

Existing Things

Whatever exists is knowable by mind. Nothing is unknowable, but it might take a Buddha's mind to know it. Buddha classified all existing things into the permanent, those things that do not change moment-by-moment, and the impermanent, those that do. Permanence, in this context, doesn't necessarily mean lasting forever. A permanent thing can always be there, or it can be something that comes into and goes out of existence. The point is that, while it exists, it does not change moment-by-moment like an atom, which is in a state of constant flux, or the mind, which is a constantly changing stream of awareness.

Permanent things An example of a permanent thing is space, defined in Buddhism as the mere absence of obstructive contact, and it exists everywhere. Even solid things have their own space, otherwise they couldn't be where they are. Obstructive contact is negated but nothing is affirmed to be space. The term, 'mere,' indicates the absence of any special substance that is space. The mere absence of obstructive contact is something which exists but is not produced by anything, and it is permanent in that it does not change moment-by-moment. Physical things and consciousness arise as products of various causes and conditions that necessarily change in producing their result, and their results also have the property of moment-by-moment change. Thus, whatever arises from causes and conditions is an impermanent thing.

Another permanent thing is emptiness of inherent existence, the ultimate nature of all things. For example, the emptiness of inherent existence of a ceramic vase. A vase is produced in dependence upon clay, a potter, heat, glaze, and so on. It has no inherent nature that is the vase in itself. When the potter removes an object from the kiln, you may think it is a tall cup, but the potter declares it to be a vase. At the moment of labelling it 'vase,' the emptiness of inherent existence of 'the vase' comes into existence and it remains unchanging until little Jimmy knocks it off the mantelpiece with his football and the emptiness of the vase ceases as it is smashed into pieces that are no longer suitable to be called 'vase.'

Impermanent things are divided into three categories:

1 Forms Although Buddhism does assert the existence of atomic particles, the physical world is not described in terms of atoms and molecules but in terms of *forms*: the way things are experienced by the five sense consciousnesses. Colours and shapes are forms that appear to visual consciousness; pleasant and unpleasant sounds are forms that appear to auditory consciousness; fragrant and non-fragrant odours are forms that appear to olfactory consciousness; tastes are forms that appear to gustatory consciousness; and tangibles, such as smooth, rough, heavy and light, are forms that appear to tactile consciousness.

Just as my high-school science teachers described elements and compounds of elements in terms of their sensory qualities of colour, smell, taste, and texture, and their physical state of gas, liquid, or solid, Buddhism presents the physical world in terms of appearance to the senses and the five physical states called earth, water, fire, and air *elements*. These five states are not elements as in the Periodic Table, they are tangible forms. Earth element is the entity of hardness and supporting, water element is dampness and holding together, fire element is heat and chemical change, and wind element is lightness and movement.

2 Consciousness Mind, or consciousness, is a self-perpetuating, non-material, stream of brief moments of awareness. There are six main types of consciousness: the five sense consciousnesses and mental consciousness.

3 Products that are neither form nor consciousness are of two types: persons and non-persons. A person is (merely) designated in dependence upon a combination of body and mind and, since a person is neither the body (form) nor consciousness, but is still impermanent, it belongs to this category. 'Non-persons' in this category are 'designations to states.' For example, 'life' is designated to the state of living; it is the basis of consciousness and warmth. Also,

production, ageing, duration, and impermanence are designations to states of the characteristics of things. Words, time, region, number, and collection are some other members of this category.

Mind

In Buddhism, mind is asserted to be our mere experience of things, either through our five senses or through thought. Mind is not some esoteric substance in the background that does the experiencing; it is the very experience itself. Our experience of things includes whatever subjective feeling of happiness or unhappiness, or emotion of love, anger, generosity, greed, and so on, that accompanies our awareness. As it is simply the experience of things, mind is not a physical entity. Even though our awareness depends upon a functioning brain and nervous system, subjective experience has no material properties such as colour, shape, texture, and so on. Nor is it any of the physiological processes or organs upon which awareness depends. Thus the human organism consists of a duality of body and mind that are interdependent but different entities.

