there is the case where a monk… enters & remains in the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness. If, as he remains there, he is beset with attention to perceptions dealing with the dimension of the infinitude of space, that is an affliction for him….

"Then again, there is the case where a monk… enters & remains in the dimension of nothingness. If, as he remains there, he is beset with attention to perceptions dealing with the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness, that is an affliction for him….

"Then again, there is the case where a monk… enters & remains in the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception. If, as he remains there, he is beset with attention to perceptions dealing with the dimension of nothingness, that is an affliction for him." — *AN 9:34*

"Then again, the disciple of the noble ones… attains the dimension of nothingness…. With the break-up of the body, after death, it's possible that this leading-on consciousness of his will go to the dimension of nothingness….

"Then again, the disciple of the noble ones considers this: 'Sensuality here & now; sensuality in lives to come; sensual perceptions here & now; sensual perceptions in lives to come; forms here & now; forms in lives to come; form-perceptions here & now; form-perceptions in lives to come; perceptions of the imperturbable; perceptions of the dimension of nothingness: All are perceptions. Where they cease without remainder: that is peaceful, that is exquisite, i.e., the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception.' Practicing & frequently abiding in this way, his mind acquires confidence in that dimension. There being full confidence, he either attains the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception now or else is committed to discernment. With the break-up of the body, after death, it's possible that this leading-on consciousness of his will go to the dimension of

neither perception nor non-perception. This is declared to be the practice conducive to the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception." — *MN 106*

These, then, are the possibilities that can be provided by the field of kamma. They range from the miseries of beings in the hell and animal realms, through the mixed pleasures and pains of the human realm, the sensual pleasures of the lower heavens, to the refined pleasures of form and formlessness in the higher heavens. The precise manner in which actions of different levels interact in opening and closing possibilities for happiness and understanding in a particular moment can be very complex, but three patterns emerge from the above passages.

The first is that the more refined the kamma, the more refined the resulting happiness. The kamma of form provides a happiness more refined than does sensual kamma; and formless kamma, a happiness more refined than does the kamma of form.

The second pattern is that all of these levels of kamma place limitations on the levels of becoming they can produce, although the limitations are more severe in some cases than in others. The most severe come from unskillful sensual kamma, whether it leads to rebirth in the lower realms or on the human realm. In the lower realms, one has no opportunity to develop skillful kamma at all, as one is too preoccupied with suffering and too limited in the powers available to the body in which one is reborn. On the human level, one is limited in terms of such things as one's resources, social position, and bodily strength, although here it is possible to develop skillful kamma within these limitations. Still, the restrictions posed by unskillful sensual kamma explain why the Buddha placed generosity and virtue at the very beginning of the path of practice he recommended to all people, whether they wanted to go beyond becoming or not, so that they could create maximal conditions for the further pursuit of lasting happiness.

Skillful kamma on the levels of sensuality, form, and formlessness open wider ranges of possibilities, both in this life and in future lives, whether in the human realm or in the higher realms. The limitations on these happy realms, however, are two. The first is that the pleasures they afford can be so alluring that, without understanding where they come from, one may abandon skillful behavior in the attempt to prolong them. This is why discernment is such an important part of the Buddhist path even on the mundane level, for it enables one to develop the proper attitude toward pleasure, using the opportunities provided by pleasure for even more skillful behavior.

The second limitation is that none of the results of the levels of kamma underlying these realms can last forever. In fact, the conditions these levels of kamma make possible are so fleeting that even the most lasting states of becoming based on them require constant upkeep. This is why the Buddha taught that the only truly reliable happiness lies in putting an end to becoming. But to do that, one first needs to watch how it is formed, so that one's efforts will be based on understanding rather than the sheer force of desire.

This is where the third pattern becomes relevant: Even though the human realm is classed as a sensual level, the human mind is capable of creating and dwelling in any level of becoming. Not only can it experience sensual pleasure and sensual pain, but it can also experience jhāna on the levels of form and formlessness.

This range of possibilities carries two practical consequences. The first is that if the mind is properly focused, it can watch the different levels of becoming as they form and disband, and thus gain insight into the process of becoming as it happens. Because jhāna provides this level of focus, it is the ideal level of becoming to function as part of the path. However, the second consequence is that even though the human mind is capable of attaining a level of becoming that might serve as the path to the end of suffering, that attainment is unstable. Thus the mind must remain heedful not to nourish causal factors that might look innocent but would lead it back into levels of becoming destructive to the path.

This is why the Buddha stressed heedfulness as an essential quality even for those relatively advanced in the practice (DN 16). And this is why he tried to provide an all-around picture of the factors giving rise to becoming. In the course of his Awakening he realized that the possibilities offered by the field of kamma are only part of the picture. To fully understand the picture, and to be fully alert to the dangers that can pull one off the path, he saw that it was also necessary to understand the way these possibilities become actualized by the moisture of craving and clinging—the topic to which we will now turn.

Chapter 4: Four Clingings

As we noted in Chapter Two, craving and clinging determine the location of a particular becoming within the range of possibilities offered by the field of kamma. The act of locating, however, is also an act of definition. Once an act of craving and clinging has fastened on a particular goal, it acts as a kernel around which a sense of self-identity coalesces, as one identifies the goal—or whatever aggregates can be used as a means toward that goal—as "me" or "mine." The discourses tend to state this point formally in terms of the five aggregates, but it's a familiar psychological truth. If one's desires consistently center on raising a child, one becomes increasingly defined—in one's actions, in one's mind, and in the mind of others—as a parent. If one is devoted to playing music, one finds oneself increasingly defined as a musician.

This process of definition, however, tends to take on such solidity and reality that we often lose sight of its constructed nature. The more solid and real it seems, the more we let ourselves be limited by it. This is why the Buddha's approach of analyzing it into its component factors, such as the five aggregates, is such a useful first step in overcoming those limitations.

> Then Ven. Rādha went to the Blessed One and on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One: "'A being,' lord. 'A being,' it's said. To what extent is one said to be 'a being'?"
>
> "Any desire, passion, delight, or craving for form, Rādha: When one is caught up *[satta]* there, tied up *[visatta]* there, one is said to be 'a being *[satta].'*
>
> "Any desire, passion, delight, or craving for feeling… perception… fabrications… consciousness, Rādha: When one is caught up there, tied up there, one is said to be 'a being.'" — *SN 23:2*

> "If one stays obsessed with form, that's what one is measured/limited by. Whatever one is measured by, that's how one is classified.
>
> "If one stays obsessed with feeling…
>
> "If one stays obsessed with perception…

"If one stays obsessed with fabrications…

"If one stays obsessed with consciousness, that's what one is measured/limited by. Whatever one is measured by, that's how one is classified." — *SN 22:36*

Visākha: "But, lady, how does self-identity come about?"

Sister Dhammadinnā: "There is the case, friend Visākha, where an uninstructed, run-of-the-mill person—who has no regard for noble ones, is not well-versed or disciplined in their Dhamma; who has no regard for men of integrity, is not well-versed or disciplined in their Dhamma—assumes form to be the self, or the self as possessing form, or form as in the self, or the self as in form.

"He assumes feeling to be the self, or the self as possessing feeling, or feeling as in the self, or the self as in feeling.

"He assumes perception to be the self, or the self as possessing perception, or perception as in the self, or the self as in perception.

"He assumes fabrications to be the self, or the self as possessing fabrications, or fabrications as in the self, or the self as in fabrications.

"He assumes consciousness to be the self, or the self as possessing consciousness, or consciousness as in the self, or the self as in consciousness. This is how self-identity comes about." — *MN 44*

Notice that the sense of self is not necessarily equated with the aggregates. Instead, the aggregates form the ground from which the sense of self can be fabricated. Thus every sense of self would be classified under the fabrication-aggregate (see SN 22:81). Yet even though individual aggregates may be small and finite events, there is no need for a sense of self derived from them to be small or finite in order to have a location. For instance, one may cling to a particular feeling and then assume a self around that feeling, either as possessing the feeling, containing the feeling, or contained within the feeling. As DN 15 points out, this sense of self may be possessed of form and finite, formless and finite, possessed of form and infinite, or formless and infinite. Thus a formless, infinite sense of self centered on a feeling of infinite, interconnected bliss would nevertheless count as a state of becoming grounded in the aggregates, located in the particular feeling.

So it is a mistake to say, as is often said, that the five aggregates constitute the Buddha's analysis of what we are. Actually, they constitute his analysis of the range of raw materials from which we choose, with craving and clinging, the location where we will fabricate whatever sense of self we can

imagine. And because craving and clinging focus "now here, now there," one's sense of self can change instantaneously in line with wherever one's latest craving lands. This means that a new sense of self could form around any of the aggregates, or any combination of aggregates provided by one's field of kamma, at any time at all. For example, while engaged in abstract thought, one might identify oneself as the thinker possessing those perceptions and thought-fabrications. Then, with a sudden feeling of thirst, one might drop that thought world, and identify instead with the thirst and whatever efforts the body makes to assuage it.

In another way of analyzing what is essentially the same territory, self-identity can also form around any of the six senses, their objects, or the processes that grow out of contact between the senses and their objects.

> "Dependent on the eye & forms there arises consciousness at the eye. The meeting of the three is contact. With contact as a requisite condition there is feeling. With feeling as a requisite condition there is craving.
>
> "Dependent on the ear & sounds…
>
> "Dependent on the nose & aromas…
>
> "Dependent on the tongue & flavors…
>
> "Dependent on the body & tactile sensations…
>
> "Dependent on the intellect & ideas there arises consciousness at the intellect. The meeting of the three is contact. With contact as a requisite condition there is feeling. With feeling as a requisite condition there is craving…
>
> "This is the path of practice leading to self-identity. One assumes about the eye that 'This is me, this is my self, this is what I am.' One assumes about forms… One assumes about eye-consciousness… One assumes about eye-contact… One assumes about feeling… One assumes about craving that 'This is me, this is my self, this is what I am.'
>
> "One assumes about the ear….
>
> "One assumes about the nose….
>
> "One assumes about the tongue….
>
> "One assumes about the body….
>
> "One assumes about the intellect that 'This is me, this is my self, this is what I am.' One assumes about ideas… One assumes about intellect-consciousness… One assumes about intellect-contact… One assumes

about feeling… One assumes about craving that 'This is me, this is my self, this is what I am.'" — *MN 148*

"What do you think, Māluṅkyaputta: the forms cognizable via the eye that are unseen by you—that you have never before seen, that you don't see, and that are not to be seen by you: Do you have any desire or passion or love there?"

"No, lord."

"The sounds cognizable via the ear…

"The aromas cognizable via the nose…

"The flavors cognizable via the tongue…

"The tactile sensations cognizable via the body…

"The ideas cognizable via the intellect that are uncognized by you–that you have never before cognized, that you don't cognize, and that are not to be cognized by you: Do you have any desire or passion or love there?"

"No, lord." — *SN 35:95*

It is possible, of course, to give birth to a desire for a sight that one has not seen. However, strictly speaking, the desire is not "there" at the unseen sight. Rather, it's there at the present idea of the unseen sight—in other words, at the sense of ideation, rather than the sense of sight. This distinction is important to keep in mind when trying to track and understand the movements of craving and clinging, and the psychology of how we define ourselves and our sense of the world within the limitations provided by past kamma.

Now, it stands to reason that the act of defining a sense of self around a particular craving or clinging would also influence the way one experiences the world. In terms of present kamma, acting on a particular craving shapes the experience of events now and into the future. As for the range of possibilities offered by past kamma, one would tend to feel unity with the parts of the world that assist in achieving one's desires, alienation from the parts that thwart them, and no interest in the parts that have no effect on one's desires at all. This tendency is something we see repeatedly on the human level. Based on past kamma, different people have access to different sights, sounds, etc. Even when we have access to the same sights, etc., we perceive them differently—based on what we normally call our point of view, and what the Buddha might have called our point of clinging. As we noted in the Introduction, when two people are looking at the same

mountain, the person who has delighted in skiing in the past will see a different mountain from the person who has found delight in the search for gold.

This observation fits especially well with the Buddha's teachings because, in his analysis, the field of possibilities from which one draws one's sense of the world is the same field from which one draws one's sense of self.

> Then a certain monk went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One: "'The world, the world *[loka],*' it is said. In what respect does the word 'world' apply?"
>
> "Insofar as it disintegrates *[lujjati],* monk, it is called the 'world.' Now what disintegrates? The eye disintegrates. Forms disintegrate. Consciousness at the eye disintegrates. Contact at the eye disintegrates. And whatever there is that arises in dependence on contact at the eye—experienced as pleasure, pain or neither-pleasure-nor-pain—that too disintegrates.
>
> "The ear disintegrates. Sounds disintegrate….
>
> "The nose disintegrates. Aromas disintegrate….
>
> "The tongue disintegrates. Tastes disintegrate….
>
> "The body disintegrates. Tactile sensations disintegrate….
>
> "The intellect disintegrates. Ideas disintegrate. Consciousness at the intellect disintegrates. Contact at the intellect disintegrates. And whatever there is that arises in dependence on contact at the intellect—experienced as pleasure, pain or neither-pleasure-nor-pain—that too disintegrates.
>
> "Insofar as it disintegrates, it is called the 'world.'" — *SN 35:82*

None of the discourses explicitly make the general point that one's sense of self will shape one's sense of the world, but many specific examples and stories in the discourses make this point implicitly. We have already encountered one example, in the story of flavor-earth. The influence of one's sense of self on one's sense of the world will come into even clearer focus if we consider some of these other examples and stories under the four types of clinging that craving can produce.

> "Which clinging? These four clingings: sensuality-clinging, view-clinging, habit-&-practice-clinging, and self-doctrine-clinging." — *SN 12:2*

Passages in the discourses show how each of these types of clinging can lead to a particular type of becoming. In some cases, these illustrations focus on one type of clinging at a time; in others, they combine two or more. But in every case, each type of clinging can shape one's sense of self in the present life, shape one's sense of the world in the present life, and lead to a particular destination-world in later rebirths. These principles apply regardless of whether the clinging is based on craving for sensuality, craving for becoming, or craving for non-becoming.

The first clinging is **sensuality,** here meant in its technical sense as passion for sensual resolves. The ways in which a sense of self can form around sensuality-clinging need little explanation. All they require is a graphic analogy.

> "Suppose there were a beetle, a dung-eater, full of dung, gorged with dung, with a huge pile of dung in front of him. He, because of that, would look down on other beetles: 'Yes, sirree! I am a dung-eater, full of dung, gorged with dung, with a huge pile of dung in front of me!'
>
> "In the same way, there is the case where a certain monk—conquered by gains, offerings, & fame, his mind consumed—puts on his robes and, carrying his bowl & outer robe, goes into a village or town for alms. Having eaten there as much as he likes—full of almsfood & invited again for the next day—he goes to the monastery and, in the midst of a group of monks, boasts, 'I have eaten as much as I like, I am full of almsfood & have been invited again for tomorrow. I am a recipient of robes, almsfood, lodgings, & medicinal requisites for curing illness. These other monks, though, have next to no merit, next to no influence. They aren't recipients of robes, almsfood, lodgings, & medicinal requisites for curing illness.'
>
> "Conquered by gains, offerings, & fame, his mind consumed, he looks down on other well-behaved monks. That will be for this worthless man's long-term suffering & harm. That's how cruel gains, offerings, & fame are: a harsh, bitter obstacle to the attainment of the unexcelled rest from bondage." — *SN 17:5*

The quest for sensuality can have an enormous impact on one's experience of this life and the next.

> If one, longing for sensual pleasure,
> achieves it, yes,

he's enraptured at heart.
The mortal gets what he wants.
But if for that person
—longing, desiring—
the pleasures diminish,
he's shattered,
as if shot with an arrow….

A man who is greedy
for fields, land, gold,
cattle, horses,
servants, employees,
women, relatives,
many sensual pleasures,
is overpowered with weakness
and trampled by trouble,
for pain invades him
as water, a cracked boat. — *Sn 4:1*

"Monks, have you heard the jackal howling in the last hours of the night?"

"Yes, lord."

"That jackal is suffering from mange. He finds no pleasure whether he goes to a bluff, to the foot of a tree, or to the open air. Wherever he goes, wherever he stands, wherever he sits, wherever he lies down, he is sunk in misery.

"In the same way there is the case where a certain monk is conquered by gains, offerings, & fame, his mind consumed. He finds no pleasure whether he goes to an empty dwelling, to the foot of a tree, or to the open air. Wherever he goes, wherever he stands, wherever he sits, wherever he lies down, he is sunk in misery. That's how cruel gains, offerings, & fame are: a harsh, bitter obstacle to the attainment of the unexcelled rest from bondage." — *SN 17:8*

"Now what, Mahānāma, is the allure of sensuality? These five strings of sensuality. Which five? Forms cognizable via the eye—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, accompanied by sensuality, enticing. Sounds cognizable via the ear… Aromas cognizable via the nose… Flavors cognizable via the tongue… Tactile sensations cognizable via the body—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, accompanied by sensuality, enticing. Now whatever pleasure or

happiness arises in dependence on these five strings of sensuality, that is the allure of sensuality.

"And what is the drawback of sensuality? There is the case where, on account of the occupation by which a clansman makes a living—whether checking or accounting or calculating or plowing or trading or cattle-tending or archery or as a king's man, or whatever the occupation may be—he faces cold, he faces heat, being harassed by mosquitoes & flies, wind & sun & creeping things, dying from hunger & thirst.

"Now this drawback in the case of sensuality, this mass of stress visible here & now, has sensuality for its reason, sensuality for its source, sensuality for its cause, the reason being simply sensuality.

"If the clansman gains no wealth while thus working & striving & making effort, he sorrows, grieves, & laments, beats his breast, becomes distraught: 'My work is in vain, my efforts are fruitless!' Now this drawback too… this mass of stress visible here & now, has sensuality for its reason….

"If the clansman gains wealth while thus working & striving & making effort, he experiences pain & distress in protecting it: 'How will neither kings nor thieves make off with my property, nor fire burn it, nor water sweep it away, nor hateful heirs make off with it?' And as he thus guards and watches over his property, kings or thieves make off with it, or fire burns it, or water sweeps it away, or hateful heirs make off with it. And he sorrows, grieves, & laments, beats his breast, becomes distraught: 'What was mine is no more!' Now this drawback too… this mass of stress visible here & now, has sensuality for its reason….

"Again, it is with sensuality for the reason, sensuality for the source, sensuality for the cause, the reason being simply sensuality, that kings quarrel with kings, nobles with nobles, priests with priests, householders with householders, mother with child, child with mother, father with child, child with father, brother with brother, sister with sister, brother with sister, sister with brother, friend with friend. And then in their quarrels, brawls, & disputes, they attack one another with fists or with clods or with sticks or with knives, so that they incur death or deadly pain. Now this drawback too… this mass of stress visible here & now, has sensuality for its reason….

"Again, it is with sensuality for the reason, sensuality for the source… that (men), taking swords & shields and buckling on bows &

quivers, charge into battle massed in double array while arrows & spears are flying and swords are flashing; and there they are wounded by arrows & spears, and their heads are cut off by swords, so that they incur death or deadly pain. Now this drawback too… this mass of stress visible here & now, has sensuality for its reason….

"Again, it is with sensuality for the reason, sensuality for the source… that (men), taking swords & shields and buckling on bows & quivers, charge slippery bastions while arrows & spears are flying and swords are flashing; and there they are splashed with boiling cow dung and crushed under heavy weights, and their heads are cut off by swords, so that they incur death or deadly pain. Now this drawback too… this mass of stress visible here & now, has sensuality for its reason….

"Again, it is with sensuality for the reason, sensuality for the source… that (men) break into windows, seize plunder, commit burglary, ambush highways, commit adultery, and when they are captured, kings have them tortured in many ways. They flog them with whips, beat them with canes, beat them with clubs; they cut off their hands, cut off their feet, cut off their hands & feet; they cut off their ears, cut off their noses, cut off their ears & noses; they subject them to the 'porridge pot,' the 'polished-shell shave,' the 'Rāhu's mouth,' the 'flaming garland,' the 'blazing hand,' the 'grass-duty (ascetic),' the 'bark-dress (ascetic),' the 'burning antelope,' the 'meat hooks,' the 'coin-gouging,' the 'lye pickling,' the 'pivot on a stake,' the 'rolled-up bed'; they have them splashed with boiling oil, devoured by dogs, impaled alive on stakes; they have their heads cut off with swords, so that they incur death or deadly pain. Now this drawback too in the case of sensuality, this mass of stress visible here & now, has sensuality for its reason, sensuality for its source, sensuality for its cause, the reason being simply sensuality.

"Again, it is with sensuality for the reason, sensuality for the source… that (people) engage in bodily misconduct, verbal misconduct, mental misconduct. Having engaged in bodily, verbal, and mental misconduct, they—on the break-up of the body, after death—re-appear in the plane of deprivation, the bad destination, the lower realms, in hell. Now this drawback too in the case of sensuality, this mass of stress in the future life, has sensuality for its reason, sensuality for its source, sensuality for its cause, the reason being simply sensuality." —*MN 14*

In addition, clinging to sensuality can make it impossible for one to even conceive of the possibility of a happiness on the levels of form and formlessness, thus closing off any possibility of attaining those levels. Here it is important to note that the existence of sensual pleasure—based on past skillful sensual kamma—is not the obstacle to the levels of form and formlessness. The obstacle lies in the clinging.

> "Suppose there were a poor person, penniless & indigent, with a single little shack—dilapidated, open to the crows, not the best sort; and a single bed—dilapidated, not the best sort; and a single pot of rice & gourd seeds—not the best sort; and a single wife, not the best sort. He would go to a park and see a monk—his hands & feet washed, after a delightful meal, sitting in the cool shade, committed to the heightened mind. The thought would occur to him: 'How happy the contemplative state! How free of disease the contemplative state! O that I—shaving off my hair & beard and donning the ochre robe—might go forth from the household life into homelessness!' But being unable to abandon his single little shack… and… his single wife, not the best sort, he wouldn't be able to shave off his hair & beard, to don the ochre robe, or to go forth from the household life into homelessness. And suppose someone were to say, 'That single little shack… that single bed… that single pot of rice & gourd seeds… and that single wife… which he was unable to abandon… : for him they were a weak snare, a feeble snare, a rotting snare, an insubstantial snare.' Would the person speaking that way be speaking rightly?"
>
> "No, lord. That single hut… that single bed… that single pot… that single wife… were for that man a strong snare, a thick snare, a heavy snare, an unrotting snare, and a thick yoke."…
>
> "Now suppose, Udāyin, that there were a householder or householder's son—rich, prosperous, & wealthy—with vast amounts of gold ingots, vast amounts of grain, a vast number of fields, a vast amount of land, a vast number of wives, and a vast number of male & female slaves. He would go to a park and see a monk—his hands & feet washed, after a delightful meal, sitting in the cool shade, committed to the heightened mind. The thought would occur to him: 'How happy the contemplative state! How free of disease the contemplative state! O that I—shaving off my hair & beard and donning the ochre robe—might go forth from the household life into homelessness!' And being able to abandon his vast amounts of gold ingots, his vast amounts of grain, his vast number of fields, his vast amount of land, his vast

number of wives, and his vast number of male & female slaves, he would be able to shave off his hair & beard, to don the ochre robe, and to go forth from the household life into homelessness. Now suppose someone were to say, 'Those vast amounts of gold ingots… and that vast number of male & female slaves by which that householder or householder's son was snared but which he was able to abandon… : for him they were a strong snare, a thick snare, a heavy snare, an unrotting snare, and a thick yoke.' Would the person speaking that way be speaking rightly?"

"No, lord. Those vast amounts of gold ingots… were for him a weak snare, a feeble snare, a rotting snare, an insubstantial snare.'" —*MN 66*

"Now on that occasion the novice Aciravata was living in a wilderness hut. Then Prince Jayasena—walking back and forth and around to exercise his legs—went to the novice Aciravata and exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to him, "I have heard, Master Aggivessana [Aciravata's clan name], that a monk who remains heedful, ardent, & resolute can touch singleness of mind."

"So it is, prince. So it is: A monk who remains heedful, ardent, & resolute can touch singleness of mind."

"It would be good if Master Aggivessana would teach me the Dhamma as he has heard & memorized it."

" … You wouldn't understand the meaning of my words…."

" … Perhaps I might…."

" … If you don't understand the meaning of my words, leave it to each his own. Don't question me any further about it."

" … If I don't understand the meaning of Master Aggivessana's words, I'll leave it to each his own. I won't question Master Aggivessana any further about it."

Then the novice Aciravata taught Prince Jayasena the Dhamma as he had heard & memorized it. When this was said, Prince Jayasena said to him, "It's impossible, it's unfeasible, that a monk who remains heedful, ardent, & resolute could touch singleness of mind." Then, having declared the impossibility and unfeasibility to the novice Aciravata, Prince Jayasena got up from his seat and left.

Then the novice Aciravata… went to the Blessed One… (who said,) "What do you expect, Aggivessana? How could Prince Jayasena—

living in the midst of sensuality, consuming sensuality, chewed on by thoughts of sensuality, burning with the fever of sensuality, intent on the search for sensuality—know or see or realize that which is to be known through renunciation, seen through renunciation, attained through renunciation, realized through renunciation? That's impossible." *— MN 125*

Clinging to **views** has an impact similar to that of clinging to sensuality in shaping becoming. It influences one's sense of self, one's experience of the present world, and one's experience of worlds to come.

"Only here is there purity"
—that's what they say—
"No other doctrines are pure"
—so they say.
Insisting that what they depend on is good,
they are deeply entrenched in their personal truths.

Seeking controversy, they plunge into an assembly,
regarding one another as fools.
Relying on others' authority,
they speak in debate.
Desiring praise, they claim to be skilled.

Engaged in disputes in the midst of the assembly,
—anxious, desiring praise—
the one defeated is
chagrined.
Shaken with criticism, he seeks for an opening.

He whose doctrine is (judged as) demolished,
defeated, by those judging the issue:
He laments, he grieves—the inferior exponent.
"He beat me," he mourns.

These disputes have arisen among contemplatives.
In them are
elation,
dejection.
Seeing this, one should abstain from disputes,
for they have no other goal
than the gaining of praise.

He who is praised there
for expounding his doctrine
in the midst of the assembly,
laughs on that account & grows haughty,
attaining his heart's desire.

That haughtiness will be his grounds for vexation,
for he'll speak in pride & conceit.
Seeing this, one should abstain from debates.
No purity is attained by them, say the skilled. — *Sn 4:8*

One of the wanderers said to Anāthapiṇḍika the householder, *"The cosmos is eternal.* Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless. This is the sort of view I have."

Another wanderer said to Anāthapiṇḍika, *"The cosmos is not eternal.* Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless. This is the sort of view I have."

Another wanderer said, *"The cosmos is finite …" … "The cosmos is infinite … " … "The soul & the body are the same … " … "The soul is one thing and the body another … " … "After death a Tathāgata exists … " … "After death a Tathāgata does not exist … " … "After death a Tathāgata both does & does not exist … " … "After death a Tathāgata neither does nor does not exist.* Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless. This is the sort of view I have."

When this had been said, Anāthapiṇḍika the householder said to the wanderers, "As for the venerable one who says, *'The cosmos is eternal.* Only this is true; anything otherwise is worthless. This is the sort of view I have,' his view arises from his own inappropriate attention or in dependence on the words of another. Now this view has been brought into being, is fabricated, willed, dependently originated. Whatever has been brought into being, is fabricated, willed, dependently originated, that is inconstant. Whatever is inconstant is stress. This venerable one thus adheres to that very stress, submits himself to that very stress." [Similarly for the other positions.] — *AN 10:93*

"There's the case, headman, where a certain teacher holds this doctrine, holds this view: 'All those who take life are destined for a state of deprivation, are destined for hell. All those who steal… All those who indulge in illicit sex… All those who tell lies are destined for a state of deprivation, are destined for hell.' A disciple has faith in that teacher, and the thought occurs to him, 'Our teacher holds this

doctrine, holds this view: "All those who take life are destined for a state of deprivation, are destined for hell." There are living beings that I have killed. I, too, am destined for a state of deprivation, am destined for hell.' He fastens onto that view. If he doesn't abandon that doctrine, doesn't abandon that state of mind, doesn't relinquish that view, then as if he were to be carried off, he would thus be placed in hell.

"(The thought occurs to him,) 'Our teacher holds this doctrine, holds this view: 'All those who steal… All those who indulge in illicit sex… All those who tell lies are destined for a state of deprivation, are destined for hell.' There are lies I have told. I, too, am destined for a state of deprivation, am destined for hell.' He fastens onto that view. If he doesn't abandon that doctrine, doesn't abandon that state of mind, doesn't relinquish that view, then as if he were to be carried off, he would thus be placed in hell." *— SN 42:8*

Now at that time Nālanda was in the midst of famine, a time of scarcity, the crops white with blight and turned to straw. And at that time Niganṭha Nāṭaputta was staying in Nālandā together with a large following of Niganṭhas. Then Asibandhakaputta the headman, a disciple of the Niganṭhas, went to Niganṭha Nāṭaputta and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, Niganṭha Nāṭaputta said to him, "Come, now, headman. Refute the words of the contemplative Gotama, and this admirable report about you will spread afar: 'The words of the contemplative Gotama—so mighty, so powerful—were refuted by Asibandhakaputta the headman!'"

"But how, venerable sir, will I refute the words of the contemplative Gotama—so mighty, so powerful?"

"Come now, headman. Go to the contemplative Gotama and on arrival say this: 'Venerable sir, doesn't the Blessed One in many ways praise kindness, protection, & sympathy for families?' If the contemplative Gotama, thus asked, answers, 'Yes, headman, the Tathāgata in many ways praises kindness, protection, & sympathy for families,' then you should say, 'Then why, venerable sir, is the Blessed One, together with a large community of monks, wandering on tour around Nālandā in the midst of famine, a time of scarcity, when the crops are white with blight and turned to straw? The Blessed One is practicing for the ruin of families. The Blessed One is practicing for the demise of families. The Blessed One is practicing for the downfall of families.' When the contemplative Gotama is asked this two-pronged

question by you, he won't be able to swallow it down or spit it up."

Responding, "As you say, venerable sir," Asibandhakaputta the headman got up from his seat, bowed down to Niganṭha Nāṭaputta, circumambulated him, and then went to the Blessed One. On arrival, he bowed down to the Blessed One and sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One, "Venerable sir, doesn't the Blessed One in many ways praise kindness, protection, & sympathy for families?"

"Yes, headman, the Tathāgata in many ways praises kindness, protection, & sympathy for families."

"Then why, venerable sir, is the Blessed One, together with a large community of monks, wandering on tour around Nālandā in the midst of famine, a time of scarcity, when the crops are white with blight and turned to straw? The Blessed One is practicing for the ruin of families. The Blessed One is practicing for the demise of families. The Blessed One is practicing for the downfall of families."

"Headman, recollecting back over ninety-one eons, I do not know any family to have been brought to downfall through the giving of cooked alms. On the contrary: Whatever families are rich, with much wealth, with many possessions, with a great deal of money, a great many accoutrements of wealth, a great many commodities, all have become so from giving, from truth, from restraint.

"Headman, there are eight causes, eight reasons for the downfall of families. Families go to their downfall because of kings, or families go to their downfall because of thieves, or families go to their downfall because of fire, or families go to their downfall because of floods, or their stored-up treasure disappears, or their mismanaged undertakings go wrong, or in the family a wastrel is born who squanders, scatters, & shatters its wealth, and inconstancy itself is the eighth. These are the eight causes, the eight reasons for the downfall of families. Now, when these eight causes, these eight reasons are to be found, if anyone should say of me, 'The Blessed One is practicing for the ruin of families. The Blessed One is practicing for the demise of families. The Blessed One is practicing for the downfall of families'—without abandoning that statement, without abandoning that intent, without relinquishing that view—then as if he were to be carried off, he would thus be placed in hell." — *SN 42:9*

Some views are actively pernicious in that they negate the idea that present action can have an effect on one's well being. Thus they discourage

any effort to act skillfully, which in turn has a strong impact on one's experience of the world. Determinism is one such view, and we have already seen the Buddha's refutation of it in Chapter Two. The same refutation applies to views holding that all experience is caused by a supreme being or is totally without cause.

> "Having approached the contemplatives & brahmans who hold that… 'Whatever a person experiences… is all caused by a supreme being's act of creation,' I said to them: 'Is it true that you hold that… whatever a person experiences… is all caused by a supreme being's act of creation?' Thus asked by me, they admitted, 'Yes.' Then I said to them, 'Then in that case, a person is a killer of living beings because of a supreme being's act of creation. A person is a thief… a holder of wrong views because of a supreme being's act of creation.' When one falls back on a supreme being's act of creation as being essential, monks, there is no desire, no effort (at the thought), 'This should be done. This shouldn't be done.' When one can't pin down as a truth or reality what should & shouldn't be done, one dwells bewildered & unprotected. One cannot legitimately refer to oneself as a contemplative….
>
> "Having approached the contemplatives & brahmans who hold that… 'Whatever a person experiences… is all without cause, without condition,' I said to them: 'Is it true that you hold that… whatever a person experiences… is all without cause, without condition?' Thus asked by me, they admitted, 'Yes.' Then I said to them, 'Then in that case, a person is a killer of living beings without cause, without condition. A person is a thief… unchaste… a liar… a divisive speaker… a harsh speaker… an idle chatterer… greedy… malicious… a holder of wrong views without cause, without condition.' When one falls back on lack of cause and lack of condition as being essential, monks, there is no desire, no effort (at the thought), 'This should be done. This shouldn't be done.' When one can't pin down as a truth or reality what should & shouldn't be done, one dwells bewildered & unprotected. One cannot legitimately refer to oneself as a contemplative….
>
> "These [along with the determinists] are the three sectarian guilds that—when cross-examined, pressed for reasons, & rebuked by wise people—even though they may explain otherwise, remain stuck in inaction." — *AN 3:62*

Clinging to views includes not only the act of clinging to a firmly held

opinion, but also being stuck in doubt and uncertainty, for one's doubts can have a strong impact on one's experience of life.

> "Then there is the case of the person in doubt & perplexity, who has not arrived at certainty with regard to the True Dhamma. Then he comes down with a serious disease. As he comes down with a serious disease, the thought occurs to him, 'How doubtful & perplexed I am! I have not arrived at any certainty with regard to the True Dhamma!' He grieves & is tormented, weeps, beats his breast, & grows delirious. This, too, is a person who, subject to death, is afraid & in terror of death." — *AN 4:184*

The third form of clinging, clinging to **habits and practices,** is one of the more controversial in its interpretation, in that the Pāli words for "habit" and "practice"—sīla and vata—can have so many other meanings as well. Sīla can also mean "precept" or "virtue." Vata can also mean "duty" or "ritual." Thus this form of clinging is sometimes translated as clinging to precepts and duties, to rules and vows, or to virtues and rituals. "Habit," however, seems the most appropriate translation for sīla here, in that it covers the broadest range of behavior. A person can cling to habitual patterns of behavior regardless of whether they are related to a particular precept, virtue, or rule, and regardless of whether they are skillful.

> "Now what are unskillful habits *[sīla]?* Unskillful bodily actions, unskillful verbal actions, evil means of livelihood…. And what are skillful habits? Skillful bodily actions, skillful verbal actions, purity of livelihood." — *MN 78*

"Practice" seems the best translation for *vata,* in that this term denotes a more formulated set of observances. As I have noted elsewhere, though (see *The Mind Like Fire Unbound*, p. 66), *vata* also seems to cover purely mental practices, such as the practice of jhāna.

As with clinging to sensuality and to views, clinging to habits and practices shapes becoming in three ways: influencing one's sense of self, one's experience of the present world, and one's experience of worlds to come.

> "There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones recollects the devas, thus: 'There are the Devas of the Four Great Kings, the Devas of the Thirty-three, the Devas of the Hours, the Contented Devas, the Devas who Delight in Creation, the Devas Who Have Power over the

Creations of Others, the Devas of Brahmā's retinue, the devas beyond them. Whatever conviction they were endowed with that—when falling away from this life—they re-arose there, the same sort of conviction is present in me as well. Whatever virtue… Whatever learning… Whatever generosity… Whatever discernment they were endowed with that—when falling away from this life—they re-arose there, the same sort of discernment is present in me as well.' As he is recollecting the devas, his mind is calmed, and joy arises; the defilements of his mind are abandoned. He is thus called a disciple of the noble ones undertaking the deva-uposatha. He lives with the devas." — *AN 3:71*

"A person of no integrity is a wilderness dweller. He notices, 'I am a wilderness dweller, but these other monks are not wilderness dwellers.' He exalts himself for being a wilderness dweller and disparages others. This is the quality of a person of no integrity.

"A person of no integrity is one who wears robes of thrown-away rags… an alms-goer… one who dwells at the root of a tree… a cemetery dweller… one who lives in the open air… one who doesn't lie down… one who eats only one meal a day. He notices, 'I am one who eats only one meal a day, but these other monks do not eat only one meal a day.' He exalts himself for being one who eats only one meal a day and disparages others. This is the quality of a person of no integrity.

"A person of no integrity… enters & remains in the first jhāna. He notices, 'I have gained the attainment of the first jhāna, but these other monks have not gained the attainment of the first jhāna.' He exalts himself for the attainment of the first jhāna and disparages others. This is the quality of a person of no integrity.

[Similarly with the other levels of jhāna up through the dimension of nothingness.]

"A person of no integrity… enters & remains in the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception. He notices, 'I have gained the attainment of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception, but these other monks have not gained the attainment of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception.' He exalts himself for the attainment of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception and disparages others. This is the quality of a person of no integrity." — *MN 113*

As the Buddha learned on the night of his Awakening, actions follow from views. Thus clinging to habits and practices is often combined with clinging to views about the results that those habits or practices will yield. If the underlying view is wrong, it can lead to even greater suffering than what is engendered by the habits and practices based on it.

> Then Puṇṇa Koliyaputta, an ox-practice ascetic, and Seniya, a naked dog-practice ascetic, went to the Blessed One. On arrival, Puṇṇa Koliyaputta the ox-practice ascetic bowed down to the Blessed One and sat to one side, whereas Seniya, the naked dog-practice ascetic, exchanged courteous greetings with the Blessed One and, after an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, sat down to one side, hunched up like a dog.
>
> As they were sitting there, Puṇṇa Koliyaputta the ox-practice ascetic said to the Blessed One, "This Seniya, a naked dog-practice ascetic, does what is hard to do. He eats food thrown on the ground. He has undertaken and perfectly conformed to that dog-practice. What is his destination? What his future course?"
>
> "Enough, Puṇṇa. Put that aside. Don't ask me that."
>
> A second time… A third time Puṇṇa Koliyaputta the ox-practice ascetic said to the Blessed One, "This Seniya, a naked dog-practice ascetic, does what is hard to do. He eats food thrown on the ground. He has for a long time undertaken and perfectly conformed to that dog-practice. What is his destination? What his future course?"
>
> "Apparently, Puṇṇa, I don't get leave from you (to avoid the matter by saying), 'Enough, Puṇṇa. Put that aside. Don't ask me that.' So I will simply answer you. There is the case where a certain person develops the dog-practice fully and without lapse, develops the dog-habit fully and without lapse, develops the dog-mind fully and without lapse, develops dog-behavior fully and without lapse. Having developed the dog-practice fully and without lapse, the dog-habit fully and without lapse, the dog-mind fully and without lapse, dog-behavior fully and without lapse, he—on the break-up of the body, after death—reappears in the company of dogs. But if he is of a view such as this: 'By this habit or practice or asceticism or holy life I will become one deva or another,' that is his wrong view. For a person of wrong view, Puṇṇa, there is one of two destinations, I tell you: hell or the animal womb. Thus when succeeding, Puṇṇa, the dog-practice leads to the animal womb; when failing, to hell." — *MN 57*

As he was sitting there, Tālapuṭa, the head of an acting troupe said to the Blessed One: "Venerable sir, I have heard that it has been passed down by the ancient teaching lineage of actors that 'When an actor on the stage, in the midst of a festival, makes people laugh & gives them delight with his imitation of reality, then with the breakup of the body, after death, he is reborn in the company of the laughing devas.' What does the Blessed One have to say about that?"

"Enough, headman. Put that aside. Don't ask me that."

A second time… A third time Tālapuṭa, the head of an acting troupe, said: "Venerable sir, I have heard that it has been passed down by the ancient teaching lineage of actors that 'When an actor on the stage, in the midst of a festival, makes people laugh & gives them delight with his imitation of reality, then with the breakup of the body, after death, he is reborn in the company of the laughing devas.' What does the Blessed One have to say about that?"

"Apparently, headman, I don't get leave from you (to avoid the matter by saying), 'Enough, headman. Put that aside. Don't ask me that.' So I will simply answer you. Any beings who are not devoid of passion to begin with, who are bound by the bond of passion, focus with even more passion on things inspiring passion presented by an actor on stage in the midst of a festival. Any beings who are not devoid of aversion to begin with, who are bound by the bond of aversion, focus with even more aversion on things inspiring aversion presented by an actor on stage in the midst of a festival. Any beings who are not devoid of delusion to begin with, who are bound by the bond of delusion, focus with even more delusion on things inspiring delusion presented by an actor on stage in the midst of a festival. Thus the actor —himself intoxicated & heedless, having made others intoxicated & heedless—with the breakup of the body, after death, is reborn in what is called the hell of laughter. But if he holds such a view as this: 'When an actor on the stage, in the midst of a festival, makes people laugh & gives them delight with his imitation of reality, then with the breakup of the body, after death, he is reborn in the company of the laughing devas,' that is his wrong view. Now, there are two destinations for a person with wrong view, I tell you: either hell or the animal womb."

When this was said, Tālapuṭa, the head of an acting troupe, sobbed & burst into tears. (The Blessed One said:) "That was what I didn't get leave from you (to avoid by saying), 'Enough, headman. Put that aside. Don't ask me that.'"

"I'm not crying, venerable sir, because of what the Blessed One said

to me, but simply because I have been deceived, cheated, & fooled for a long time by that ancient teaching lineage of actors who said: 'When an actor on the stage, in the midst of a festival, makes people laugh & gives them delight with his imitation of reality, then with the breakup of the body, after death, he is reborn in the company of the laughing devas.'" — *SN 42:2*

As he was sitting there, Yodhājīva [Professional Warrior] the headman said to the Blessed One: "Venerable sir, I have heard that it has been passed down by the ancient teaching lineage of professional warriors that 'When a professional warrior strives & exerts himself in battle, if others then strike him down & slay him while he is striving & exerting himself in battle, then with the breakup of the body, after death, he is reborn in the company of devas slain in battle.' What does the Blessed One have to say about that?"

"Enough, headman. Put that aside. Don't ask me that."

A second time… A third time Yodhājīva the headman said: "Venerable sir, I have heard that it has been passed down by the ancient teaching lineage of professional warriors that 'When a professional warrior strives & exerts himself in battle, if others then strike him down & slay him while he is striving & exerting himself in battle, then with the breakup of the body, after death, he is reborn in the company of devas slain in battle.' What does the Blessed One have to say about that?"

"Apparently, headman, I don't get leave from you (to avoid the matter by saying), 'Enough, headman. Put that aside. Don't ask me that.' So I will simply answer you. When a professional warrior strives & exerts himself in battle, his mind is already seized, debased, & misdirected by the thought: 'May these beings be struck down or slaughtered or annihilated or destroyed. May they not exist.' If others then strike him down & slay him while he is thus striving & exerting himself in battle, then with the breakup of the body, after death, he is reborn in the hell called the realm of those slain in battle. But if he holds such a view as this: 'When a professional warrior strives & exerts himself in battle, if others then strike him down & slay him while he is striving & exerting himself in battle, then with the breakup of the body, after death, he is reborn in the company of devas slain in battle,' that is his wrong view. Now, there are two destinations for a person with wrong view, I tell you: either hell or the animal womb."

When this was said, Yodhājīva the headman sobbed & burst into

tears. (The Blessed One said:) "That was what I didn't get leave from you (to avoid by saying), 'Enough, headman. Put that aside. Don't ask me that.'"

"I'm not crying, venerable sir, because of what the Blessed One said to me, but simply because I have been deceived, cheated, & fooled for a long time by that ancient teaching lineage of professional warriors who said: 'When a professional warrior strives & exerts himself in battle, if others then strike him down & slay him while he is striving & exerting himself in battle, then with the breakup of the body, after death, he is reborn in the company of devas slain in battle.'" — *SN 42:3*

In treating the fourth type of clinging—to **self-doctrines**—the discourses deal primarily in general terms when relating self-doctrines to states of becoming. Obviously, one's sense of self and of the world will be shaped by one's articulated doctrines on the topic of self, but the discourses give few specific examples of the connection between a particular doctrine and a particular state of becoming.

Strangely, many writers have maintained that the Buddha, in discussing self-doctrines, meant to refute only "the" brahmanical self-doctrine, which equated the self—*ātman*—with brahmā, the principle underlying the universe. Although this interpretation attempts to place the Buddha's teachings within a specific historical context, it actually misreads both his teachings and their context. In terms of the context, even a cursory glance at the Upaniṣads—brahmanical writings generally predating the Pāli Canon—will show that there was no single brahmanical self-doctrine at the time (see Appendix II). The teachings of non-brahmanical religious wanderers who were contemporaries of the Buddha espoused many other self-doctrines as well. So the Buddha was not situated in a context where only one view of the self prevailed. Thus it is unlikely that in discussing self-doctrines he would concern himself only with one. And when we look at his discussions of the topic, we see that he tries to cast his net wide enough to cover every conceivable way of defining a self.

"To what extent, Ānanda, does one delineate when delineating a self? Either delineating a self possessed of form & finite, one delineates that 'My self is possessed of form & finite.' Or, delineating a self possessed of form & infinite, one delineates that 'My self is possessed of form & infinite.' Or, delineating a self formless & finite, one delineates that 'My self is formless & finite.' Or, delineating a self formless & infinite, one delineates that 'My self is formless & infinite.'

"Now, the one who, when delineating a self, delineates it as possessed of form & finite, either delineates it as possessed of form & finite in the present, or of such a nature that it will (naturally) become possessed of form & finite [in deep sleep/after death], or he believes that 'Although it is not yet that way, I will convert it into being that way.' This being the case, it is proper to say that a fixed view of a self possessed of form & finite obsesses him.

"The one who, when delineating a self, delineates it as possessed of form & infinite, either delineates it as possessed of form & infinite in the present, or of such a nature that it will (naturally) become possessed of form & infinite [in deep sleep/after death], or he believes that 'Although it is not yet that way, I will convert it into being that way.' This being the case, it is proper to say that a fixed view of a self possessed of form & infinite obsesses him.

"The one who, when delineating a self, delineates it as formless & finite, either delineates it as formless & finite in the present, or of such a nature that it will (naturally) become formless & finite [in deep sleep/after death], or he believes that 'Although it is not yet that way, I will convert it into being that way.' This being the case, it is proper to say that a fixed view of a self formless & finite obsesses him.

"The one who, when delineating a self, delineates it as formless & infinite, either delineates it as formless & infinite in the present, or of such a nature that it will (naturally) become formless & infinite [in deep sleep/after death], or he believes that 'Although it is not yet that way, I will convert it into being that way.' This being the case, it is proper to say that a fixed view of a self formless & infinite obsesses him." *— DN 15*

"Monks, whatever contemplatives or priests who assume in various ways when assuming a self, all assume the five clinging-aggregates, or a certain one of them. Which five? There is the case where an uninstructed, run-of-the-mill person—who has no regard for noble ones, is not well-versed or disciplined in their Dhamma; who has no regard for men of integrity, is not well-versed or disciplined in their Dhamma—assumes form to be the self, or the self as possessing form, or form as in the self, or the self as in form.

"He assumes feeling to be the self, or the self as possessing feeling, or feeling as in the self, or the self as in feeling.

"He assumes perception to be the self, or the self as possessing perception, or perception as in the self, or the self as in perception.

"He assumes fabrications to be the self, or the self as possessing fabrications, or fabrications as in the self, or the self as in fabrications.

"He assumes consciousness to be the self, or the self as possessing consciousness, or consciousness as in the self, or the self as in consciousness." — *SN 22:47*

Thus, when discussing self-doctrines in general, the Buddha uses the term "self-doctrine" to cover any and all of the doctrines that would fall under these rubrics. However, with a few exceptions, he does not connect a particular self-doctrine to a particular type of becoming. Instead, he simply says that all self-doctrines lead to stress.

"Monks, you would do well to cling to that self-doctrine-clinging, clinging to which there would not arise sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, & despair. But do you see a self-doctrine-clinging, clinging to which there would not arise sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, & despair?"

"No, lord."

"Very good, monks. Neither do I….

"What do you think, monks: If a person were to gather or burn or do as he likes with the grass, twigs, branches & leaves here in Jeta's Grove, would the thought occur to you, 'It's us that this person is gathering, burning, or doing with as he likes'?"

"No, lord. Why is that? Because those things are not our self, nor do they belong to our self."

"Even so, monks, whatever isn't yours: Let go of it. Your letting go of it will be for your long-term welfare & happiness. And what isn't yours? Form isn't yours… Feeling isn't yours… Perception… Fabrications… Consciousness isn't yours: Let go of it. Your letting go of it will be for your long-term welfare & happiness." — *MN 22*

Self-doctrines include not only those that define a self and assert its existence, but also those that deny the existence of a self—for in denying a self, one first has to define what it is that one is denying.

There is the case where an uninstructed, run-of-the-mill person… does not discern what ideas are fit for attention, or what ideas are unfit for attention. This being so, he does not attend to ideas fit for attention, and attends (instead) to ideas unfit for attention. And what are the ideas unfit for attention that he attends to? Whatever ideas such that,

when he attends to them, the unarisen effluent of sensuality arises, and the arisen effluent of sensuality increases; the unarisen effluent of becoming… the unarisen effluent of ignorance arises, and the arisen effluent of ignorance increases…. This is how he attends inappropriately: 'Was I in the past? Was I not in the past? What was I in the past? How was I in the past? Having been what, what was I in the past? Shall I be in the future? Shall I not be in the future? What shall I be in the future? How shall I be in the future? Having been what, what shall I be in the future?' Or else he is inwardly perplexed about the immediate present: 'Am I? Am I not? What am I? How am I? Where has this being come from? Where is it bound?'

As he attends inappropriately in this way, one of six kinds of view arises in him: The view *I have a self* arises in him as true & established, or the view *I have no self …* or the view *It is precisely by means of self that I perceive self …* or the view *It is precisely by means of self that I perceive not-self …* or the view *It is precisely by means of not-self that I perceive self* arises in him as true & established, or else he has a view like this: *This very self of mine—the knower that is sensitive here & there to the ripening of good & bad actions—is the self of mine that is constant, everlasting, eternal, not subject to change, and will endure as long as eternity.* This is called a thicket of views, a wilderness of views, a contortion of views, a writhing of views, a fetter of views. Bound by a fetter of views, the uninstructed run-of-the-mill person is not freed from birth, aging, & death, from sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair. He is not freed, I tell you, from stress." — *MN 2*

Thus a self-doctrine deals with two issues: defining a self and then stating whether that self exists. Interestingly, the only cases where the discourses state that a particular self-doctrine leads to a particular state of becoming is where monks apply the Buddha's own teachings on not-self to their meditative experience.

"Then again, the disciple of the noble ones, having gone into the wilderness, to the root of a tree, or into an empty dwelling, considers this: 'This is empty of self or of anything pertaining to self.' Practicing & frequently abiding in this way, his mind acquires confidence in that dimension. There being full confidence, he either attains the dimension of nothingness now or else is committed to discernment. With the break-up of the body, after death, it's possible that this leading-on consciousness of his will go to the dimension of nothingness….

"Then again, the disciple of the noble ones considers this: 'I am not anyone's anything anywhere; nor is anything of mine in anyone anywhere.' Practicing & frequently abiding in this way, his mind acquires confidence in that dimension. There being full confidence, he either attains the dimension of nothingness now or else is committed to discernment. With the break-up of the body, after death, it's possible that this leading-on consciousness of his will go to the dimension of nothingness." — *MN 106*

Later passages in this discourse show that the monks in question, in trying to abandon a sense of self, end up clinging instead to a state of equanimity—a point that shows how important it is to understand all four types of clinging in order to escape clinging entirely. However, because the discussion of these passages also covers a practice that the Buddhist monks practiced in common with other paths of their time, we will save the full discussion for the next chapter.

Here, however, we can review all four types of clinging to delineate the themes that have emerged from the above discussion. Three stand out: themes of anticipation, mutuality, and limitation.

Anticipation. The choice of a particular focal point in which to take passion and delight often has less to do with what the point already offers, and more to do with one's anticipation of what might be gained by focusing one's efforts there. Even in cases where sensuality-clinging forms around a sensual pleasure, the motivation lies primarily in the hope that more sensual pleasure will be engendered through the clinging. In the case of view-clinging, a view can be clearly detrimental, but if one anticipates an advantage coming from expounding that view, one will submit oneself to it. The same principle applies to habit-and-practice clinging and self-doctrine-clinging. The passion and desire focus on anticipation of possible present or future results of present action. This anticipation is, in turn, based on a view —explicit or implicit—of how cause and effect work. One believes that the act of clinging in a particular way will cause a particular happiness to arise, and one draws conclusions within that framework as to which efforts will lead to a happiness worth the effort involved.

In this way, every form of clinging starts with a type of view-clinging. And the actual prospects of happiness to be gained from an act of clinging will be determined by the accuracy of the view on which it is based. The person engaged in the deva-uposatha is a case where the accuracy of his/her view leads to happiness now and into the future. The dog-practice ascetic, the actor, and the professional warrior are instances where the inaccuracy of

the view will lead to severe suffering.

What this means in practice is that the most direct way of getting someone to abandon a particular type of clinging is to get that person to change his/her views, particularly about cause and effect. This is why the Buddha stated that the central insight of his Awakening involved a principle of cause and effect, and why his teaching career centered on various ways of getting people to change their views to adopt his vision of cause and effect as well.

Mutuality. Just as views fashion all clinging, a similar case can be made that self-doctrines, habits, and practices fashion every form of clinging as well. People tend to cling to areas that seem to offer the best possibility of happiness given their sense of their capabilities and the means at hand. This sense, in turn, is influenced by their sense of self and their experience of which habits and practices have and haven't worked in the past. The case of the poor man unable to abandon his meager possessions is an example here. He clung to his shack, his wife, his pot of rice & gourd seeds because they lay within his sense of the possible—his familiar sense of himself and of the actions of which he was capable. Thus all forms of clinging contain elements of views, habits and practices, and self-doctrines, which in turn are shaped by the ways one has clung in the past. In some cases these aspects are clearly articulated in one's mind; in others, not. A particular act of clinging would be classified under one of these three sorts primarily on the basis of which aspect is most consciously felt or clearly articulated.

The one type of clinging that does not necessarily participate fully in this mutual interplay is sensuality. Even though every instance of sensuality-clinging is shaped by views, habits and practices, and self-doctrines, not every instance of those forms of clinging is shaped by sensuality. In fact some forms of habit-&-practice-clinging, involving the practice of jhāna, require the abandoning of sensuality-clinging, at least for the duration of the practice.

The fact of mutuality explains why every state of becoming that follows on clinging has three dimensions: a view of a world's working in line with a particular pattern of cause and effect, a sense of what habits and practices will lead to happiness within that pattern, and a sense of oneself trying to operate within that pattern. And as we noted in Chapter Two, the Buddha's path to the end of becoming involves creating states of becoming conducive to viewing things as they have come to be. Thus in formulating his path he had to include not only a view of causality, but also a guide to the proper habits and practices to follow within that view, and a sense of self capable of following those habits and practices. Because his path ultimately had to put aside the state of becoming it used as a tool, it also had to include teachings

that eventually brought freedom from each of these three mutual aspects.

Limitations. In its choice of a spot in the field of kamma, the act of clinging can add limitations on top of the limitations already inherent in the past kamma within that field. These limitations work in two dimensions: limitations on what is experienced in the present, and limitations on what will be done in the present. Although the first dimension may create a heaven in human life, it can also create a hell, as in the example of the person convinced that he was destined to hell because of his past bad actions. This then creates constraints on what one will do in the present, which in turn limits what will be experienced and feasible to do in the future.

Prince Jayasena is a prime example here. Obsessed with sensuality, his only knowledge of human potential centered on the sensual quest, which meant that although he lived in the midst of sensual pleasures, his pleasure was eaten away by sensual thoughts and on fire with sensual fever. With his mind inflamed in this way, he could not conceive of the possibility of a human being's achieving singleness of mind. This limitation on his imagination thus limited the range of action that he was even willing to attempt. This, of course, would then have a limiting effect on what he would experience in the future. If—like the person who denounces alms-going—he was led by his current actions to hell or the animal world, that would place severe limitations not only on the happiness he could experience in those locations, but also on the range of activities he could engage in there. The existence of these limitations helps to explain why the Buddha, in using becoming to put an end to becoming—and thus clinging to put an end to clinging—did not employ sensuality-clinging as part of his path.

Clinging to fortunate effects of past kamma or even to skillful actions in the present also entails limitations, which are of two sorts. The first sort is illustrated in the cases of the "dung-beetle" monk and the person of no integrity practicing jhāna. Conceit can easily form around these otherwise fortunate circumstances and skillful practices, and the conceit itself can then become a source of unskillful action.

The second sort of limitation is of a more general nature, and derives from the inherent limitations in the field of kamma in which craving and clinging work: No matter how skillful or fortunate the act of clinging, if it is not transcended the happiness it produces is always impermanent. At some point it will have to end, and there is no guarantee that a person falling from refined, long-term happiness will be wise or fortunate in finding a new place to cling. The incident of flavor-earth, for instance, was only the first in a long string of foolish decisions made by beings after descending from the Radiant realm. At the same time, cravings and clingings are not necessarily

consistent. A state of becoming may be based on conflicting views and habits, and thus contain inevitable tension. The poor person clinging to his shack is again an example here. Although he rightly saw the contemplative life as desirable, he could not bring himself to abandon his meager sensual pleasures because of other, conflicting views and desires.

Thus the happiness gained solely through clinging is inherently unreliable.

This is why the Buddha saw that the craving and clinging leading to becoming also lead inevitably to suffering and stress. And this is why his path to the end of suffering, although it involves the creation of skillful becoming, ultimately requires the ability to allow becoming to come to an end. It is also why his path requires a full understanding of the craving and clinging underlying becoming. Otherwise, without an understanding of the causes of becoming, the path would not have worked, for the causes—unapprehended—would have continued to function. Only when the causes are overcome through understanding can becoming be overcome as well.

To help gain a full appreciation of the skillful strategy embodied in his path, however, it will be useful first to look at the Buddha's discussion of some unsuccessful attempts to overcome the limitations of clinging, craving, and becoming. As he notes, all of these attempts fail because they are based on an incomplete understanding of the various guises that clinging, craving, and becoming can take. Thus, in their failure, they provide instructive lessons as to why the twists and turns of the Buddha's strategy are essential for his path to succeed.

Chapter 5: Two Incorrect Paths, One Incomplete

The discourses tell of many individuals who, in experiencing the types of happiness based on becoming, mistook them for the ultimate possible happiness. DN 1, for instance, describes five types of wrong view concerning Unbinding *(nibbāna)* in the here and now: one equating it with a state in which the self is completely furnished with the five sensual pleasures, and four equating it with each of the four jhānas. MN 49 tells of a Great Brahmā who believed of his brahmā realm that "This is constant. This is permanent. This is eternal. This is total. This is not subject to falling away—for this does not take birth, does not age, does not die, does not fall away, does not reappear. And there is no other, higher escape." The Buddha himself studied with two teachers who identified the highest happiness with the formless realms: fiḷāra Kālāma, whose path led to the dimension of nothingness; and Uddaka Rāmaputta, whose path led to the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception.

The Buddha repeatedly warned that a person aiming at genuine freedom must be careful not to mistake any of these states of becoming for the goal. The happiness they provide is conditioned. No matter how long it might last, it still ends when its underlying conditions end, and the mind will continue to be subject to all the uncertainties of its kammic field.

However, the Buddha was not the only seeker of his time who noticed these limitations. Others noticed them as well and recommended paths of action to escape them. In some cases their paths bore a partial resemblance to the Buddha's path; in others, no resemblance at all. The Buddha discussed some of these other paths, showing that they failed to lead to true freedom because they were based on an incomplete understanding of the various forms that becoming—and its underlying clinging—can take. Three of his discussions are especially interesting: two because they deal with paths that the Buddha totally rejected but are currently taught as genuinely Buddhist; and one because it shows how the Buddha adopted a teaching from another path and adapted it for use in his own.

The first discussion focuses on a view equating the self with the cosmos. This view attempts to overcome the limitations inherent in centering an identity on a particular point in space and time, and it does so by identifying with the entire cosmos in all time. The Buddha gave explicit reasons for

rejecting this approach. In fact, of all the self-doctrines he reviews, this is the one he holds up to the strongest ridicule.

> "Monks, where there is a self, would there be (the thought,) 'belonging to my self'?"
>
> "Yes, lord."
>
> "Or, monks, where there is what belongs to self, would there be (the thought,) 'my self'?"
>
> "Yes, lord."
>
> "Monks, where a self or what belongs to self are not pinned down as a truth or reality, then the view-position—'This cosmos is the self. After death, this I will be constant, permanent, eternal, not subject to change. I will stay just like that for an eternity'—Isn't it utterly & totally a fool's teaching?"
>
> "What else could it be, lord? It's utterly & totally a fool's teaching." — *MN 22*

The Buddha calls this view foolish because it denies a notion central to the concept of self, which is control (SN 22:59). One can genuinely identify with something only if one has a measure of control over it, for the function of "self" is to use that control for the sake of happiness. If one would have full control over the entire cosmos, it would be possible to claim a unity between the cosmos and one's self. But because such a range of control is patently impossible, the notion of a world-self or cosmic self is ultimately meaningless. A person claiming to hold this view on an explicit level would have to make use of other self-definitions in order to function in daily life. Thus, because the view contains an inherent contradiction and self-dishonesty, the Buddha does not adopt this teaching as part of his path at all.

From our analysis of the factors leading to becoming, we can see that there are other reasons for rejecting such a teaching as well. The motivation for adopting a view of a cosmic self is based on a misunderstanding: the idea that by claiming an infinite self, one can escape the limitations of a self centered on a single point. Actually, even though a cosmic sense of self may claim identity with all points in space and time, the acts of craving and clinging leading to that identity still center on a single psychological event: the particular feeling, perception, or thought fabrication on which the act of identification is initially based. Thus this view does not overcome limitations in the way it is meant to. At the same time, because it encourages the person holding it to adopt surreptitious self-views to function in the world, it does not lead to a state of becoming that would be useful on a path devoted to

developing genuine insight into the process of becoming.

Another failed path to freedom was that advocated by the Niganṭhas, a group presently known as the Jains. Seeing the dangers of identifying with pleasure, they thought that these dangers could be overcome by subjecting themselves to painful practices. They held to the following views: All worldly pain and pleasure were the results of past physical actions; worldly pleasure was simply a subtle form of pain. Thus the way to the end of suffering lay in escaping the results of past actions. The only way to do this was to avoid all action, developing equanimity while enduring pain as it arose in the present. The process could be accelerated by patiently enduring painful practices, thus burning up past action and not replacing it with new action. With the ending of all action, one's self would be freed.

The Buddha's primary criticism of this approach is that it is based on a partial understanding of kamma, in which past kamma is given total power, with no understanding of the role of present kamma in shaping the present.

> "Going to Niganṭhas… I have asked them, 'Is it true, friend Niganṭhas, that you teach in this way, that you have this view: "Whatever a person experiences—pleasure, pain, or neither pleasure nor pain—all is caused by what was done in the past. Thus, with the destruction of (the results of) old actions through asceticism, and with the non-doing of new actions, there will be no flow into the future. With no flow into the future, there is the ending of action. With the ending of action, the ending of stress. With the ending of stress, the ending of feeling. With the ending of feeling, all suffering & stress will be exhausted"?'
>
> "Having been asked this by me, the Niganṭhas admitted it, 'Yes.'
>
> "So I said to them, 'But friends, do you know that you existed in the past, and that you did not not exist?'
>
> "'No, friend.'
>
> "'And do you know that you did evil actions in the past, and that you did not not do them?'
>
> "'No, friend.'
>
> "'And do you know that you did such-and-such evil actions in the past?'
>
> "'No, friend.'
>
> "'And do you know that so-and-so much stress has been exhausted, or that so-and-so much stress remains to be exhausted, or that with the exhaustion of so-and-so much stress all stress will be exhausted?'

"'No, friend.'

"'But do you know what is the abandoning of unskillful mental qualities and the attainment of skillful mental qualities in the here-&-now?'

"'No, friend' ….

"So I asked them further, ' … When there is fierce striving, fierce exertion, do you feel fierce, sharp, racking pains from harsh treatment? And when there is no fierce striving, no fierce exertion, do you feel no fierce, sharp, racking pains from harsh treatment?'

"'Yes, friend…'

"'… Then it's not proper for you to assert that, "Whatever a person experiences—pleasure, pain, or neither pleasure nor pain—all is caused by what was done in the past." …. But when I said this, I did not see that the Niganṭhas had any legitimate defense of their teaching." *— MN 101*

In other words, the Niganṭhas totally ignored the fact that the pains of their practices were partly due to their present intentions to engage in those practices. Because the Niganṭha path was thus based on an act of willful ignorance of what is happening in the present, it was incapable of producing a state of becoming that would be useful on the Buddhist path. This is why the Buddha, in his first sermon, singled out the practice of self-torment as one of the two extremes that a true contemplative should avoid.

Another problem with the Niganṭha view is that they did not see that the act of being equanimous in the face of pain is also a type of kamma, and as such can become a center for craving and clinging. The Buddha discusses this point in his analysis of another view, one that he adapted from meditators of sects who aimed at non-becoming.

This viewpoint is expressed in a fairly cryptic statement that, because of an idiomatic peculiarity of the Pāli language, can be translated in two ways:

"The supreme viewpoint external (to the Dhamma) is this: 'I should not be and it should not be mine; I will not be; it will not be mine.'" *— AN 10:29*

"The supreme viewpoint external (to the Dhamma) is this: 'I should not be and it should not occur to me; I will not be; it will not occur to me.'" *— AN 10:29*

In the first reading, the "it" in "it should not be… it will not be,"

apparently refers to any object of consciousness. In the second reading, the "it" apparently refers to any thought or perception appearing in the mind. In either reading, this viewpoint is aimed at putting an end to all thought, perception, consciousness, and any sense of identity at all. The Buddha regarded this as the supreme viewpoint external to the Dhamma because it prevents the person holding it from regarding becoming as an attractive option, and the cessation of becoming as an unattractive one. In this way, it could prove useful in a path aiming at the cessation of becoming.

> "The supreme viewpoint external (to the Dhamma) is this: 'I should not be and it should not occur to me; I will not be; it will not occur to me.' Of one with this view it may be expected, '(The thought of) unloathsomeness with regard to becoming will not occur to him, and (the thought of) loathsomeness with regard to the cessation of becoming will not occur to him.'" — *AN 10:29*

However, this viewpoint—in and of itself—does not lead to freedom from the changeablility of becoming.

> "There are beings who have this view. Yet even in the beings who have this view there is still aberration, there is change. Seeing this, the instructed disciple of the noble ones grows disenchanted with that." — *AN 10:29*

The Buddha nowhere discusses the precise state of becoming engendered by the act of holding to this viewpoint, but two possibilities come to mind. The first is that the act of holding to the second reading of the viewpoint—stating that no thoughts (or perceptions) should or will occur to one—would apparently lead to the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception. AN 4:172 singles out this dimension as the realm in which beings take rebirth without conscious intention on their part or on the part of anyone else. In other words, one takes rebirth and inhabits a new level of becoming there even when one does not consciously want to engage in becoming at all. As we will see below, MN 106 states that this realm is the fate of a monk who, with an incomplete understanding of its results, uses a modified version of this viewpoint.

A second possibility is that, in trying to obliterate both perception and one's existence—"I should not be… I will not be"—a person at death would join the ranks of a class of devas that are mentioned—briefly—in only one spot in the discourses: the "beings without perception" (*asaññī satta* or *asaññā-satta*—DN 1). These beings apparently exist in a state of total

blankness, for DN 1 adds that when they fall from this state they retain no memory of anything preceding their fall, even if they later develop the level of concentration that would otherwise allow them to remember previous lives.

In either event, the primary flaw in this viewpoint aimed at non-becoming is that it actually results in renewed becoming. This, as we have frequently noted, is the central paradox of becoming. The simple desire to put an end to becoming cannot, by itself, put an end to the ignorance that lies at the root of becoming. This is why the Buddha, in MN 49, says that he saw becoming in the search for non-becoming, and why his full definition of the cause of suffering includes not only craving for sensuality and becoming, but also craving for non-becoming as well. This is also why his path to the end of becoming has, as its crucial moment, an act of knowledge that puts an end to ignorance about becoming and the types of clinging and craving that underlie it. An understanding of the processes of becoming thus not only helps to explain the path. It is part of the path itself.

The need for this knowledge is illustrated in a passage where the Buddha discusses two cases—one unsuccessful, one successful—in which a monk adapts the above viewpoint for the purpose of full liberation.

> Ven. Ānanda said to the Blessed One: "There is the case, lord, where a monk, having practiced in this way—'It should not be and it should not occur to me; it will not be; it will not occur to me. What is, what has come to be, that I abandon'—obtains equanimity. Now, would this monk be totally unbound, or not?"
>
> "A certain such monk might, Ānanda, and another might not.'
>
> "What is the cause, what is the reason, whereby one might and another might not?"
>
> "There is the case, Ānanda, where a monk, having practiced in this way—(thinking,) 'It should not be and it should not occur to me; it will not be; it will not occur to me. What is, what has come to be, that I abandon'—obtains equanimity. He relishes that equanimity, welcomes it, remains fastened to it. As he relishes that equanimity, welcomes it, remains fastened to it, his consciousness is dependent on it, clings to it. With clinging, Ānanda, a monk is not totally unbound."
>
> "In clinging, where does that monk cling?"
>
> "The dimension of neither perception nor non-perception."
>
> "Then, indeed, in clinging, he clings to the supreme clinging."
>
> "In clinging, Ānanda, he *does* cling to the supreme clinging; for this

—the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception—is the supreme clinging. There is (however,) the case where a monk, having practiced in this way—'It should not be and it should not occur to me; it will not be; it will not occur to me. What is, what has come to be, that I abandon'—obtains equanimity. He does not relish that equanimity, does not welcome it, does not remain fastened to it. As he does not relish that equanimity, does not welcome it, does not remain fastened to it, his consciousness is not dependent on it, does not cling to/is not sustained by it. Without clinging/sustenance, Ānanda, a monk is totally unbound." *— MN 106*

This passage illustrates several important points. To begin with, notice the two ways in which both monks have adapted the viewpoint. First, in replacing the phrases, "I should not be… I will not be," with the phrases, "It should not be… It will not be," they have removed all references to self-annihilation. In this way they avoid the mistake of "slipping right past" the Buddha's purpose in teaching the cessation of becoming (Iti 49—see the following chapter). Instead of willing their own destruction—and thus taking on a new identity as destroyers—the monks are simply fostering dispassion for the raw materials provided by every instance of the aggregates (the "it" in the altered phrases). In this way, they are beginning to put themselves in a position to undercut becoming at the ground level.

Second, the monks have added a new sentence to the viewpoint: "What is, what has come to be, that I abandon." The phrase, "what has come to be," is important here, for as we will see in the next chapter it is essential to the path for side-stepping both craving for becoming and craving for non-becoming. It derives from an understanding of kamma as illustrated in the Buddha's field analogies for explaining becoming. Both monks in this passage are attempting to relate to the field of kamma, not in terms of what becoming can be created from that kamma, but simply as it appears as mere kammic result: unfashioned raw material. In this way, old potentials can be allowed to arise and pass away, with no new becomings created from them. This is how becoming can come to an end.

The fact that the above viewpoint can be adapted to this understanding of kamma explains why the Buddha felt that—unlike the views of the cosmic self or the burning away of kamma—it could be adopted for his purposes in inducing a sense of dispassion for becoming in a relatively informed way.

However, the difference between the first monk and the second monk shows that a general understanding of past and present kamma is not enough to put an end to renewed becoming. There is also a need to

understand all four ways in which clinging can function. The first monk, having focused exclusively on his desire to put an end to thoughts and perceptions, is blind to the fact that he is relishing the equanimity to which that desire leads. Because the equanimity is intentional, and intention is kamma, his relish for equanimity still waters the field of kamma. Becoming is bound to result.

Based on our analysis of the various forms of clinging, we can see that his relish for equanimity would easily involve clinging to views—perhaps to the unarticulated view that equanimity was a state free from fabrication. It could also involve clinging to the practices of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception, perhaps again with the view that, because these practices aimed at non-becoming, they could not be a source of clinging.

The second monk, however, has a full understanding both of kamma and of clinging, and so he is able to detect—and abandon—types of clinging that eluded the first monk. This is why he is totally unbound.

This passage thus illustrates the practical corollary to the paradox of becoming: that part of the path to the end of becoming involves practices that lead to becoming. The states of becoming that can be used for this purpose, however, must allow the meditator to watch the processes of becoming as they occur. Now, it so happens that the states of becoming meeting this requirement can be created either through craving for becoming or—as we have just seen—craving for non-becoming. This fact is what allowed the Buddha to convert the two alternatives of craving for becoming and craving for non-becoming into a third alternative that opened the way to the end of suffering. An exploration of that third alternative, and the way it absorbs and transmutes the two other alternatives, provides many important insights into the strategies the Buddha employed in opening a path to the genuine end of suffering.

Chapter 6: One Way Out

As the Buddha stated in his first sermon, the knowledge that led to his Awakening was a special kind of knowledge and vision—*yathā-bhūta-ñāṇa-dassana*—into the four noble truths. Because the *bhūta* in this compound can mean "truth," the compound as a whole is usually translated as "knowledge and vision into things as they truly are." However, *bhūta* is also the past participle of *bhavati,* in which case it means "having become" or "come to be." Now, the Buddha taught that the way to avoid the dual trap of craving for becoming and craving for non-becoming was to view things as they have come to be. Thus the knowledge leading to Awakening would better be described as "knowledge and vision of things as they have come to be."

> "Overcome by two viewpoints, some human & divine beings adhere, other human & divine beings slip right past, while those with vision see.
>
> "And how do some adhere? Human & divine beings delight in becoming, enjoy becoming, are satisfied with becoming. When the Dhamma is being taught for the sake of the cessation of becoming, their minds do not take to it, are not calmed by it, do not settle on it, or become resolved on it. This is how some adhere.
>
> "And how do some slip right past? Some, feeling horrified, humiliated, & disgusted with that very becoming, delight in non-becoming: 'When this self, at the break-up of the body, after death, perishes & is destroyed, and does not exist after death, that is peaceful, that is exquisite, that is sufficiency!' This is how some slip right past.
>
> "And how do those with vision see? There is the case where a monk sees what's come to be as what's come to be. Seeing this, he practices for disenchantment with what's come to be, dispassion for what's come to be, and the cessation of what's come to be. This is how those with vision see….
>
> Those, having seen
> what's come to be
> as what's come to be,
> and what's gone beyond

what's come to be,
are released in line
with what's come to be,
through the exhaustion of craving for becoming.
If they've comprehended what's come to be—
and are free from craving
for becoming & not-,
with the non-becoming
of what's come to be—
monks come to no renewed becoming. — *Iti 49*

The first of the three alternatives listed in the prose part of this passage—adhering to becoming—is nothing more than the continued desire to engage in the process of becoming, unwilling to heed the Buddha's warnings of its drawbacks. The second alternative, delighting in non-becoming, is here given its clearest definition in the discourses. It consists of delight in the idea that what is currently becoming will pass away.

The third alternative—seeing things as they have come to be—is best understood by reviewing the approach the mind takes in giving rise to becoming. Delight in becoming focuses on the ground and nutriment for becoming in anticipation of converting them into a sense of self and the world. Delight in non-becoming focuses on the ground and nutriment in anticipation of their passing. In both cases, the mind inhabits a location in the focal point of delight. To see things as they have come to be, however, means looking at them without the interference of delight of any sort, simply to watch them as, having arisen, they pass away.

Because the ground for becoming is composed of old kamma as experienced through new kamma, this means, ideally, trying to experience the old kamma directly with no new kammic input. This, however, requires a great deal of skill, which is developed by trying first to see old and new kamma simply as events *per se,* so that one can ferret out the subtle levels of delight that can turn these events into becoming. When seeing these types of kamma simply as events—rather than as raw material for delight—one is struck by how inconstant and evanescent they are, totally dependent on causes and conditions that are also inconstant and evanescent. This gives rise to a sense of disenchantment for them, thus making it easier to abandon progressively subtler levels of passion and delight for new kamma and the process of becoming, until ultimately the moisture for becoming is all gone.

"One sees with right discernment that 'this has come to be.' Seeing

with right discernment that 'this has come to be,' one practices for disenchantment with, for dispassion toward, for the cessation of what has come to be. One sees with right discernment that 'it has come to be from this nutriment.' Seeing with right discernment that 'it has come to be from this nutriment,' one practices for disenchantment with, for dispassion toward, for the cessation of the nutriment by which it has come to be. One sees with right discernment that 'from the cessation of this nutriment, what has come to be is subject to cessation.' Seeing with right discernment that 'from the cessation of this nutriment, what has come to be is subject to cessation,' one practices for disenchantment with, for dispassion toward, for the cessation of what is subject to cessation. This is how one is a learner.

"And how is one a person who has fathomed the Dhamma?

"One sees with right discernment that 'this has come to be.' Seeing with right discernment that 'this has come to be,' one is—through disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, through lack of clinging/sustenance—released from what has come to be. One sees with right discernment that 'it has come to be from this nutriment.' Seeing with right discernment that 'it has come to be from this nutriment,' one is—through disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, through lack of clinging/sustenance—released from the nutriment by which it has come to be. One sees with right discernment that 'from the cessation of this nutriment, what has come to be is subject to cessation.' Seeing with right discernment that 'from the cessation of this nutriment, what has come to be is subject to cessation,' one is—through disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, through lack of clinging/sustenance—released from what is subject to cessation. This is how one is a person who has fathomed the Dhamma." *— SN 12:31*

"Monks, when one sees with right discernment as it has come to be that 'This has come to be,' is uncertainty abandoned?"

"Yes, lord."

"And when one sees with right discernment as it has come to be that, 'Its coming-into-being is with that as nutriment,' is uncertainty abandoned?"

"Yes, lord."

"And when one sees with right discernment as it has come to be that, 'From the cessation of that nutriment, what has come to be is subject to cessation,' is uncertainty abandoned?"

"Yes, lord."

"Monks, are you thus free from uncertainty here that 'This has come to be'?"

"Yes, lord."

"And are you thus free from uncertainty that 'It has come into being from that nutriment'?"

"Yes, lord."

"And are you thus free from uncertainty that 'From the cessation of that nutriment, what has come to be is subject to cessation'?"

"Yes, lord."

"Monks, is it well-seen with right discernment as it has come to be that 'This has come to be'?"

"Yes, lord."

"Is it well-seen with right discernment as it has come to be that 'It has come into being from that nutriment'?"

"Yes, lord."

"Is it well-seen with right discernment as it has come to be that 'From the cessation of that nutriment, what has come to be is subject to cessation'?"

"Yes, lord."

"If you were to latch on to, to cherish, to treasure, to be possessive of this view—so pure, so bright—would you understand the Dhamma as taught similar to a raft for the purpose of crossing over, not for the purpose of holding onto?"

"No, lord."

"If you were not to latch on to, to cherish, to treasure, or to be possessive of this view—so pure, so bright—would you understand the Dhamma as taught by me to be similar to a raft for the purpose of crossing over, not for the purpose of holding onto?"

"Yes, lord." —*MN 38*

Thus the Buddha did not intend his third alternative to be clung to as a view. Instead, it is used as a tool—like the raft for crossing the river—to achieve a particular effect on the mind. Once that effect has struck home with sufficient force to rid the mind of its delight for either becoming or non-becoming, the tool can be put aside.

Now because the mind, in taking up this approach, is necessarily in a state of becoming, this raises a strategic necessity: There must be a particular state

of becoming that is conducive for looking at things in this way. And, as the Buddha points out, that state does exist—when the mind is in a state of jhāna, or right concentration.

> "Develop concentration, monks. A concentrated monk discerns things as they have come to be. And what does he discern as it has come to be? The origination & disappearance of form. The origination & disappearance of feeling… perception… fabrications. The origination & disappearance of consciousness.
>
> "And what is the origination of form… feeling… perception… fabrications? What is the origination of consciousness?
>
> "There is the case where one enjoys, welcomes, & remains fastened. And what does one enjoy & welcome, to what does one remain fastened? One enjoys, welcomes, & remains fastened to form. As one enjoys, welcomes, & remains fastened to form, there arises delight. Any delight in form is clinging. From clinging/sustenance as a requisite condition comes becoming. From becoming as a requisite condition comes birth. From birth as a requisite condition, then aging & death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair come into play. Such is the origination of this entire mass of stress & suffering.
>
> [Similarly with feeling, perception, fabrications, and consciousness.]
>
> "And what is the disappearance of form… feeling… perception… fabrications? What is the disappearance of consciousness?
>
> "There is the case where one doesn't enjoy, welcome, or remain fastened. And what does one not enjoy or welcome, to what does one not remain fastened? One doesn't enjoy, welcome, or remain fastened to form. As one doesn't enjoy, welcome, or remain fastened to form, any delight in form ceases. From the cessation of delight comes the cessation of clinging. From the cessation of clinging/sustenance, the cessation of becoming. From the cessation of becoming, the cessation of birth. From the cessation of birth, then aging & death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair all cease. Such is the cessation of this entire mass of stress & suffering.
>
> [Similarly with feeling, perception, fabrications, and consciousness.] — *SN 22:5*

> "Develop concentration, monks. A concentrated monk discerns things as they have come to be. And what does he discern as it has come to be?

"'This is stress,' he discerns as it has come to be. 'This is the origination of stress… This is the cessation of stress… This is the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress,' he discerns as it has come to be." — *SN 56:1*

Stress, its origination, its cessation, and the path to its cessation are the four noble truths. Thus concentration is what makes the knowledge of Awakening possible. To see these things as they have come to be means two things: viewing events under the framework of the four truths as a whole, and focusing on the content of each truth within that framework.

As a whole, the four noble truths constitute a way of viewing experience that avoids dealing in the essential terms of becoming: self and the world. Instead, it focuses simply on the issue of cause and effect, and the way the connections between cause and effect can be manipulated unskillfully, leading to suffering, or skillfully, to its end. The imperatives that grow from this framework are different from those growing from the sense of self and the world. Instead of being enjoined to use the world to satisfy the craving around which the sense of self is built, one is enjoined simply to comprehend stress, abandon its cause, realize its cessation, and develop the path to its cessation.

Although a sense of self and the world will inevitably accompany the initial stages in adopting this point of view—as "I" decide to adopt it and master it—that sense of self is ultimately not essential to the framework. In fact, the framework allows one to view the creation of a sense of self and the world as an activity falling under the principle of cause and effect—an activity that can be judged as skillful or unskillful, to be developed where skillful and abandoned where not. Thus this framework is ideal for undercutting clinging to any sense of self or the world that would lead to becoming.

As for the content of the truths: Stress, the content of the first noble truth, is summarized as the five clinging-aggregates—in other words, the ground and nutriment of becoming as moistened with clinging and craving. The origination of stress is the clinging and craving that acts as the moisture itself. The cessation of stress is dispassion for and cessation of that moisture. And the path leading to the cessation of stress consists of right concentration together with the seven "requisites" that make it noble (MN 117). These requisites are nothing other than the seven other factors that make up the noble path: right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, and right mindfulness.

What is striking here is that the first two truths focus directly on the

factors that give rise to becoming, whereas the last truth focuses on itself. In other words, it focuses on the particular state of becoming—induced through discernment, virtue, and the practice of jhāna—that can be used to put an end to becoming. In practical terms, this means that once the path has been used to bring about dispassion for all other types of becoming, it can be turned on itself in a way that induces dispassion for the factors comprising the path. Thus the path contains the seeds for its own disbanding. In this way, it covers all possible types of becoming and so can put an end to becoming in all its forms.

Of course, jhāna on its own does not automatically function in this way, for as we have seen it is a prime example of becoming on the form and formless levels. To become a factor in the path to the end of becoming, it needs the insight provided by right view—seeing phenomena in terms of the four noble truths—together with the other factors that lead from right view to right concentration. Only then can it function in this new way. Nevertheless, it provides an absolutely essential vantage point from which right view can do its work. Unlike many later teachers in the Buddhist tradition, the Buddha did not regard right concentration—the four jhānas—as a dispensable factor of the path.

> "I tell you, the ending of the effluents depends on the first jhāna… the second jhāna… the third… the fourth… the dimension of the infinitude of space… the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness… the dimension of nothingness. I tell you, the ending of the effluents depends on the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception." — *AN 9:36*

> "Knowledge of the ending of the effluents, as it is has come to be, occurs to one who is concentrated, I tell you, and not to one who is not concentrated. So concentration is the path, monks. Non-concentration is no path at all." — *AN 6:64*

After all, jhāna was the first factor of the path that occurred to the Buddha when, as a young Bodhisatta, he realized that the path of austerities was not the true way to Awakening.

> "I thought: 'Whatever contemplatives or brahmans in the past have felt painful, racking, piercing feelings due to their striving, this is the utmost. None have been greater than this. Whatever contemplatives or brahmans in the future will feel painful, racking, piercing feelings due to their striving, this is the utmost. None will be greater than this.

Whatever contemplatives or brahmans in the present are feeling painful, racking, piercing feelings due to their striving, this is the utmost. None is greater than this. But with this racking practice of austerities I haven't attained any superior human state, any distinction in knowledge or vision worthy of the noble ones. Could there be another path to Awakening?'

"I thought: 'I recall once, when my father the Sakyan was working, and I was sitting in the cool shade of a rose-apple tree, then—quite secluded from sensuality, secluded from unskillful mental qualities—I entered & remained in the first jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. Could that be the path to Awakening?' Then following on that memory came the realization: 'That is the path to Awakening.' I thought: 'So why am I afraid of that pleasure that has nothing to do with sensuality, nothing to do with unskillful mental qualities?' I thought: 'I am no longer afraid of that pleasure that has nothing to do with sensuality, nothing to do with unskillful mental qualities." *— MN 36*

This last fact—that jhāna provides a pleasure that has nothing to do with sensuality—is the first reason why jhāna is such an essential factor of the path. Without the pleasure of jhāna as a higher, more stable alternative, one is sure to remain attached to sensuality, even if one has right view about sensuality's drawbacks.

"The uninstructed, run-of-the-mill person… when touched with a feeling of pain, delights in sensuality. Why is that? Because the uninstructed run-of-the-mill person does not discern any escape from painful feeling aside from sensuality. As he is delighting in sensuality, any passion-obsession with regard to that feeling of pleasure obsesses him….

"Now, the well-instructed disciple of the noble ones, when touched with a feeling of pain… does not delight in sensuality. Why is that? Because the well-instructed disciple of the noble ones discerns an escape from painful feeling aside from sensuality." *— SN 36:6*

"Even though a disciple of the noble ones has clearly seen with right discernment as it has come to be that sensuality is of much stress, much despair, & greater drawbacks, still—if he has not attained a rapture & pleasure apart from sensuality, apart from unskillful mental qualities, or something more peaceful than that—he can be tempted by

sensuality. But when he has clearly seen with right discernment as it has come to be that sensuality is of much stress, much despair, & greater drawbacks, and he has attained a rapture & pleasure apart from sensuality, apart from unskillful mental qualities, or something more peaceful than that, he cannot be tempted by sensuality." — *MN 14*

"When elephants & cow-elephants & calf-elephants & baby elephants go ahead of a wilderness tusker foraging for food and break off the tips of the grasses, the wilderness tusker feels irritated, upset, & disgusted. When elephants & cow-elephants & calf-elephants & baby elephants devour the wilderness tusker's bunches of branches, he feels irritated, upset, & disgusted. When elephants & cow-elephants & calf-elephants & baby elephants go ahead of the wilderness tusker on his way down to his bath and stir up the mud in the water with their trunks, he feels irritated, upset, & disgusted. When cow-elephants go along as the wilderness tusker is bathing and bang up against his body, he feels irritated, upset, & disgusted.

"Then the thought occurs to the wilderness tusker, ' …. What if I were to live alone, apart from the crowd?'

"So at a later time he lives alone, apart from the crowd. He feeds off grass with unbroken tips. His bunches of branches are undevoured. He drinks unmuddied water. When he bathes, cow-elephants don't go along and bang up against his body. The thought occurs to him, 'Before, I lived hemmed in by elephants & cow-elephants & calf-elephants & baby elephants. I fed off grass with broken-off tips. My bunches of branches were devoured. I drank muddied water. Even when I bathed, cow-elephants would go along and bang up against my body. But now I live alone, apart from the crowd. I feed off grass with unbroken tips. My bunches of branches are undevoured. I drink unmuddied water. When I bathe, cow-elephants don't go along and bang up against my body.' Breaking off a branch with his trunk and scratching his body with it, gratified, he allays his itch.

In the same way, when a monk lives hemmed in with monks, nuns, male & female lay followers, kings, royal ministers, sectarians, & their disciples, the thought occurs to him, '…. What if I were to live alone, apart from the crowd?'

"So he seeks out a secluded dwelling: a wilderness, the shade of a tree, a mountain, a glen, a hillside cave, a charnel ground, a forest grove, the open air, a heap of straw. After his meal, returning from his alms round, he sits down, crosses his legs, holds his body erect, and

brings mindfulness to the fore.

"Abandoning covetousness with regard to the world, he dwells with an awareness devoid of covetousness. He cleanses his mind of covetousness. Abandoning ill will and anger, he dwells with an awareness devoid of ill will, sympathetic with the welfare of all living beings. He cleanses his mind of ill will and anger. Abandoning sloth and drowsiness, he dwells with an awareness devoid of sloth and drowsiness, mindful, alert, percipient of light. He cleanses his mind of sloth and drowsiness. Abandoning restlessness and anxiety, he dwells undisturbed, his mind inwardly stilled. He cleanses his mind of restlessness and anxiety. Abandoning uncertainty, he dwells having crossed over uncertainty, with no perplexity with regard to skillful mental qualities. He cleanses his mind of uncertainty.

"Having abandoned these five hindrances, corruptions of awareness that weaken discernment… he enters & remains in the first jhāna… Gratified, he allays his itch.

" … He enters & remains in the second jhāna… the third jhāna… the fourth jhāna… the dimension of the infinitude of space… the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness… the dimension of nothingness… the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception. Gratified, he allays his itch." *— AN 9:40*

Thus jhāna, on its own, can provide a superior escape from pain and suffering, a gratifying sense of pleasure, ease, and equanimity with none of the dangers posed by sensual passion. When accompanied by right view, jhāna can enable the mind to abandon the fetter of sensual passion once and for all. This is why the point in the practice where this fetter is abandoned—non-return—is also the point where the practice of concentration has been brought to the fullness of its development (AN 3:88). At that point, once the mind is no longer distracted by sensuality, it can focus without interference on the issue of becoming in and of itself.

This helps to explain the practical corollary to the paradox of becoming: To truly see becoming in a way that puts an end to becoming, one must bring jhāna—a state of becoming—into being. In fact, the Pāli term for meditation—*bhāvanā*—literally means "developing" or "bringing into being." It, along with the other elements of the path, is something that should be developed *(bhāvetabba).*

"Vision arose, insight arose, discernment arose, knowledge arose, illumination arose within me with regard to things never heard before:

'This noble truth of the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress is to be developed." — *SN 56:11*

In developing the path, all the elements of becoming are brought into play. The path itself is a type of kamma, consciousness has to be focused on the task, and even desire—craving—plays an essential role.

"And what, monks, is right effort? There is the case where a monk *generates desire,* endeavors, activates persistence, upholds & exerts his intent for the sake of the non-arising of evil, unskillful qualities that have not yet arisen… for the sake of the abandoning of evil, unskillful qualities that have arisen… for the sake of the arising of skillful qualities that have not yet arisen… for the maintenance, non-confusion, increase, plenitude, development, & culmination of skillful qualities that have arisen." — *SN 45:8* (emphasis added)

I have heard that on one occasion Ven. Ānanda was staying in Kosambī, at Ghosita's Park. Then the brahman Uṇṇābha went to Ven. Ānanda…. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to Ven. Ānanda: "Master Ānanda, what is the aim of this holy life lived under the contemplative Gotama?"

"Brahman, the holy life is lived under the Blessed One with the aim of abandoning desire."

"Is there a path, is there a practice, for the abandoning of that desire?"

"Yes, there is a path, there is a practice, for the abandoning of that desire."

"What is the path, the practice, for the abandoning of that desire?"

"Brahman, there is the case where a monk develops the base of power endowed with concentration founded on desire & the fabrications of exertion. He develops the base of power endowed with concentration founded on persistence… concentration founded on intent… concentration founded on discrimination & the fabrications of exertion. This, brahman, is the path, this is the practice for the abandoning of that desire."

"If that's so, Master Ānanda, then it's an endless path, and not one with an end, for it's impossible that one could abandon desire by means of desire."

"In that case, brahman, let me question you on this matter. Answer

as you see fit. What do you think: Didn't you first have desire, thinking, 'I'll go to the park,' and then when you reached the park, wasn't that particular desire allayed?"

"Yes, sir"….

"So it is with an arahant whose effluents are ended, who has reached fulfillment, done the task, laid down the burden, attained the true goal, totally destroyed the fetter of becoming, and who is released through right gnosis. Whatever desire he first had for the attainment of arahantship, on attaining arahantship that particular desire is allayed…. So what do you think, brahman? Is this an endless path, or one with an end?"

"You're right, Master Ānanda. This is a path with an end, and not an endless one." — *SN 51:15*

Ven. Ānanda: "'This body comes into being through craving. And yet it is by relying on craving that craving is to be abandoned.' Thus it was said. And in reference to what was it said? There is the case, sister, where a monk hears, 'The monk named such-and-such, they say, through the ending of the effluents, has entered & remains in the effluent-free awareness-release & discernment-release, having known & realized them for himself in the here & now.' The thought occurs to him, 'I hope that I, too, will—through the ending of the effluents—enter & remain in the effluent-free awareness-release & discernment-release, having directly known & realized them for myself right in the here & now.' Then, at a later time, he abandons craving, having relied on craving." — *AN 4:159*

Notice that two kinds of desire are encouraged here. First, as an overall orientation, one is advised to foster desire for the goal of the path, which is to put an end to renewed becoming. Second, as a means to that end, one is advised to generate desire for the abandoning of unskillful qualities thwarting that goal, and for the development of skillful qualities leading to it. This means that, as an overall strategy, one is encouraged to aim at the end of becoming, while as a tactical maneuver one is encouraged to aspire to certain types of becoming as means to that end. In this way, one tames both the desire for non-becoming and the desire for becoming, and puts them to use in a way that actually leads to the end of becoming.

These desires are tamed because the mind understands the process of cause and effect thoroughly enough to realize that the simple desire to end becoming is not enough to attain the goal. It sees, in line with the four noble

truths, that the problem of becoming is to be solved not by abandoning the problem, but by comprehending the problem and abandoning its causes.

Because jhāna—the means to this end—is a state of becoming, even clinging—the prerequisite for becoming—has to be converted into a factor in the development of the path to provide the moisture needed to nurture the development of jhāna. Of the four types of clinging, only clinging to sensuality is excluded from this role for—as we have seen—sensuality-clinging is a direct obstacle to the arising of jhāna. However, as the Buddha noted when he first realized that jhāna was the path, jhāna cannot be attained when the body is weakened through lack of food. Thus a modicum of sensual pleasure—a result of skillful sensual kamma—is required for jhāna, even though sensual passion has to be put aside. Because sensual passion can easily assume the guise of what is "reasonably necessary" for comfort, the Buddha formulated a standard for judging the enjoyment of pleasure to test whether it is actually sensual passion in disguise.

> "The monk, when not loaded down, does not load himself down with pain, nor does he reject pleasure that accords with the Dhamma, although he is not infatuated with that pleasure…. (But) he notices this: 'When I live according to my pleasure, unskillful mental qualities increase in me & skillful qualities decline. When I exert myself with stress & pain, though, unskillful qualities decline in me & skillful qualities increase. Why don't I exert myself with stress & pain?' So he exerts himself with stress & pain, and while he is exerting himself with stress & pain, unskillful qualities decline in him, & skillful qualities increase. Then at a later time he would no longer exert himself with stress & pain. Why is that? Because he has attained the goal for which he was exerting himself with stress & pain." *— MN 101*

In this way, sensual pleasure is allowed on the path, but not to the point of developing into sensuality-clinging. However, the other three types of clinging are given clear roles in the path. View is converted to right view; habits are converted to right speech, right action, and right livelihood; and practices are converted to right concentration and the factors that support it: right resolve, right effort, and right mindfulness.

Even a skillful sense of self plays a role, although it is never fully developed into an explicit self-doctrine. Instead, mundane right view—acceptance of the teaching on kamma—induces an implicit sense of self, starting with a sense of responsibility and self-reliance.

"'I am the owner of kamma, heir to kamma, born of kamma, related through kamma, and have kamma as (my) arbitrator. Whatever I do, for good or for evil, to that will I fall heir': This is the fifth fact one should reflect on often, whether one is a woman or a man, lay or ordained." — *AN 5:57*

Your own self is
your own mainstay,
for who else could your mainstay be?
With you yourself well-trained
you obtain the mainstay
hard to obtain. — *Dhp 160*

Make an island for yourself!
Work quickly! Be wise!
With impurities all blown away,
unblemished,
you'll reach the divine realm
of the noble ones. — *Dhp 235*

Excellent are tamed mules,
tamed thoroughbreds,
tamed horses from Sindh.
Excellent, tamed tuskers,
great elephants.
But even more excellent
are those self-tamed.

For not by these mounts could you go
to the land unreached,
as the tamed one goes
by taming, well-taming, himself. — *Dhp 322-323*

A healthy sense of self also includes confidence in one's own abilities to succeed at the path.

"'This body comes into being through conceit. And yet it is by relying on conceit that conceit is to be abandoned.' Thus it was said. And in reference to what was it said? There is the case, sister, where a monk hears, 'The monk named such-and-such, they say, through the ending of the effluents, has entered & remains in the effluent-free awareness-release & discernment-release, having directly known &

realized them for himself right in the here & now.' The thought occurs to him, 'The monk named such-&-such, they say, through the ending of the effluents, has entered & remains in the effluent-free awareness-release & discernment-release, having directly known & realized them for himself right in the here & now. Then why not me?' Then, at a later time, he abandons conceit, having relied on conceit. 'This body comes into being through conceit. And yet it is by relying on conceit that conceit is to be abandoned.' Thus it was said, and in reference to this was it said." — *AN 4:159*

Self-reliance and self-esteem, when healthy, are not selfish. Compassionate behavior is taught as a natural consequence of genuine self-love, for if one's happiness depends on the suffering of others, they will do whatever they can to bring that happiness to an end.

Searching all directions
with your awareness,
you find no one dearer
    than yourself.
In the same way, others
are thickly dear to themselves.
So you shouldn't hurt others
    if you love yourself. — *Ud 5:1*

Even the practice of right mindfulness—the theme of right concentration (MN 44)—makes skillful use of a sense of "me."

"There is the case where, there being sensual desire present within, a monk discerns that 'There is sensual desire present *within me.*' Or, there being no sensual desire present within, he discerns that 'There is no sensual desire present *within me.*' He discerns how there is the arising of unarisen sensual desire. And he discerns how there is the abandoning of sensual desire once it has arisen. And he discerns how there is no future arising of sensual desire that has been abandoned. [The same formula is repeated for the remaining hindrances: ill will, sloth & drowsiness, restlessness & anxiety, and uncertainty.]" — *DN 22* (emphasis added)

In this way, a sense of self based on a competent mastery of cause and effect is an essential part of the path. And because this competence is defined in terms of cause and effect—the underlying principles of the four noble

truths—it can continue to function even after the sense of self used to develop it has been abandoned.

These, then, are the ways in which jhāna is mastered by using views, habits and practices, and one's sense of self in a skillful way. Views, habits, and practices are converted to factors of the noble path—i.e., noble right concentration and its requisites—and one's sense of self is implicitly defined in terms of the self-reliance, self-esteem, and compassionate self-confidence required to bring those factors alive.

* * *

Once mastered, jhāna provides not only a refuge of happiness beyond the need for sensuality, but also a vantage point for viewing becoming as it has come to be. Because jhāna, in building on right mindfulness (MN 44), is a consciously developed state of mindfulness and alertness, it is an ideal place to observe the processes of becoming in action. In this way it can also provide insight into how the conditions underlying becoming might best be allowed to lapse.

To begin with, an essential feature of jhāna is a consistent one-pointedness. This one-pointedness can function in two ways. First, it provides a point of reference from which one can observe the inconstant nature of less refined and more unstable states of becoming. In the course of developing jhāna, the meditator must learn how to deconstruct distracting thought worlds as they interfere with concentration. This skill, as it is mastered, provides insight into the component factors of becoming—past and present kamma, craving and clinging, and consciousness—in action. When jhāna is mastered, the mind is in a position where it can intentionally bring other thought worlds into the range of its concentration, and examine their movements in even greater detail. This examination is especially effective in observing the instability of states of becoming based on sensuality. In this way, the mastery of jhāna helps loosen attachment to the sensual level of kamma.

Second, mastery of jhāna provides long periods of mental stillness that enable one to observe how passion and delight can form a location of becoming around the focal point at the heart of jhāna itself. To observe this focal point—rather than simply being absorbed in it—one must step back a bit from one's full absorption without yet destroying the jhāna. The ability to do this relies on two things: the fact that consciousness can serve as food for consciousness, and that jhāna provides an expanded, whole-body awareness. One observes a state of jhāna consciousness as one's food, while inhabiting

another locus of consciousness within the expanded field of awareness provided by that jhāna consciousness. This, however, is a special skill, developed above and beyond the four jhānas themselves.

> The Blessed One said: "Now what, monks, is five-factored noble right concentration? There is the case where a monk… enters and remains in the first jhāna… the second jhāna… the third jhāna… the fourth jhāna….
>
> "And furthermore, the monk has his theme of reflection well in hand, well attended to, well-considered, well-tuned/well-penetrated by means of discernment.
>
> "Just as if one person were to reflect on another, or a standing person were to reflect on a sitting person, or a sitting person were to reflect on a person lying down; even so, monks, the monk has his theme of reflection well in hand, well attended to, well-pondered, well-tuned/well-penetrated by means of discernment. This is the fifth development of the five-factored noble right concentration." — *AN 5:28*

In this fifth factor, one can observe each jhāna while still in the expanded range it provides. One can watch not only the focal point of awareness, but also all the other mental factors that go into making the jhāna.

> "There was the case where Sāriputta—quite secluded from sensuality, secluded from unskillful qualities—entered & remained in the first jhāna…. Whatever qualities there are in the first jhāna—directed thought, evaluation, rapture, pleasure, singleness of mind, contact, feeling, perception, intention, consciousness [or, in a variant reading, "intent"], desire, decision, persistence, mindfulness, equanimity, & attention—he ferreted them out one after another. Known to him they arose, known to him they remained, known to him they subsided. He discerned, 'So this is how these qualities, not having been, come into play. Having been, they vanish.'" — *MN 111*

As MN 111 explicitly notes, one can observe these phenomena as they arise within any of the levels of right concentration while in them, with the exception of two: the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception and the cessation of feeling and perception. For these two levels, one can observe the state only after having left it.

> "Furthermore, with the complete transcending of the dimension of nothingness, Sariputta entered & remained in the dimension of neither

perception nor non-perception. He emerged mindfully from that attainment. On emerging mindfully from that attainment, he regarded the past qualities that had ceased & changed: 'So this is how these qualities, not having been, come into play. Having been, they vanish.' [Similarly with the cessation of feeling and perception.]" —*MN 111*

In addition to providing a spot where one can observe the mind in action, the practice of jhāna also provides the mind with direct, hands-on experience in manipulating the five aggregates, thus familiarizing it with the categories of thought needed to understand the kammic ground of becoming.

The "hands-on" aspect of this process can be seen most clearly in the description of the first jhāna which—among the four jhānas—is the only one whose standard simile includes a consciously active agent.

"He enters & remains in the first jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. He permeates & pervades, suffuses & fills this very body with the rapture & pleasure born of seclusion. Just as if a skilled bathman or bathman's apprentice would pour bath powder into a brass basin and knead it together, sprinkling it again & again with water, so that his ball of bath powder—saturated, moisture-laden, permeated within & without—would nevertheless not drip; even so, the monk permeates… this very body with the rapture & pleasure born of seclusion. There is nothing of his entire body unpervaded by rapture & pleasure born of seclusion." —*DN 2*

Kneading the sense of rapture and pleasure throughout the body is the work of directed thought and evaluation. This work requires skill in dealing not only with the aggregate of feeling, but also with the remaining four aggregates as well. For instance, if the meditator is using the breath—an aspect of the aggregate of form—as the focal point of the jhāna, this means growing familiar not only with the rhythm and texture of breathing that will create the rapture and pleasure to begin with, but also with the different breath forces that suffuse the body (MN 28), so that they can assist in spreading those feelings and not interfere with them. At the same time, the initial focus of the mind requires maintaining a constant perception of the breath. In fact, perception is so central to the practice of jhāna that AN 9:36 terms all the jhānas up through the dimension of nothingness as "perception-attainments." Fabrication also plays a role in the development of the first jhāna in the form of directed thought and evaluation, which are classed as verbal fabrications (MN 44). And of course the aggregate of consciousness is

involved in being aware of all of these processes as objects of the mind. In this way the first jhāna familiarizes the meditator with all five aggregates by providing an opportunity to master them as actions in fabricating the jhāna. Thus it paves the way for viewing the entire ground of kamma in those terms.

The practice of jhāna provides the opportunity to view the aggregates not only within each level of jhāna, but also while moving from one level to another. Because the differences among the levels are measured in terms of aggregates—and in particular, the aggregates of perception and fabrication—this reinforces the mind's ability to view mental and physical events in those terms.

> "Then again, monk, I have also taught the step-by-step stilling of fabrications. When one has attained the first jhāna, speech has been stilled. When one has attained the second jhāna, directed thoughts & evaluations *[verbal fabrications]* have been stilled. When one has attained the third jhāna, rapture has been stilled. When one has attained the fourth jhāna, in-and-out breaths *[bodily fabrications]* have been stilled. When one has attained the dimension of the infinitude of space, the perception of forms has been stilled. When one has attained the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness, the perception of the dimension of the infinitude of space has been stilled. When one has attained the dimension of nothingness, the perception of the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness has been stilled. When one has attained the dimension of neither-perception nor non-perception, the perception of the dimension of nothingness has been stilled. When one has attained the cessation of perception & feeling, perceptions & feelings *[mental fabrications]* have been stilled." — *SN 36:11*

By developing skill in the use of perceptions, the practice of jhāna provides a two-fold support for the work of right view in seeing things as they have come to be. This is because the work of right view is done largely with perception. The delight that provides a locus for becoming builds on the perception that anticipates a happiness worth the effort involved in producing it. Thus right view must provide alternative perceptions to counteract that wrong view. Here is where the two-fold support provided by jhāna comes in. Because jhāna gives practice in consciously choosing and holding to a single perception for long periods of time, it provides the mental skill needed to stick with these alternative perceptions. At the same time, jhāna provides a solid sense of stability and well-being that enables the mind to maintain these alternative perceptions without succumbing to depression

or disorientation—for the perceptions needed to reverse the mind's addiction to delight have to be strongly distasteful if they are going to have any success in thwarting the mind's ingrained habit of anticipating that delight. In a mind without a readily available source of pleasure, this process can seem like hell. Only a mind with a solid foundation can maintain it in a happy, healthy, and balanced way.

Examples of these distasteful perceptions are not hard to find in the discourses. We have already seen, in Chapter Two, how the Buddha recommended viewing the four forms of nutriment so as to induce a feeling of dispassion for them. Physical food was to be regarded as the flesh of one's own child; contact, as creatures feeding on a flayed cow; intellectual intention, as a pit of glowing embers; and consciousness, as the experience of being stabbed by three hundred spears a day.

To undercut delight for the ground of becoming in the form of the five aggregates and six sense media, the Buddha recommended the following perceptions:

> "What is the perception of inconstancy? There is the case where a monk—having gone to the wilderness, to the shade of a tree, or to an empty building—reflects thus: 'Form is inconstant, feeling is inconstant, perception is inconstant, fabrications are inconstant, consciousness is inconstant.' Thus he remains focused on inconstancy with regard to the five aggregates. This, Ānanda, is called the perception of inconstancy.
>
> "And what is the perception of not-self? There is the case where a monk—having gone to the wilderness, to the shade of a tree, or to an empty building—reflects thus: 'The eye is not-self; forms are not-self. The ear is not-self; sounds are not-self. The nose is not-self; aromas are not-self. The tongue is not-self; flavors are not-self. The body is not-self; tactile sensations are not-self. The intellect is not-self; ideas are not-self.' Thus he remains focused on not-selfness with regard to the six inner & outer sense media. This is called the perception of not-self.
>
> "And what is the perception of unattractiveness? There is the case where a monk ponders this very body—from the soles of the feet on up, from the crown of the head on down, surrounded by skin, filled with all sorts of unclean things: 'There is in this body: hair of the head, hair of the body, nails, teeth, skin, muscle, tendons, bones, bone marrow, spleen, heart, liver, membranes, kidneys, lungs, large intestines, small intestines, gorge, feces, gall, phlegm, lymph, blood, sweat, fat, tears, oil, saliva, mucus, oil in the joints, urine.' Thus he

remains focused on unattractiveness with regard to this very body. This is called the perception of unattractiveness.

"And what is the perception of drawbacks? There is the case where a monk—having gone to the wilderness, to the foot of a tree, or to an empty dwelling—reflects thus: 'This body has many pains, many drawbacks. In this body many kinds of disease arise, such as: seeing-diseases, hearing-diseases, nose-diseases, tongue-diseases, body-diseases, head-diseases, ear-diseases, mouth-diseases, teeth-diseases, cough, asthma, catarrh, fever, aging, stomach-ache, fainting, dysentery, grippe, cholera, leprosy, boils, ringworm, tuberculosis, epilepsy, skin-diseases, itch, scab, psoriasis, scabies, jaundice, diabetes, hemorrhoids, fistulas, ulcers; diseases arising from bile, from phlegm, from the wind-property, from combinations of bodily humors, from changes in the weather, from uneven care of the body, from attacks, from the result of kamma; cold, heat, hunger, thirst, defecation, urination.' Thus he remains focused on drawbacks with regard to this body. This is called the perception of drawbacks.

"And what is the perception of abandoning? There is the case where a monk does not tolerate an arisen thought of sensuality. He abandons it, destroys it, dispels it, & wipes it out of existence. He does not tolerate an arisen thought of ill-will. He abandons it, destroys it, dispels it, & wipes it out of existence. He does not tolerate an arisen thought of harmfulness. He abandons it, destroys it, dispels it, & wipes it out of existence. He does not tolerate arisen evil, unskillful mental qualities. He abandons them, destroys them, dispels them, & wipes them out of existence. This is called the perception of abandoning….

"And what is the perception of distaste for every world? There is the case where a monk abandoning any attachments, clingings, fixations of awareness, biases, or obsessions with regard to any world, refrains from them and does not get involved. This is called the perception of distaste for every world.

"And what is the perception of the undesirability of all fabrications? There is the case where a monk feels horrified, humiliated, & disgusted with all fabrications. This is called the perception of the undesirability of all fabrications." — *AN 10:60*

"Thus an instructed disciple of the noble ones reflects in this way: 'I am now being chewed up by form. But in the past I was also chewed up by form in the same way I am now being chewed up by present form. And if I delight in future form, then in the future I will be

chewed up by form in the same way I am now being chewed up by present form.' Having reflected in this way, he becomes indifferent to past form, does not delight in future form, and is practicing for the sake of disenchantment, dispassion, and cessation with regard to present form. [Similarly with feeling, perception, fabrications, and consciousness.]" — *SN 22:79*

These antidote perceptions function in two ways to enable the mind to see things as they have come to be. Some of them focus on developing a sense of distaste for any world of becoming that might be developed out of the ground or nutriment for becoming. Others focus on looking directly at the ground or nutriment, not in terms of what might be made of them, but simply as events in and of themselves, as they have come to be. The purpose in this second case is to show that the raw materials for creating becoming are too stressful and unstable to provide an adequate foundation for a reliable state of happiness.

The most frequently taught perceptions among this second sort are the perceptions of inconstancy *(anicca),* stress *(dukkha),* and not-self *(anattā).* The commentaries term these perceptions the Three Characteristics, and teach them as the common marks of all experience. Many people have reacted negatively to this teaching, saying that these three characteristics cannot possibly cover all of experience, for a great deal of pleasure can be found in experience as well. And because the sense of self entails control, the not-self teaching would seem to imply total lack of control, contradicting the teaching on kamma which indicates that we have a certain level of control over our actions, and thus our lives.

There are two possible ways of responding to these objections. One would be to brand the objections as an instance of "adhering" as described in Iti 49. A more fruitful response, however, is to note that the Buddha himself never used the term Three Characteristics, and never referred to these three perceptions as characteristics at all. The discourses nowhere compound the terms, anicca, dukkha, or anattā with the term for characteristic *(lakkhaṇa).* Instead, they compound them only with the terms for perception *(saññā)* and contemplation *(anupassanā).* This means that these terms are employed less for the purpose of providing a comprehensive description of experience than for the purpose of supplying mental tools and exercises that will produce a certain result—dispassion—in the mind.

Now, these perceptions are not useful fictions. They are truths.

"Whether or not there is the arising of Tathāgatas, this property

stands—this steadfastness of the Dhamma, this orderliness of the Dhamma: All fabrications are inconstant…. All fabrications are stressful…. All phenomena are not-self." — *AN 3:137*

However, early Buddhists also noted that the pleasures offered by phenomena are also a truth. In fact, pleasure and pain are inextricably intertwined.

Sister Dhammadinnā: "Pleasant feeling is pleasant in remaining, & painful in changing, friend Visākha. Painful feeling is painful in remaining & pleasant in changing. Neither-pleasant-nor-painful feeling is pleasant in occurring together with knowledge, and painful in occurring without knowledge." — *MN 44*

And if we did not assume that phenomena lie to at least some extent under our control, the idea of a path of practice would be futile.

Thus pain and pleasure are both truths, as are the facts of control and lack of control. However, in MN 58 the Buddha notes that a statement had to be more than a truth if he was going to state it. It also had to be beneficial and timely. Thus the question arises, when is it beneficial and timely to focus on issues of pleasure and control, and when is it beneficial and timely to focus on their opposites?

As a general principle, the Buddha noted that the mind's choice of which aspect of phenomena to focus on makes a great difference in what happens to it.

"Mahāli, if form were exclusively stressful—followed by stress, infused with stress and not infused with pleasure—beings would not be infatuated with form. But because form is also pleasurable—followed by pleasure, infused with pleasure and not infused with stress—beings are infatuated with form. Through infatuation, they are captivated. Through captivation, they are defiled. This is the cause, this the requisite condition, for the defilement of beings. And this is how beings are defiled with cause, with requisite condition.

"If feeling were exclusively stressful….

"If perception were exclusively stressful….

"If fabrications were exclusively stressful….

"If consciousness were exclusively stressful—followed by stress, infused with stress and not infused with pleasure—beings would not be infatuated with consciousness. But because consciousness is also

pleasurable—followed by pleasure, infused with pleasure and not infused with stress—beings are infatuated with consciousness. Through infatuation, they are captivated. Through captivation, they are defiled. This is the cause, this the requisite condition, for the defilement of beings. And this is how beings are defiled with cause, with requisite condition."

"And what, lord, is the cause, what the requisite condition, for the purification of beings? How are beings purified with cause, with requisite condition?"

"Mahāli, if form were exclusively pleasurable—followed by pleasure, infused with pleasure and not infused with stress—beings would not be disenchanted with form. But because form is also stressful—followed by stress, infused with stress and not infused with pleasure—beings are disenchanted with form. Through disenchantment, they grow dispassionate. Through dispassion, they are purified. This is the cause, this the requisite condition, for the purification of beings. And this is how beings are purified with cause, with requisite condition.

"If feeling were exclusively pleasurable….

"If perception were exclusively pleasurable….

"If fabrications were exclusively pleasurable….

"If consciousness were exclusively pleasurable—followed by pleasure, infused with pleasure and not infused with stress—beings would not be disenchanted with consciousness. But because consciousness is also stressful—followed by stress, infused with stress and not infused with pleasure—beings are disenchanted with consciousness. Through disenchantment, they grow dispassionate. Through dispassion, they are purified. This is the cause, this the requisite condition, for the purification of beings. And this is how beings are purified with cause, with requisite condition." *— SN 22:60*

Because infatuation leads to defilement, and dispassion to purity, the Buddha found it generally more beneficial to focus on the stressful, inconstant nature of the aggregates rather than on their pleasurable side. Of course, when advocating the development of jhāna and its prerequisites on the path, he found it beneficial and timely to focus on the pleasure that comes from exerting control over one's thoughts, words, and deeds. Perceptions of inconstancy, stress, and lack of control at that stage of the practice would best be reserved for phenomena that would pull one off the path. But once jhāna had been firmly developed, and the defilements that

would undermine jhāna removed, the Buddha would advocate applying the three perceptions of inconstancy, stress, and not-self to all manifestations of the aggregates, even within the experience of jhāna, so as to induce knowledge and vision of all phenomena as they have come to be. In enabling the mind to see things in this way, these perceptions also enable it to develop disenchantment and dispassion for things as they have come to be. In so doing, they help to free it from renewed becoming.

> "In seeing six rewards, it's enough for a monk to establish the perception of inconstancy with regard to all fabrications without exception. Which six? 'All fabrications will appear as unstable. My mind will not delight in any world. My mind will rise above every world. My heart will be inclined to Unbinding. My fetters will go to their abandoning. I'll be endowed with the foremost qualities of the contemplative life.'" — *AN 6:102*

> "In seeing six rewards, it's enough for a monk to establish the perception of stress with regard to all fabrications without exception. Which six? 'The perception of disenchantment will be established within me with regard to all fabrications, like a murderer with a drawn sword. My mind will rise above every world. I'll become one who sees peace in Unbinding. My obsessions will go to their destruction. I'll be one who has completed his task. The Teacher will have been served with good will.'" — *AN 6:103*

> "In seeing six rewards, it's enough for a monk to establish the perception of not-self with regard to all phenomena without exception. Which six? 'I won't be fashioned in connection with any world. My I-making will be stopped. My my-making will be stopped. I'll be endowed with uncommon knowledge. I'll become one who rightly sees cause, along with causally-originated phenomena.'" — *AN 6:104*

Of these three perceptions, the perception of inconstancy provides the preliminary attack on the clinging that "waters" becoming. To focus on the inconstancy of the ground and nutriment of becoming underscores the fact that the ground is constantly shifting underfoot. A phrase frequently repeated in the discourses calls attention to how quickly this can happen: "By whatever means they construe it, it becomes otherwise from that (MN 111; Ud 3:10)." In other words, whatever the condition of the ground when one begins using it to construe a becoming, it has already changed by the time the becoming has taken shape. Thus the ground of becoming is so

unstable that any state of becoming has to be continually shored up if it's going to last for any time at all. This means that even the most pleasant becoming is inherently stressful.

The perception of stress focuses on this point, and raises the question as to whether the continual maintenance of becoming is worth all the effort involved. This prepares the mind for the possibility that it might be better off not identifying with becoming or with the craving and clinging that allow it to grow.

In considering this possibility, the mind is ready for the perception of not-self, which clearly attacks any self-doctrine-clinging. However, this perception can also be used to counteract clinging to habits and practices and to views in general—even to the skillful habits of right speech and right action, to the skillful practices of right mindfulness and right concentration, and to the skillful views of right view. This expanded application of the not-self perception is necessary to avoid the pitfall that we noted in Chapter Five. There we saw that if the perception of "not-self" is applied without attention to what it is creating in the present, it does not totally loosen clinging to all habits, practices, or views acting in the present. It simply leads to a formless state of becoming. However, the discourses show how the perception of not-self can also be used to focus on present action, leading to non-fashioning in the present, and in this way becoming a tool for true Unbinding.

As AN 6:104 points out, one of the rewards of the perception of not-self is that "I won't be fashioned in connection with any world." The discourses use the theme of non-fashioning *(atammayatā)* as an important element in their description of how clinging to habits and practices and to views is overcome.

The drawback of even the best habits is that conceit can form around them and become an object of clinging. The cure for this tendency is not to drop the good habits, but to stop making them a part of one's self-definition.

> "Now where do skillful habits cease without trace? … There is the case where a monk is virtuous but not fashioned of virtue. He discerns, as it has come to be, the awareness-release & discernment-release where these skillful habits cease without trace." —*MN 78*

The discourses discuss how this can be done in the context of the practice of jhāna. As we noted in Chapter Five, it is possible for a person bent on non-becoming to delight in equanimity and thus to continue clinging to a state of becoming. To remedy this possibility, the discourses recommend viewing equanimity as a fabricated phenomenon. This helps draw the mind's attention to the fact that equanimity relies on intention—kamma—and is

thus a potential ground for becoming, something that should be viewed as it has come to be. This allows one to dis-identify with it and stop fashioning a self around it.

"There is equanimity coming from multiplicity, dependent on multiplicity; and there is equanimity coming from singleness, dependent on singleness.

"And what is equanimity coming from multiplicity, dependent on multiplicity? There is equanimity with regard to forms, equanimity with regard to sounds… smells… tastes… tactile sensations [& ideas: this word appears in one of the recensions]. This is equanimity coming from multiplicity, dependent on multiplicity.

"And what is equanimity coming from singleness, dependent on singleness? There is equanimity dependent on the dimension of the infinitude of space, equanimity dependent on the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness… the dimension of nothingness… the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception. This is equanimity coming from singleness, dependent on singleness.

"By depending & relying on equanimity coming from singleness, dependent on singleness, abandon & transcend equanimity coming from multiplicity, dependent on multiplicity. Such is its abandoning, such its transcending.

"By depending & relying on non-fashioning, abandon & transcend the equanimity coming from singleness, dependent on singleness. Such is its abandoning, such its transcending." — *MN 137*

"A person of no integrity… enters & remains in the first jhāna. He notices, 'I have gained the attainment of the first jhāna, but these other monks have not gained the attainment of the first jhāna.' He exalts himself for the attainment of the first jhāna and disparages others. This is the quality of a person of no integrity.

"A person of integrity notices, 'The Blessed One has spoken of non-fashioning even with regard to the attainment of the first jhāna, for by whatever means they construe it, it becomes otherwise from that.' So, making non-fashioning his focal point, he neither exalts himself for the attainment of the first jhāna nor disparages others. This is the quality of a person of integrity.

[Similarly with the other levels of jhāna up through the dimension of nothingness.]

"A person of no integrity… enters & remains in the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception. He notices, 'I have gained the attainment of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception, but these other monks have not gained the attainment of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception.' He exalts himself for the attainment of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception and disparages others. This is the quality of a person of no integrity.

"A person of integrity notices, 'The Blessed One has spoken of non-fashioning even with regard to the attainment of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception, for by whatever means they construe it, it becomes otherwise from that.' So, making non-fashioning his focal point, he neither exalts himself for the attainment of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception nor disparages others. This is the quality of a person of integrity.

"A person of integrity, completely transcending the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception, enters & remains in the cessation of feeling & perception. When he sees with discernment, his effluents are ended. This is a monk who does not construe anything, does not construe anywhere, does not construe in any way." — *MN 113*

"One discerns that 'If I were to direct equanimity as pure & bright as this toward the dimension of the infinitude of space and to develop the mind along those lines, that would be fabricated. One discerns that 'If I were to direct equanimity as pure and bright as this toward the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness… the dimension of nothingness… the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception and to develop the mind along those lines, that would be fabricated.' One neither fabricates nor concocts for the sake of becoming or un-becoming. This being the case, one doesn't cling to/isn't sustained by anything in the world. Without clinging/sustenance, one isn't agitated. Unagitated, one is totally unbound right within. One discerns that 'Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.'" — *MN 140*

The theme of non-fashioning also appears in discussions of how one abandons clinging to views.

An attainer-of-wisdom isn't measured
made proud
by views or what's thought,

for he isn't fashioned of them. — *Sn 4:9*

As with habits and practices, the danger of views is that one can easily fashion a sense of self around them. However, right view contains the tools to help dismantle both the sense of self and the concepts of existence and non-existence, thus undercutting any question of whether a self exists. Thus it is the only form of view that can be used ultimately to undercut all types of clinging and the types of becoming that might form around it.

It's useful to examine in detail how this happens. In its purest form, right view forces the mind to view the aggregates and sense media simply as events arising and passing away—as they have come to be. As the mind stays in this mode of perception, it abandons the most basic assumptions that underlie becoming and non-becoming—the idea of "my self," as well as the ideas of the existence and non-existence of the world. This leaves the mind free to focus exclusively on events simply as they have come to be, thus avoiding issues of becoming and non-becoming altogether.

The mind arrives at this point not through the force of logic or sheer will power, but through the simple fact that these assumptions don't even occur to the mind as it stays in this mode. With these assumptions abandoned, one cannot fashion any views around the existence or non-existence of a self in any world at all. Thus there is no place in the content of views for clinging to land.

> "By & large, Kaccāyana, this world is supported by/takes as its object a polarity, that of existence & non-existence. But when one sees the origination of the world [the six sense media] with right discernment as it has come to be, 'non-existence' with reference to the world does not occur to one. When one sees the cessation of the world with right discernment as it has come to be, 'existence' with reference to the world does not occur to one.
>
> "By & large, Kaccāyana, this world is in bondage to attachments, clingings/sustenances, & biases. But one such as this does not get involved with or cling to these attachments, clingings, fixations of awareness, biases, or obsessions; nor is he resolved on 'my self.' He has no uncertainty or doubt that mere stress, when arising, is arising; stress, when passing away, is passing away. In this, his knowledge is independent of others. It's to this extent, Kaccāyana, that there is right view." — *SN 12:15*

With the basic content of views called into question, they begin to lose

their fascination. Thus they can be regarded simply as instances of stress arising and passing away in a causal sequence that can be traced back to ignorance.

> "Or… he may have a view such as this: 'This self is the same as the cosmos. This I will be after death, constant, lasting, eternal, not subject to change.' This eternalist view is a fabrication…. Or… he may have a view such as this: 'I would not be, neither would there be what is mine. I will not be, neither will there be what is mine.' This annihilationist view is a fabrication…. Or… he may be doubtful & uncertain, having come to no conclusion with regard to the true Dhamma. That doubt, uncertainty, & coming-to-no-conclusion is a fabrication.
>
> "What is the cause… of that fabrication? To an uninstructed, run-of-the-mill person, touched by what is felt born of contact with ignorance, craving arises. That fabrication is born of that (feeling and craving). And that fabrication is inconstant, fabricated, dependently co-arisen. That craving… That feeling… That contact… That ignorance is inconstant, fabricated, dependently co-arisen. It is by knowing & seeing in this way that one without delay puts an end to the effluents." — *SN 22:81*

Right view even regards itself as an instance of stress arising and passing away. This is why—when it has completed its work—it contains the seeds for its own transcendence.

> When this had been said, the wanderers said to Anāthapiṇḍika the householder, "We have each & every one expounded to you in line with our own positions. Now tell us what views you have."
>
> "Whatever has been brought into being, is fabricated, willed, dependently co-arisen: That is inconstant. Whatever is inconstant is stress. Whatever is stress is not mine, is not what I am, is not my self. This is the sort of view I have."
>
> "So, householder, whatever has been brought into being, is fabricated, willed, dependently co-arisen: That is inconstant. Whatever is inconstant is stress. You thus adhere to that very stress, submit yourself to that very stress."
>
> "Venerable sirs, whatever has been brought into being, is fabricated, willed, dependently co-arisen: That is inconstant. Whatever is inconstant is stress. Whatever is stress is not mine, is not what I am, is not my self. Having seen this well with right discernment as it has

come to be, I also discern the higher escape from it as it has come to be."

When this had been said, the wanderers fell silent, abashed, sitting with their shoulders drooping, their heads down, brooding, at a loss for words. Anāthapiṇḍika the householder, perceiving that the wanderers were silent, abashed… at a loss for words, got up from his seat & left. — *AN 10:93*

Thus the perception of not-self, in undercutting any sense of self that might be exalted or weighed down by a view or practice, helps to undercut any and all forms of clinging. In fact, it is so useful that it can even undercut a sense of clinging to the deathless.

Now, some passages in the discourses—such as SN 22:59 and AN 10:60—apply the perception of not-self only to fabricated phenomena. However, other passages extend its range further than that.

When you see with discernment,
'All fabrications are inconstant' ….
'All fabrications are stressful' ….
'All phenomena are not-self'—
you grow disenchanted with stress.
This is the path
to purity. — *Dhp 277-279*

"Whether or not there is the arising of Tathāgatas, this property stands—this steadfastness of the Dhamma, this orderliness of the Dhamma: All phenomena are not-self. The Tathāgata directly awakens to that, breaks through to that. Directly awakening & breaking through to that, he declares it, teaches it, describes it, sets it forth. He reveals it, explains it, makes it plain: All phenomena are not-self." — *AN 3:137*

"Phenomena" *(dhamma)* here covers unfabricated as well as fabricated experiences, but there is considerable controversy over how the statement, "All phenomena are not-self," should be handled. Some interpreters would like to convert it into a general statement about the nature of reality. Because the fabricated and unfabricated cover all possible realities, this would lead to the conclusion that there is no self. To say this, however, is to create a self-doctrine, which could provide ground for clinging. More in line with the Buddha's overall strategy advanced in Iti 49 would be to look for the point in the practice where the statement, "All phenomena are not-self," could be applied in a beneficial and timely way to see things as they have come to be,

to eradicate clinging, and thus put an end to renewed becoming.

The first step in this line of inquiry is to note that the discourses are not consistent on the point of whether Unbinding counts as a phenomenon. Iti 90, among others, states clearly that it is. Sn 5:6, on the other hand, describes the attainment of the goal as the transcending of all phenomena. Sn 4:6 and Sn 4:10 state that the arahant has transcended dispassion, said to be the highest phenomenon.

Perhaps the passage most relevant to this question is this:

> "'All phenomena gain a footing in the deathless.
> "'All phenomena have Unbinding as their final end.'" — *AN 10:58*

The deathless, here, would seem to refer to the unfabricated as experienced in the levels of Awakening from stream-entry through non-return (MN 56; Mv.I.23.5). The image of "gaining a footing" clearly refers to the image, common throughout the Canon, which compares the practice to the act of crossing a river. When one reaches the deathless, one has gained a footing in the bed of the river, but has yet to arrive on shore. Only on reaching arahantship does one stand safely out of the river on firm ground (SN 35:238; Iti 69; Sn 4:15). In the context of this image, the unfabricated—experienced first as the deathless and then as full Unbinding—would be apprehended in two different ways: as a phenomenon in the first case, and as the ending of phenomena in the second. As a phenomenon, it could be regarded as an object of delight. And several passages clearly show that the act of regarding the phenomenon of deathlessness with delight is precisely what separates the lower levels of Awakening from the highest.

> "Suppose that an archer or archer's apprentice were to practice on a straw man or mound of clay, so that after a while he would become able to shoot long distances, to fire accurate shots in rapid succession, and to pierce great masses. In the same way, there is the case where a monk… enters & remains in the first jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. He regards whatever phenomena there that are connected with form, feeling, perception, fabrications, & consciousness, as inconstant, stressful, a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction, alien, a disintegration, an emptiness, not-self. He turns his mind away from those phenomena, and having done so, inclines his mind to the property of deathlessness: 'This is peace, this is exquisite—the pacification of all fabrications; the relinquishing of all acquisitions; the ending of craving; dispassion;

cessation; Unbinding.'

"Staying right there, he reaches the ending of the effluents. Or, if not, then—*through this very Dhamma-passion, this Dhamma-delight,* and from the total wasting away of the first five fetters [self-identity views, grasping at habits & practices, uncertainty, sensual passion, and irritation]—he is due to be reborn [in the Pure Abodes], there to be totally unbound, never again to return from that world….

[Similarly with the second, third, and fourth jhāna.]

"…. Suppose that an archer or archer's apprentice were to practice on a straw man or mound of clay, so that after a while he would become able to shoot long distances, to fire accurate shots in rapid succession, and to pierce great masses. In the same way, there is the case where a monk… enters & remains in the dimension of the infinitude of space. He regards whatever phenomena there that are connected with feeling, perception, fabrications, & consciousness, as inconstant, stressful, a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction, alien, a disintegration, an emptiness, not-self. He turns his mind away from those phenomena, and having done so, inclines his mind to the property of deathlessness: 'This is peace, this is exquisite — the pacification of all fabrications; the relinquishing of all acquisitions; the ending of craving; dispassion; cessation; Unbinding.'

"Staying right there, he reaches the ending of the effluents. Or, if not, then—*through this very Dhamma-passion, this very Dhamma-delight,* and from the total wasting away of the first five fetters—he is due to be reborn [in the Pure Abodes], there to be totally unbound, never again to return from that world….

[Similarly with the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness and the dimension of nothingness.]" —*AN 9:36* (emphasis added)

MN 1 makes a similar point about the distinction between the lower levels of Awakening and the highest, although it uses the word Unbinding to cover the experience of the unfabricated at all levels of Awakening.

"The monk in training [i.e., a streamwinner, once-returner, or non-returner]… directly knows Unbinding as Unbinding. Directly knowing Unbinding as Unbinding, let him not conceive about Unbinding, let him not conceive (things) in Unbinding, let him not conceive (things) coming out of Unbinding, let him not conceive Unbinding as 'mine,' let him not delight in Unbinding. Why is that? So that he may comprehend it, I tell you….

"The arahant… directly knows Unbinding as Unbinding. Directly knowing Unbinding as Unbinding, he does not conceive about Unbinding, does not conceive (things) in Unbinding, does not conceive (things) coming out of Unbinding, does not conceive Unbinding as 'mine,' does not delight in Unbinding. Why is that? Because, with the ending of delusion, he is devoid of delusion, I tell you." — *MN 1*

Even though the dispassion of Unbinding is the highest of phenomena, full Awakening requires abandoning passion even for the phenomenon of dispassion.

"Among whatever phenomena there may be, fabricated or unfabricated, the phenomenon of dispassion—the subduing of intoxication, the elimination of thirst, the uprooting of attachment, the breaking of the round, the destruction of craving, dispassion, cessation, the realization of Unbinding—is considered supreme." — *Iti 90*

The brahman [the arahant]
gone beyond territories,
has nothing that
—on knowing or seeing—
he's grasped.
Unimpassionate for passion,
not impassioned for dispassion,
he has nothing here
that he's grasped as supreme. — *Sn 4:4*

Thus the statement, "All phenomena are not-self," shows its timely utility in the case of the meditator in training, reminding him or her, when apprehending the unfabricated, not to identify with any delight or passion that might arise around it. Even though that delight may aim at the supreme good, it still forms a location, a landing spot for becoming and its inherent stress, thus preventing full Awakening.

"Just as even a small amount of excrement is foul smelling, in the same way I do not praise even a small amount of becoming, even for the extent of a finger-snap." — *AN 1:202*

With this perception in mind as one continues with the practice of seeing things as they have come to be—whether fabricated or unfabricated—one reaches the point where no new intentions form around any of these things.

When that happens, the sense of location that leads to renewed becoming—the moisture in the field analogies—is gone.

> "Then, Bāhiya, you should train yourself thus: In reference to the seen, there will be only the seen. In reference to the heard, only the heard. In reference to the sensed, only the sensed. In reference to the cognized, only the cognized. That is how you should train yourself. When for you there will be only the seen in reference to the seen, only the heard in reference to the heard, only the sensed in reference to the sensed, only the cognized in reference to the cognized, then, Bāhiya, there is no you in connection with that. When there is no you in connection with that, there is no you there. When there is no you there, you are neither here nor yonder nor between the two. This, just this, is the end of stress." — *Ud 1:10*

Not only is there no you there, there is no there.

> "One who is dependent has wavering. One who is independent, no wavering. There being no wavering, there is calm. There being calm, there is no desire. There being no desire, there is no coming or going. There being no coming or going, there is no passing away or arising. There being no passing away or arising, there is neither a here nor a there nor a between-the-two. This, just this, is the end of stress." — *Ud 8:4*

With no here or there or between the two, no activity of coming or going or staying can occur, for these activities require a sense of place. This fact explains the Buddha's famous paradox about the last stage of the practice.

> Then a certain devatā, in the far extreme of the night, her extreme radiance lighting up the entirety of Jeta's Grove, went to the Blessed One. On arrival, having bowed down to him, she stood to one side. As she was standing there, she said to him, "Tell me, dear sir, how you crossed over the flood."
>
> "I crossed over the flood without pushing forward, without staying in place."
>
> "But how, dear sir, did you cross over the flood without pushing forward, without staying in place?"
>
> "When I pushed forward, I was whirled about. When I stayed in place, I sank. And so I crossed over the flood without pushing forward, without staying in place."

The devatā:

"At long last I see
a brahman, totally unbound,
who
without pushing forward,
without staying in place,
has crossed over
the entanglements
of the world." — *SN 1:1*

With all entanglements transcended and the end of stress fully realized, the tasks surrounding the four noble truths are complete. And as the Buddha stated in summarizing his first discourse, that is how the knowledge and vision of things as they have come to be yields full Awakening.

> "Vision arose, insight arose, discernment arose, knowledge arose, illumination arose within me with regard to things never heard before: 'This is the noble truth of stress' …. 'This noble truth of stress is to be comprehended' …. 'This noble truth of stress has been comprehended.'
>
> "Vision arose, insight arose, discernment arose, knowledge arose, illumination arose within me with regard to things never heard before: 'This is the noble truth of the origination of stress' …. 'This noble truth of the origination of stress is to be abandoned' …. 'This noble truth of the origination of stress has been abandoned.'
>
> "Vision arose, insight arose, discernment arose, knowledge arose, illumination arose within me with regard to things never heard before: 'This is the noble truth of the cessation of stress' …. 'This noble truth of the cessation of stress is to be directly realized' …. 'This noble truth of the cessation of stress has been directly realized.'
>
> "Vision arose, insight arose, discernment arose, knowledge arose, illumination arose within me with regard to things never heard before: 'This is the noble truth of the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress' …. 'This noble truth of the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress is to be developed' …. 'This noble truth of the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress has been developed.'
>
> "And, monks, as long as this—my three-round, twelve-permutation knowledge & vision concerning these four noble truths as they have come to be—was not pure, I did not claim to have directly awakened to the right self-awakening unexcelled in the cosmos with its devas, Maras, & Brahmās, with its contemplatives & priests, its royalty &

commonfolk. But as soon as this—my three-round, twelve-permutation knowledge & vision concerning these four noble truths as they have come to be—was truly pure, then I did claim to have directly awakened to the right self-awakening unexcelled in the cosmos with its devas, Maras, & Brahmās, with its contemplatives & priests, its royalty & commonfolk. Knowledge & vision arose in me: 'Unprovoked is my release. This is the last birth. There is now no renewed becoming.'" — *SN 56:11*

In the words of Iti 49, "This is how those with vision see."

Chapter 7: No Location, No Limitation

To contrast with the analogies discussed in Chapter Two, the Buddha provided three analogies to describe the mind that has put an end to renewed becoming.

The **first analogy** is simply a reversal of the field analogies.

> "And if these five means of propagation are not broken, not rotten, not damaged by wind & sun, mature, and well-buried, but there is no earth and no water, would they exhibit growth, increase, & proliferation?"
>
> "No, lord."
>
> "And if these five means of propagation are broken, rotten, damaged by wind & sun, immature, and poorly-buried, but there is earth & water, would they exhibit growth, increase, & proliferation?"
>
> "No, lord" ….
>
> "Like the earth property, monks, is how the four standing-spots for consciousness should be seen. Like the liquid property is how delight & passion should be seen. Like the five means of propagation is how consciousness together with its nutriment should be seen….
>
> "If a monk abandons passion for the property of form….
>
> "If a monk abandons passion for the property of feeling….
>
> "If a monk abandons passion for the property of perception….
>
> "If a monk abandons passion for the property of fabrications….
>
> "If a monk abandons passion for the property of consciousness, then owing to the abandonment of passion, the support is cut off, and there is no landing of consciousness. Consciousness, thus not having landed, not increasing, not concocting, is released. Owing to its release, it is steady. Owing to its steadiness, it is contented. Owing to its contentment, it is not agitated. Not agitated, he (the monk) is totally unbound right within. He discerns that 'Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.'" — *SN 22:54*

Although this analogy explicitly mentions only two alternative ways by

which becoming is ended, it contains three variables that can actually function in this way: when the seed is deprived of water, when it is deprived of earth, and when it is poorly buried and damaged to the point where it cannot grow. These three variables, in differing combinations, relate to the three modes in which freedom from becoming—Unbinding—is experienced after Awakening. Iti 44 describes two of these. In the first, the arahant while still alive experiences the six senses, but without any passion, aversion, or delusion. This would correspond to the seed's being deprived of water. In the second, the arahant at death watches as the six senses grow cold through not being relished. This would correspond to the seed's being deprived both of water and of earth.

Other discourses, though, describe a third mode: an experience of Unbinding in this lifetime that seems to be a foretaste of Unbinding after death, in which all experience of the six senses is absent.

> Ven. Sāriputta: "Once, friend Ānanda, when I was staying right here in Savatthī in the Blind Man's Grove, I reached concentration in such a way that I was neither percipient of earth with regard to earth, nor of water with regard to water, nor of fire ... wind ... the dimension of the infinitude of space ... the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness ... the dimension of nothingness ... the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception ... this world ... nor of the next world with regard to the next world, and yet I was still percipient."
>
> Ven. Ānanda: "But what, friend Sāriputta, were you percipient of at that time?"
>
> Ven. Sāriputta: "'The cessation of becoming — Unbinding — the cessation of becoming — Unbinding': One perception arose in me, friend Ānanda, as another perception ceased. Just as in a blazing woodchip fire, one flame arises as another flame ceases, even so, 'The cessation of becoming — Unbinding — the cessation of becoming — Unbinding': One perception arose in me as another one ceased. I was percipient at that time of 'The cessation of becoming — Unbinding.'" *— AN 10:7*

In this case, consciousness is not only devoid of passion, etc.; it is also separate from the senses. In terms of the field analogies, this would correspond to the seed's being damaged—stripped of nutriment and moisture—and poorly buried.

The **second analogy** for a mind freed from becoming—dealing specifically with the arahant's more general experience of Unbinding in this lifetime—

focuses primarily on the seed.

> "Just as when seeds are not broken, not rotten, not damaged by wind & heat, capable of sprouting, well-buried, planted in well-prepared soil, and a man would burn them with fire and, burning them with fire, would make them into fine ashes. Having made them into fine ashes, he would winnow them before a high wind or wash them away in a swift-flowing stream. Those seeds would thus be destroyed at the root, made like a palmyra stump, deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising.
>
> "In the same way, any action performed with non-greed—born of non-greed, caused by non-greed, originating from non-greed: When greed is gone, that action is thus abandoned, its root destroyed, made like a palmyra stump, deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising.
>
> "Any action performed with non-aversion…
>
> "Any action performed with non-delusion—born of non-delusion, caused by non-delusion, originating from non-delusion: When delusion is gone, that action is thus abandoned, its root destroyed, made like a palmyra stump, deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising." *— AN 3:34*

The purpose of this analogy is clear: to explain how an arahant still engages in intentional activity without producing renewed becoming. He or she has so thoroughly destroyed any trace of passion and delight for action that no present action can possibly sprout into a future kammic result. Although only an arahant would fully understand what this entails, the analogy does help make sense of the fact that arahants continue to engage in intentional activity after Awakening—practicing generosity, virtue, and concentration; making use of skillful habits, practices, and views—without creating any new kamma.

> "One enters & remains in the first jhāna… the second jhāna… the third jhāna… the fourth jhāna: purity of equanimity & mindfulness, neither pleasure nor pain. Such is my instruction, brahman, to those monks who are in training, who have not attained the heart's goal but remain intent on the unsurpassed safety from bondage. But as for those monks who are arahants—whose effluents are ended, who have reached fulfillment, done the task, laid down the burden, attained the true goal, totally destroyed the fetter of becoming, and who are

released through right gnosis—these dhammas lead both to a pleasant abiding in the here-&-now and to mindfulness & alertness." — *MN 107*

Ven. Sāriputta: "An arahant should attend in an appropriate way to these five clinging-aggregates as inconstant, stressful, a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction, alien, a dissolution, an emptiness, not-self. Although, for an arahant, there is nothing further to do, and nothing to add to what has been done, still these things—when developed & pursued—lead both to a pleasant abiding in the here-&-now and to mindfulness & alertness." — *SN 22:122*

Although the purpose of this second analogy is clear, its terms are not explicitly defined. The seed would appear to correspond to present intention —i.e., new kamma. The fact that it is planted and then destroyed would indicate that the arahant does fabricate intentions, but that their potential to produce becoming is then aborted.

But because intention is one of the four nutriments for consciousness, the seed might implicitly correspond to consciousness and its other three nutriments as well. After all, intention depends on contact (AN 6:63) and the presence of sensory consciousness (SN 12:2); the survival of the arahant's body depends on food. This would mean that the seed in this analogy corresponds to the same analogues as does the seed in the first analogy in this chapter: consciousness plus its nutriments. And this would further mean that arahants, in the course of this lifetime, have a special relationship to nutriment and sensory consciousness, just as they do to intention.

This interpretation is supported by discourses dealing specifically with the living arahant's relationship to sensory consciousness and physical food.

Iti 44 states unequivocally that the arahant, during this lifetime, is conscious of the six sense media.

"And what is the Unbinding property with fuel remaining? There is the case where a monk is an arahant whose effluents have ended, who has reached fulfillment, finished the task, laid down the burden, attained the true goal, ended the fetter of becoming, and is released through right gnosis. His five sense faculties still remain and, owing to their being intact, he is cognizant of the agreeable & the disagreeable, and is sensitive to pleasure & pain. His ending of passion, aversion, & delusion is termed the Unbinding property with fuel remaining." — *Iti 44*

However, the arahant's consciousness of the senses occurs with an attitude of being disjoined from them.

> Ven. Nandaka: "Just as if a skilled butcher or butcher's apprentice, having killed a cow, were to carve it up with a sharp carving knife so that—without damaging the substance of the inner flesh, without damaging the substance of the outer hide—he would cut, sever, & detach only the skin muscles, connective tissues, & attachments in between. Having cut, severed, & detached the outer skin, and then covering the cow again with that very skin, if he were to say that the cow was joined to the skin just as it had been: would he be speaking rightly?"
>
> A group of nuns: "No, venerable sir. Why is that? Because if the skilled butcher or butcher's apprentice, having killed a cow, were to carve it up with a sharp carving knife so that—without damaging the substance of the inner flesh, without damaging the substance of the outer hide—he would cut, sever, & detach only the skin muscles, connective tissues, & attachments in between; and… having covered the cow again with that very skin, then no matter how much he might say that the cow was joined to the skin just as it had been, the cow would still be disjoined from the skin."
>
> Ven. Nandaka: "This simile, sisters, I have given to convey a message. The message is this: The substance of the inner flesh stands for the six internal sense media; the substance of the outer hide, for the six external sense media. The skin muscles, connective tissues, & attachments in between stand for passion & delight. And the sharp knife stands for noble discernment—the noble discernment that cuts, severs, & detaches the defilements, fetters, & bonds in between." —*MN 146*

Thus, although the arahant is sensitive to the senses, his or her lack of passion & delight—clinging—alters the way in which this form of nutriment is consumed.

A similar dynamic tempers the way in which an arahant consumes physical food.

> Not hoarding,
> having comprehended food,
> their pasture—emptiness
> & freedom without sign:

their trail,
like that of birds through space,
can't be traced.

Effluents ended,
independent of nutriment,
their pasture—emptiness
& freedom without sign:
their trail,
like that of birds through space,
can't be traced. — *Dhp 92-93*

Being independent of nutriment means not that arahants no longer have to eat, simply that their attainment, being unconditioned, requires no nutriment. Arahants, like anyone else, need to consume physical food to stay alive. But having fully comprehended the nature of food—which, according to SN 22:23, means that they have abandoned all passion, aversion, and delusion with regard to it—the nature of their consumption has radically changed. They consume food simply for the upkeep of the body, for whatever length of time it takes their past kamma to run out.

Ven. Sañkicca:

I don't delight in death,
don't delight in living.
I await my time
as a worker his wage.
I don't delight in death,
don't delight in living.
I await my time
mindful, alert. — *Thag 11*

Because they consume without delight in either living or dying, there is no clinging in their consumption. Thus the motivation for their eating is both pure and free. This purity and freedom mean that an awakened person "eats the country's almsfood without debt" (SN 16:11), because the kammic rewards of providing physical requisites for an arahant are so great that donors who provide them are amply repaid for their gift. In this way the blissful rewards of Awakening are not confined to the awakened, but are shared among those who support them. Although those who seek arahantship are sometimes criticized as "selfish" for pursuing their goal, in actual fact one of the motivations for their pursuit is that it offers great

rewards to their supporters.

> "'Contemplatives, contemplatives': That is how people perceive you. And when asked, 'What are you?' you claim that 'We are contemplatives.' So, with this being your designation and this your claim, this is how you should train yourselves: 'We will undertake & practice those qualities that make one a contemplative, that make one a brahman [arahant], so that our designation will be true and our claim accurate; so that the services of those whose robes, alms-food, lodging, and medicinal requisites we use will bring them great fruit & great reward; and so that our going forth will not be barren, but fruitful & fertile.'" — *MN 39*

Thus the purity of the arahants' mode of consumption converts their act of receiving into an act of giving. In this way, they transcend the dichotomy of serving self and serving others, in that even in the act of consuming nutriment they produce conditions for widespread happiness.

After death, however, arahants no longer partake of the six sense media, and for that reason no longer partake of the four nutriments.

> "And what is the Unbinding property with no fuel remaining? There is the case where a monk is an arahant whose effluents have ended, who has reached fulfillment, finished the task, laid down the burden, attained the true goal, ended the fetter of becoming, and is released through right gnosis. For him, all that is sensed, being unrelished, will grow cold right here. This is termed the Unbinding property with no fuel remaining."

These two
proclaimed
by the one with vision,
Unbinding properties
the one independent,
the one who is Such:

one property, here in this life
with fuel remaining
from the destruction
of the guide to becoming,
and that with no fuel remaining,
after this life,

in which all becoming
totally ceases.

Those who know
this state uncompounded,
their minds released
through the destruction
of the guide to becoming,
they, attaining the Teaching's core,
pleased with ending,
have abandoned all becoming:

they, the Such. — *Iti 44*

SN 35:23 indicates that the "all" in "all that is sensed, being unrelished, will grow cold right here" denotes the six sense media. The term "Such" refers to the fact that the arahant's attainment is effortlessly unaffected by the arising or passing away of anything related to the six senses. Because sensory consciousness arises in dependence on the six sense media, this Suchness is unaffected at the arahant's death, when sensory consciousness totally ends.

However, a **third analogy** raises the question of whether there is another mode of consciousness unaffected by the arahant's death. In this analogy, awakened consciousness is depicted not as a seed but as a beam of light, the four nutriments of consciousness are the various places where a beam of light might land, while passion and delight are the means of its landing.

"Where there is no passion for the nutriment of physical food, where there is no delight, no craving, then consciousness does not land there or grow. Where consciousness does not land or grow, name-&-form does not alight. Where name-&-form does not alight, there is no growth of fabrications. Where there is no growth of fabrications, there is no production of renewed becoming in the future. Where there is no production of renewed becoming in the future, there is no future birth, aging, & death. That, I tell you, has no sorrow, affliction, or despair.

[Similarly with the nutriment of contact, intellectual intention, and consciousness.]

"Just as if there were a roofed house or a roofed hall having windows on the north, the south, or the east. When the sun rises, and a ray has entered by way of the window, where does it land?"

"On the western wall, lord."

"And if there is no western wall, where does it land?"

"On the ground, lord."

"And if there is no ground, where does it land?"

"On the water, lord."

"And if there is no water, where does it land?"

"It does not land, lord."

"In the same way, where there is no passion for the nutriment of physical food… contact… intellectual intention… consciousness, where there is no delight, no craving, then consciousness does not land there or grow. Where consciousness does not land or grow, name-&-form does not alight. Where name-&-form does not alight, there is no growth of fabrications. Where there is no growth of fabrications, there is no production of renewed becoming in the future. Where there is no production of renewed becoming in the future, there is no future birth, aging, & death. That, I tell you, has no sorrow, affliction, or despair." — *SN 12:64*

This analogy does not specifically state whether it refers to the arahant before or after death. However, in the context of this analogy, the beam of light depends on the wall, the ground, etc., only for the fact of its appearance and growth within space and time. This suggests that it otherwise would not be affected when the nutriments disappear. Thus the analogy would refer to the arahant both before and after death.

This interpretation is supported by two contexts, one authorial and the other textual. The authorial context is that if the Buddha's Awakening had revealed that total Unbinding was a state of total unconsciousness, he would never have thought of using this analogy to describe the awakened state.

The textual context is provided by MN 49, which states that—in contrast to the consciousness of an unawakened being, which is known only through its interaction with kamma—the arahant's knowledge of unconditioned consciousness is totally unmediated.

"'Having directly known the all [the six sense media and their objects—see SN 35:23] as the all, and having directly known the extent of what has not been experienced through the allness of the all, I wasn't the all, I wasn't in the all, I wasn't coming forth from the all, I wasn't "The all is mine." I didn't affirm the all….

"'Consciousness without surface,
without end,
luminous all around,

has not been experienced through the earthness of earth… the liquidity of liquid… the fieriness of fire… the windiness of wind… the being-ness of beings… the deva-ness of devas… the Pajāpati-ness of Pajāpati… the brahmā-ness of Brahmā… the radiant-ness of the radiant (devas)… the beautiful black-ness of the beautiful black (devas)… the sky-fruit-ness of the sky-fruit (devas)… the conqueror-ness of the conqueror… the allness of the all.'" — *MN 49*

A basic feature of the Buddha's teachings on causality is that if *x* depends on *y* for its existence, it will cease when *y* ceases. But because consciousness without surface—unlike sensory consciousness—is known independently of the six sense media, it will not cease when they do.

"'Consciousness without surface,
without end,
luminous all around:
Here water, earth, fire, & wind
have no footing.
Here
long & short
coarse & fine
fair & foul
name & form
are all brought to an end.
With the cessation of consciousness
each is here brought to an end.'" — *DN 11*

Reading this verse in light of MN 49, the "cessation of consciousness" would seem to refer to the cessation of the aggregate of sensory consciousness, whereas "consciousness without surface" would not be touched by that cessation. This is because this mode of consciousness would also lie outside the aggregates, inasmuch as the aggregate of consciousness covers only those forms of consciousness that can be located in space and time. Consciousness without surface, however, no longer has a "place" defined by craving and clinging, and so does not fall under the categories of time or space.

This consciousness should not be confused with the "radiant mind" of AN 1:51-52. As those discourses state, the radiant mind is something that can be developed. In terms of the duties of the four noble truths, this indicates that the radiant mind is part of the truth of the path. As with other skillful states of becoming, it is to be developed until it has served its

purpose and then relinquished. Consciousness without surface, however, is related to the truth of cessation, and as such cannot be developed. It can only be realized.

Viewed in terms of the third analogy, the radiance of the radiant mind would count as something that can be pointed to, for it still lands on its nutriment. Thus it is a state of becoming centered on a location. Consciousness without surface, however, does not land and so its luminosity cannot be pointed to, for it reflects off of nothing.

A practical test for distinguishing between these two types of awareness would be to contemplate *any* form of awareness, no matter how radiant or pure, so as to foster a sense of dispassion for it, using the techniques recommended in Chapter Six. This would deprive the radiant mind of its nutriment, but would have no effect on consciousness without surface, which has no need for nutriment, just as a light beam has no need for anywhere to land.

The analogy between consciousness without surface and an unreflected light beam carries other implications as well. The first is that, just as a light beam that is not reflected off any surface cannot be apprehended—and in that sense has no location—in the same way, a person whose consciousness does not land and become established on any object cannot be apprehended either in this life or after death, even by those with extensive psychic powers.

> Effluents ended,
> independent of nutriment,
> their pasture—emptiness
> & freedom without sign:
> their trail,
> like that of birds through space,
> can't be traced. — *Dhp 93*

> "And when the devas, together with Indra, the Brahmās, & Pajāpati, search for the monk whose mind is thus released, they cannot find that 'The consciousness of the one truly gone *(tathāgata)* is dependent on this.' Why is that? The one truly gone is untraceable even in the here & now." — *MN 22*

> Then the Blessed One went with a large number of monks to the Black Rock on the slope of Isigili. From afar he saw Ven. Vakkali lying dead on a couch. Now at that time a smokiness, a darkness was moving to the east, moving to the west, moving to the north, the south,

above, below, moving to the intermediate directions. The Blessed One said, "Monks, do you see that smokiness, that darkness…?"

"Yes, Lord."

"That is Mara, the Evil One. He is searching for the consciousness of Vakkali the clansman: "Where is the consciousness of Vakkali the clansman established?" But, monks, it is through unestablished consciousness that Vakkali the clansman has become totally unbound." — *SN 22:87*

Because the arahant's consciousness has no location, it is totally undefined.

"If one doesn't stay obsessed with form, monk, that's not what one is measured/limited by. Whatever one isn't measured by, that's not how one is classified.

"If one doesn't stay obsessed with feeling….

"If one doesn't stay obsessed with perception….

"If one doesn't stay obsessed with fabrications….

"If one doesn't stay obsessed with consciousness, that's not what one is measured/limited by. Whatever one isn't measured by, that's not how one is classified." — *SN 22:36*

When one is undefined, one cannot be described as existing or not existing, either in the present life or after death.

Considering the ground,
crushing the seed,
he wouldn't provide it with moisture
—truly a sage—
seer of the ending of birth.
Abandoning conjecture,
he cannot be classified. — *Sn 1:12*

"What do you think, Anurādha: Do you regard form as the Tathāgata?"

"No, lord."

"Do you regard feeling as the Tathāgata?"

"No, lord."

"Do you regard perception as the Tathāgata?"

"No, lord."

"Do you regard fabrications as the Tathāgata?"

"No, lord."

"Do you regard consciousness as the Tathāgata?"

"No, lord."

"What do you think, Anurādha: Do you regard the Tathāgata as being in form? …. Elsewhere than form? …. In feeling? …. Elsewhere than feeling? …. In perception? …. Elsewhere than perception? …. In fabrications? …. Elsewhere than fabrications? …. In consciousness? …. Elsewhere than consciousness?"

"No, lord."

"What do you think, Anurādha: Do you regard the Tathāgata as form-feeling-perception-fabrications-consciousness?"

"No, lord."

"Do you regard the Tathāgata as that which is without form, without feeling, without perception, without fabrications, without consciousness?"

"No, lord."

"And so, Anurādha—when you can't pin down the Tathāgata as a truth or reality even in the present life—is it proper for you to declare, 'Friends, the Tathāgata—the supreme man, the superlative man, attainer of the superlative attainment—being described, is described otherwise than with these four positions: The Tathāgata exists after death, does not exist after death, both does & does not exist after death, neither exists nor does not exist after death'?"

"No, lord."

"Very good, Anurādha. Very good. Both formerly & now, it is only stress that I describe, and the cessation of stress." — *SN 22:86*

"But, Master Gotama, the monk whose mind is thus released: Where does he reappear?"

"'Reappear,' Vaccha, doesn't apply."

"In that case, Master Gotama, he does not reappear."

"'Does not reappear,' Vaccha, doesn't apply."

"… both does & does not reappear."

"… doesn't apply."

"… neither does nor does not reappear."

"… doesn't apply."

"How is it, Master Gotama, when Master Gotama is asked if the monk reappears… does not reappear… both does & does not reappear… neither does nor does not reappear, he says, '… doesn't apply' in each case. At this point, Master Gotama, I am befuddled; at this point, confused. The modicum of clarity coming to me from your earlier conversation is now obscured."

"Of course you're befuddled, Vaccha. Of course you're confused. Deep, Vaccha, is this phenomenon, hard to see, hard to realize, tranquil, refined, beyond the scope of conjecture, subtle, to-be-experienced by the wise. For those with other views, other practices, other satisfactions, other aims, other teachers, it is difficult to know. That being the case, I will now put some questions to you. Answer as you see fit. What do you think, Vaccha: If a fire were burning in front of you, would you know that, 'This fire is burning in front of me'?"

"… yes…."

"And suppose someone were to ask you, Vaccha, 'This fire burning in front of you, dependent on what is it burning?' Thus asked, how would you reply?"

"… I would reply, 'This fire burning in front of me is burning dependent on grass & timber as its sustenance.'"

"If the fire burning in front of you were to go out, would you know that, 'This fire burning in front of me has gone out'?"

"… yes…."

"And suppose someone were to ask you, 'This fire that has gone out in front of you, in which direction from here has it gone? East? West? North? Or south?' Thus asked, how would you reply?"

"That doesn't apply, Master Gotama. Any fire burning dependent on a sustenance of grass & timber, being unnourished—from having consumed that sustenance and not being offered any other—is classified simply as 'out/unbound'."

"Even so, Vaccha, any form by which one describing the Tathāgata would describe him: That the Tathāgata has abandoned, its root destroyed, made like a palmyra stump, deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising. Freed from the classification of form, Vaccha, the Tathāgata is deep, boundless, hard to fathom, like the sea. 'Reappears' doesn't apply. 'Does not reappear' doesn't apply. 'Both does & does not reappear' doesn't apply. 'Neither reappears nor does not reappear' doesn't apply.

"Any feeling…. Any perception…. Any mental fabrication….

"Any consciousness by which one describing the Tathāgata would describe him: That the Tathāgata has abandoned, its root destroyed, made like a palmyra stump, deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising. Freed from the classification of consciousness, Vaccha, the Tathāgata is deep, boundless, hard to fathom, like the sea. 'Reappears' doesn't apply. 'Does not reappear' doesn't apply. 'Both does & does not reappear' doesn't apply. 'Neither reappears nor does not reappear' doesn't apply." — *MN 71*

Touching liberation with the heart,
the state of peace unsurpassed,
consummate in terms of signs,
peaceful,
enjoying the peaceful state,
judicious,
an attainer-of wisdom
makes use of classifications
but can't be classified. — *Iti 63*

Upasīva:

He who has reached the end:
Does he not exist,
or is he for eternity free from dis-ease?
Please, sage, declare this to me
as this phenomenon *[dhamma]* has been known by you.

The Buddha:

One who has reached the end has no criterion/limit
by which anyone would say that—
for him it doesn't exist.
When all phenomena *[dhamma]*
are done away with,
all means of speaking
are done away with as well. — *Sn 5:6*

Even the act of asking whether anything or nothing remains after reaching the end is to engage in categories of thought that are appropriate only within the context of space and time, but inappropriate to the sphere of Awakening.

Ven. MahāKoṭṭhita: "With the remainderless dispassion-cessation of the six contact-media is there anything else?"

Ven. Sāriputta: "Don't say that, my friend."

Ven. MahāKoṭṭhita: "With the remainderless dispassion-cessation of the six contact-media, is there not anything else?"

Ven. Sāriputta: "Don't say that, my friend."

Ven. MahāKoṭṭhita: "… is it the case that there both is & is not anything else?"

Ven. Sāriputta: "Don't say that, my friend."

Ven. MahāKoṭṭhita: "… is it the case that there neither is nor is not anything else?"

Ven. Sāriputta: "Don't say that, my friend."

Ven. MahāKoṭṭhita: Being asked… if there is anything else, you say, 'Don't say that, my friend'. Being asked… if there is not anything else… if there both is & is not anything else… if there neither is nor is not anything else, you say, 'Don't say that, my friend.' Now, how is the meaning of this statement to be understood?"

Ven. Sāriputta: "Saying, '… is there anything else?' … '… is there not anything else?' … '… is it the case that there both is & is not anything else?' … '… is it the case that there neither is nor is not anything else?' one is complicating non-complication. However far the six contact-media go, that is how far complication goes. However far complication goes, that is how far the six contact-media go. With the remainderless dispassion-cessation of the six contact-media, there comes to be the cessation, the allaying of complication." — *AN 4:173*

Although the classifications of words are inadequate to describe Unbinding—because words are fabricated phenomena, part of a causal chain in which Unbinding does not participate—the discourses nevertheless describe three of Unbinding's aspects in positive terms.

The first aspect is Suchness, a term we have already met, which means that the arahant is unaffected by the arising or passing away of anything related to the six senses. Unlike equanimity, which is an activity of the mind, the Suchness involves no effort or activity at all. Because it is effortless, this Suchness lies beyond questions of control and lack of control. Thus questions of self and not-self are also irrelevant. The arahant is simply Such.

"Thus the Tathāgata—being the same with regard to all phenomena that can be seen, heard, sensed, & cognized—is 'Such.' And I tell you,

there is no Such higher or more sublime." — *AN 4:24*

He whose senses are steadied
like stallions
well-trained by the charioteer,
his conceit abandoned,
free of effluent,
Such:
even devas adore him.

Like the earth, he doesn't react—
cultured,
Such,
like Indra's pillar,
like a lake free of mud.
For him
—Such—
there's no traveling on.

Calm is his mind,
calm his speech & his deed:
one who's released
through right knowing,
pacified,
Such. — *Dhp 94-96*

A brahman [arahant] not led
by habits or practices,
gone to the beyond
—Such—
doesn't fall back. — *Sn 4:5*

For the monk who has left
all kamma
behind,
shaking off the dust of the past,
steady, unpossessive,
Such:
There's no point in telling
anyone else. — *Ud 3:1*

Knowing the world,

seeing the highest goal,
crossing the ocean, the flood,
—Such—
his chains broken,
unattached,
effluent-free:
The enlightened call him a sage. — *Sn 1:12*

The second positive aspect of Unbinding is *sukha*—a term that can be translated as pleasure, happiness, bliss, or ease. Unbinding, as experienced in this lifetime, is invariably described as pleasurable. And because this pleasure is unconditioned, it is not affected by the arahant's death.

"If the thought should occur to you that, when defiling mental qualities are abandoned and bright mental qualities have grown, and one enters & remains in the culmination & abundance of discernment, having known & realized it for oneself in the here & now, one's abiding is stressful/painful, you should not see it in that way. When defiling mental qualities are abandoned and bright mental qualities have grown, and one enters & remains in the culmination & abundance of discernment, having known & realized it for oneself in the here & now, there is joy, rapture, serenity, mindfulness, alertness, and a pleasant/happy abiding." — *DN 9*

I have heard that on one occasion Ven. Sāriputta was staying near Rājagaha in the Bamboo Grove, the Squirrels' Feeding Sanctuary. There he said to the monks, "This Unbinding is pleasant, friends. This Unbinding is pleasant."

When this was said, Ven. Udāyin said to Ven. Sāriputta, "But what is the pleasure here, my friend, where there is nothing felt?"

"Just that is the pleasure here, my friend: where there is nothing felt. There are these five strings of sensuality. Which five? Forms cognizable via the eye—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, accompanied by sensuality, enticing; sounds cognizable via the ear… smells cognizable via the nose… tastes cognizable via the tongue… tactile sensations cognizable via the body—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, accompanied by sensuality, enticing. Whatever pleasure or joy arises in dependence on these five strings of sensuality, that is sensual pleasure.

"Now there is the case where a monk… enters & remains in the first jhāna…. If, as he remains there, he is beset with attention to perceptions

dealing with *sensuality,* that is an affliction for him. Just as pain arises as an affliction in a healthy person, even so the attention to perceptions dealing with sensuality that beset the monk is an affliction for him. Now, the Blessed One has said that whatever is an affliction is stress. So by this line of reasoning it may be known how Unbinding is pleasant.

"Then there is the case where a monk… enters & remains in the second jhāna…. If, as he remains there, he is beset with attention to perceptions dealing with *directed thought,* that is an affliction for him….

"Then there is the case where a monk… enters & remains in the third jhāna…. If, as he remains there, he is beset with attention to perceptions dealing with *rapture,* that is an affliction for him….

"Then there is the case where a monk… enters & remains in the fourth jhāna…. If, as he remains there, he is beset with attention to perceptions dealing with *equanimity,* that is an affliction for him….

"Then there is the case where a monk… enters & remains in the dimension of the infinitude of space. If, as he remains there, he is beset with attention to perceptions dealing with *form,* that is an affliction for him….

"Then there is the case where a monk… enters & remains in the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness. If, as he remains there, he is beset with attention to perceptions dealing with *the dimension of the infinitude of space,* that is an affliction for him….

"Then there is the case where a monk… enters & remains in the dimension of nothingness. If, as he remains there, he is beset with attention to perceptions dealing with *the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness,* that is an affliction for him….

"Then there is the case where a monk… enters & remains in the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception. If, as he remains there, he is beset with attention to perceptions dealing with *the dimension of nothingness,* that is an affliction for him. Now, the Blessed One has said that whatever is an affliction is stress. So by this line of reasoning it may be known how Unbinding is pleasant.

"Then there is the case where a monk, with the complete transcending of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception, enters & remains in the cessation of perception & feeling. And, having seen (that) with discernment, his effluents are completely ended. So by this line of reasoning it may be known how Unbinding is pleasant." — *AN 9:34*

"Now it's possible, Ānanda, that some wanderers of other persuasions might say, 'Gotama the contemplative speaks of the cessation of perception & feeling and yet describes it as pleasure. What is this? How is this?' When they say that, they are to be told, 'It's not the case, friends, that the Blessed One describes only pleasant feeling as included under pleasure. Wherever pleasure is found, in whatever terms, the Blessed One describes it as pleasure.'" — *SN 36:19*

Some Niganṭha ascetics: "It's not the case that pleasure is to be attained through pleasure. Pleasure is to be attained through pain. For if pleasure were to be attained through pleasure, then King Seniya Bimbisāra of Magadha would attain pleasure, for he lives in greater pleasure than you, friend Gotama.

The Buddha: "Surely the venerable Niganṭhas said that rashly and without reflecting… for instead, I should be asked, 'Who lives in greater pleasure: King Seniya Bimbisāra of Magadha or venerable Gotama?'"

"Yes, friend Gotama, we said that rashly and without reflecting…. but let that be. We now ask you, venerable Gotama: Who lives in greater pleasure: King Seniya Bimbisāra of Magadha or venerable Gotama?"

"In that case, Niganṭhas, I will question you in return. Answer as you see fit. What do you think: Can King Seniya Bimbisāra of Magadha —without moving his body, without uttering a word—dwell sensitive to unalloyed pleasure for seven days & nights?" — "No, friend."

"… for six days & nights… for five days & nights… for a day & a night?" — "No, friend."

"Now, I—without moving my body, without uttering a word—can dwell sensitive to unalloyed pleasure for a day and a night… for two days & nights… for three… four… five… six… seven days & nights. So what do you think: That being the case, who dwells in greater pleasure: King Seniya Bimbisāra of Magadha or I?"

"That being the case, venerable Gotama dwells in greater pleasure than King Seniya Bimbisāra of Magadha." — *MN 14*

Although Unbinding is the foremost pleasure (Dhp 203), an arahant does not cling to it, and so is not limited by it.

When a sage,
a brahman through sagacity,

has known for himself,
then from form & formless,
from pleasure & pain,
he is freed. — *Ud 1:10*

Freedom, in fact, is the third aspect, and the one that the discourses most frequently attribute to Unbinding. This is because the Suchness of the arahants' attainment is free from conditioned influences. Although living arahants still experience their field of kamma, in the form of the aggregates and sense media, that experience creates no direct impact on them.

> "Sensing a feeling of pleasure, one discerns that it is fleeting, not grasped at, not relished. Sensing a feeling of pain… Sensing a feeling of neither pleasure nor pain, one discerns that it is fleeting, not grasped at, not relished. Sensing a feeling of pleasure, one senses it disjoined from it. Sensing a feeling of pain… Sensing a feeling of neither pleasure nor pain, one senses it disjoined from it. When sensing a feeling limited to the body, one discerns that 'I am sensing a feeling limited to the body.' When sensing a feeling limited to life, one discerns that 'I am sensing a feeling limited to life.' One discerns that 'With the break-up of the body, after the termination of life, all that is experienced, not being relished, will grow cold right here.'" — *MN 140*

With no passion, delight, or relishing for anything at all—not even for the state of dispassion—there is no "where" for the arahant to be bound. This fact explains a Pāli idiom that has long given trouble to Western translators. Poems in the Canon often mention the arahant as being "everywhere released" *(sabbattha vimutto)* or "everywhere independent" *(sabbattha anissito).* Translators, lacking a sense of the underlying image of the idiom, have tended to render it in more prosaic terms: "completely released in every respect," "not dependent on anything," "released from everything." However, in light of the field analogies, in which the moisture of craving and delight creates the "where" for becoming, the idiom means precisely what it says: The arahant is released from every possible "where," whether fabricated or not—every possible spot for renewed becoming.

Gone to the beyond of becoming,
you let go of *in front,*
let go of *behind,*
let go of *between.*
With a heart everywhere released,

you don't come again to birth
& aging. — *Dhp 348*

Sister Subhā:

I—unimpassioned, unblemished,
with a mind everywhere released…
Knowing the unattractiveness
of fabricated things,
my heart adheres nowhere at all. — *Thig 14*

Ven. Revata's last words:

Attain completion
through heedfulness:
that is my message.
So then, I'm about to be
Unbound.
I'm released
everywhere. — *Thag 14:1*

Appendix I

"And what is dependent co-arising?

From ignorance as a requisite condition come fabrications.

From fabrications as a requisite condition comes consciousness.

From consciousness as a requisite condition comes name-&-form.

From name-&-form as a requisite condition come the six sense media.

From the six sense media as a requisite condition comes contact.

From contact as a requisite condition comes feeling.

From feeling as a requisite condition comes craving.

From craving as a requisite condition comes clinging.

From clinging as a requisite condition comes becoming.

From becoming as a requisite condition comes birth.

From birth as a requisite condition, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair come into play. Such is the origination of this entire mass of stress & suffering.

"Which *aging-&-death?* Whatever aging, decrepitude, brokenness, graying, wrinkling, decline of life-force, weakening of the faculties of the various beings in this or that group of beings, that is called aging. Whatever deceasing, passing away, breaking up, disappearance, dying, death, completion of time, break up of the aggregates, casting off of the body, interruption in the life faculty of the various beings in this or that group of beings, that is called death.

"And which *birth?* Whatever birth, taking birth, descent, coming-to-be, coming-forth, appearance of aggregates, & acquisition of sense media of the various beings in this or that group of beings, that is called birth.

"And which *becoming?* These three becomings: sensuality-becoming, form-becoming, & formless-becoming. This is called becoming.

"And which *clinging?* These four clingings: sensuality-clinging, view-clinging, habit-&-practice-clinging, and self-doctrine-clinging. This is called clinging.

"And which *craving?* These six cravings: craving for forms, craving for sounds, craving for smells, craving for tastes, craving for tactile sensations, craving for ideas. This is called craving.

"And which *feeling?* These six feelings: feeling born from eye-contact, feeling born from ear-contact, feeling born from nose-contact, feeling born from tongue-contact, feeling born from body-contact, feeling born from intellect-contact. This is called feeling.

"And which *contact?* These six contacts: eye-contact, ear-contact, nose-contact, tongue-contact, body-contact, intellect-contact. This is called contact.

"And which *six sense media?* These six sense media: the eye-medium, the ear-medium, the nose-medium, the tongue-medium, the body-medium, the intellect-medium. These are called the six sense media.

"And which *name-&-form?* Feeling, perception, intention, contact, & attention: This is called name. The four great elements, and the form dependent on the four great elements: This is called form. This name & this form are called name-&-form.

"And which *consciousness?* These six consciousnesses: eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, tongue-consciousness, body-consciousness, intellect-consciousness. This is called consciousness.

"And which *fabrications?* These three fabrications: bodily fabrications, verbal fabrications, mental fabrications. These are called fabrications.

"And which *ignorance?* Not knowing in terms of stress, not knowing in terms of the origination of stress, not knowing in terms of the cessation of stress, not knowing in terms of the way of practice leading to the cessation of stress: This is called ignorance.

"Now from the remainderless fading & cessation of that very ignorance comes the cessation of fabrications. From the cessation of fabrications comes the cessation of consciousness. From the cessation of consciousness comes the cessation of name-&-form. From the cessation of name-&-form comes the cessation of the six sense media. From the cessation of the six sense media comes the cessation of contact. From the cessation of contact comes the cessation of feeling. From the cessation of feeling comes the cessation of craving. From the cessation of craving comes the cessation of clinging. From the cessation of clinging comes the cessation of becoming. From the cessation of becoming comes the cessation of birth. From the cessation of birth, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair all cease. Such is the cessation of this entire mass of stress & suffering." — *SN 12:2*

Appendix II

Some scholars, in an attempt to place the Buddha's teachings in an historical context, have maintained that his not-self teaching was meant to apply specifically to the Upaniṣadic self-doctrine. In other words, the Buddha's intention was to deny the truth of the Upaniṣadic doctrine of the universal self; he was not denying other, more common-sense doctrines of the self. This understanding of the non-self teaching has partial support in MN 22—which subjects the idea of a universal self to specific ridicule—but it fails to do justice to the wide variety of self doctrines that the Buddha refutes in other suttas, such as DN 15 and SN 22:1. It also fails to take into account two aspects of the Buddha's actual historical context:

1) The Upaniṣadic tradition was not the only tradition at the Buddha's time espousing doctrines of the self. DN 2 cites the self-doctrines of other, non-Vedic schools of the time.

2) No single self-doctrine can claim to be "the" Upaniṣadic doctrine of the self. The Upaniṣads were a diverse body of texts, offering a wide variety of teachings on the topic. Some, such as the Bṛhad-āraṇyaka Upaniṣad and Kaṭha Upaniṣad, state explicitly that each person has two selves, finite and infinite; and the major Upaniṣads differ on the nature of these two selves and how the infinite self can be attained.

In fact, it is instructive to classify the various Upaniṣadic self-doctrines in light of the categories listed in DN 15. There the Buddha says that people who propose a doctrine of the self define it either as possessed of form and finite, possessed of form and infinite [or: endless—*ananta],* formless and finite, or formless and infinite. In each of these four cases, the proponents may hold (1) that the self is already that way in the present, (2) that it will naturally become that way—in deep sleep, say, or after death—or (3) that it can be converted into being that way. This yields a total of twelve possible categories. A survey of the major Upaniṣads reveals self-doctrines falling into eight—and perhaps nine—of these categories, as follows: (Passage numbers are taken from S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upaniṣads.* London: George Allen & Unwin, 1969.)

1) Already possessed of form and finite:

Bṛhad-āraṇyaka II.5.1
Maitrī VI.11

2) Naturally becoming possessed of form and finite:

Bṛhad-āraṇyaka IV.3.19-21

3) Can be made possessed of form and finite:

—

4) Already possessed of form and infinite:

Bṛhad-āraṇyaka I.4.7-10
Bṛhad-āraṇyaka I.5.20
Chāndogya III.14.2-3
Muṇḍaka III.1.7

5) Naturally becoming possessed of form and infinite:

Chāndogya VIII.3.4
Chāndogya VIII.12.2-3

6) Can be made possessed of form and infinite:

Praśna IV.6-11
Subāla III
Kaivalya VI

7) Already formless and finite:

Kaṭha I.3.1-4 (?—the description here suggests, but does not explicitly state, that the self is formless)

8) Naturally becoming formless and finite:

—

9) Can be made formless and finite:

—

10) Already formless and infinite:

Bṛhad-āraṇyaka III.8.8-11

11) Naturally becoming formless and infinite:

Praśna IV.6-11

12) Can be made formless and infinite:

Kaṭha I.3.13-15
Subāla III
Subāla IX.15
Paiṅgala III.6

There is no way of knowing if these Upaniṣads, as we have them, were composed before or after the Buddha's time. Thus, the classifications in DN 15 may or may not have been formulated in response to them. Nevertheless, the sheer variety of their teachings shows that there was no single Upaniṣadic doctrine of the self, and that the Buddha did not formulate his not-self teaching in response to only one doctrine. As the frameworks set out in DN 15 and SN 22:1 show, the not-self teaching was formulated in such a way as to counteract the act of clinging to any self-doctrine, regardless of how the self might be defined.

Glossary

Arahant: A "worthy one" or "pure one;" a person whose mind is free of defilement and thus is not destined for further rebirth. A title for the Buddha and the highest level of his noble disciples.

Āyatana: Sense medium. The inner sense media are the sense organs—eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and intellect. The outer sense media are their respective objects.

Bodhisatta: "A being (striving) for Awakening;" the term used to describe the Buddha before he actually became Buddha, from his first aspiration to Buddhahood until the time of his full Awakening. Sanskrit form: Bodhisattva.

Brahmā: An inhabitant of the heavenly realms of form or formlessness.

Brahman: In common usage, a brahman is a member of the priestly caste, which claimed to be the highest caste in India, based on birth. In a specifically Buddhist usage, "brahman" can also mean an arahant, conveying the point that excellence is based, not on birth or race, but on the qualities attained in the mind.

Brahmavihāra: Literally, "brahmā-dwelling." Attitudes of unlimited good will, compassion, empathetic joy, and equanimity.

Deva (devatā): Literally, "shining one." An inhabitant of the heavenly realms.

Dhamma: (1) Event; action; (2) a phenomenon in and of itself; (3) mental quality; (4) doctrine, teaching; (5) nibbāna (although there are passages describing nibbāna as the abandoning of all dhammas). Sanskrit form: Dharma.

Gotama: The Buddha's clan name.

Indra: King of the devas of the heaven of the Thirty-three, one of the sensual heavenly realms. Identical with Sakka.

Jhāna: Mental absorption. A state of strong concentration focused on a single sensation or mental notion.

Kamma: (1) Intentional act. (2) The results of intentional actions. Sanskrit

form: *Karma.*

Khandha: Aggregate; physical and mental phenomena as they are directly experienced: *rūpa*—physical form; *vedanā* —feelings of pleasure, pain, or neither pleasure nor pain; *saññā*—perception, mental label; *saṅkhāra*—fabrication, thought construct; and viññāṇa—sensory consciousness, the act of taking note of sense data and ideas as they occur.

Māra: The personification of temptation and all forces, within and without, that create obstacles to release from the round of death and rebirth.

Nibbāna: Literally, the "unbinding" of the mind from passion, aversion, and delusion, and from the entire round of death and rebirth. As this term also denotes the extinguishing of a fire, it carries connotations of stilling, cooling, and peace. "Total nibbāna" in some contexts denotes the experience of Awakening; in others, the final passing away of an arahant. Sanskrit form: Nirvāṇa.

Pajāpati: A high-ranking deva, second in command to the king of his particular deva realm.

Pāli: The language of the oldest extant Canon of the Buddha's teachings.

Rāhu: A divine being consisting of a disembodied head who is supposed to cause solar and lunar eclipses by briefly swallowing the sun or moon.

Sakka: King of the devas of the heaven of the Thirty-three, one of the sensual heavenly realms. Identical with Indra.

Sakyan: An inhabitant of the Sakyan republic, the Buddha's home territory.

Tādin: "Such," an adjective to describe one who has attained the goal. It indicates that the person's state is indefinable but not subject to change or influences of any sort.

Tathāgata: Literally, one who has "become authentic *(tatha-āgata)"* or "truly gone *(tathā-gata),"* an epithet used in ancient India for a person who has attained the highest religious goal. In Buddhism, it usually denotes the Buddha, although occasionally it also denotes any of his arahant disciples.

Uposatha: Observance day, coinciding with the full moon, new moon, and half moons. Lay Buddhists often observe the eight precepts on this day. Monks recite the Pāṭimokkha, the monastic code, on the full moon and new moon uposathas.

Vinaya: The monastic discipline, whose rules and traditions comprise six

volumes in printed text.

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