Seeing mind, or consciousness, as a non-physical entity of experience that arises in dependence upon its own continuum, the body, and the object of awareness, the next question is: where does this continuum of awareness come from? The scientific point of view is that mind is an emergent phenomenon that directly arises from the nervous system as its cause. For example, although water is the same material substance as its causal components, hydrogen and oxygen, its particular properties emerge from the bonding of those two elements. Being a liquid at room temperature and water's chemical activity are new properties that do not exist in its components, but its substance – matter – is the same as the two gases. Scientifically, we see mind as a physical thing that arises from a physical substantial cause.

From the Buddhist point of view, even though human awareness exists *in dependence* upon our sense organs and nervous system, the very substance of experience is not an emergent quality of the brain. Mind's nature is awareness, and therefore its substantial cause is necessarily awareness itself, a non-physical phenomenon. Thus, although mind depends upon a functioning brain, it is not of the same nature, or substance, as the brain. It is not created from the brain.

If our mind came from our parents' minds, we would be born with mental qualities of knowledge, memories, and so on similar to our parents. But each baby is born with its own mind, including independent personality characteristics that often manifest at an extremely early age before nurture has time to have an effect. From the Buddhist point of view, 'nature,' in terms of a condition that influences our personality, can have both genetic and karmic aspects.

Finally, mind cannot arise from nothing. It is a self-perpetuating continuum in that the present moment of awareness arises directly from a previous moment of awareness and, in turn, gives rise to the next moment of awareness. A *mind-stream*, as this succession of moments of awareness is called, is unique to every individual.

Buddhism asserts that no two mind-streams can merge into one, and no individual mind-stream can split into two, separate mind-streams. Thus, if we go back to the very first moment of awareness in this body, that mind can only have arisen as the continuum of a previous moment of awareness – from another life. And when did the mind-streams that currently inhabit our bodies first begin? They didn't. Each mind-stream is beginningless. For those who recognise that mere experience, or mind, is a non-physical entity, this reasoning is logical proof of reincarnation.

The three realms and six levels of birth

The Buddhist *abhidharma* texts describe three main realms of birth in the cycle of death and rebirth that arises from karma and disturbing emotions: the desire, form, and formless realms.

The *desire realm* is so-called because the predominant attitude causing birth there is desire for sensory pleasure, particularly for the taste of food and for sexual pleasure. Its six levels include three unhappy states: the hells, the realm of hungry ghosts, and the animal realm. These are miserable rebirths because the predominant experience is mental and physical suffering. The remaining three levels are 'happy' states in that pleasure and pain are balanced or there is a preponderance of pleasure. These are rebirth as a human, as a demigod (*asura*), or as a 'pleasure being' – a *deva* or god. There are six levels of devas in the desire realm: two are said to inhabit the earth's surface and four inhabit celestial abodes.

The *form realm* has four main levels or concentrations, so-called because the karma to be born there is created through attachment to the mental experience of progressively refined levels of single-pointed concentration. All desire for sensory pleasure is temporarily suppressed by desire for the purely mental experience of concentration. Their bodies are the most refined type of matter, and their name, 'form gods,' distinguishes them from the gods of the formless realm.

The *formless realm* also has four levels, attained through even more powerful concentration. These beings have no gross bodies at all but, according to the esoteric teachings (*tantras*), their minds are still supported by subtle "wind element" that is physical in nature.

Birth states within the wheel of life

1 Formless realm devas

4 th Absorption	<i>Peak of Cyclic Existence</i>
3 rd Absorption	<i>Limitless Nothingness</i>
2 nd Absorption	<i>Limitless Consciousness</i>
1 st Absorption	<i>Limitless Space</i>

2 Form realm devas

4 th Concentration	<i>Great Fruit</i> <i>Born from Merit</i>
	<i>Cloudless</i>
3 rd Concentration	<i>Vast Bliss</i> <i>Limitless Bliss</i> <i>Small Bliss</i>
2 nd Concentration	<i>Bright Light</i> <i>Limitless Light</i> <i>Small Light</i>
1 st Concentration	<i>Great Brahma</i> <i>Reciting in Vicinity of Brahma</i> <i>Brahma Type</i>

3 Desire realm

(i) Desire realm devas

Sky-dwelling	{	<i>Heaven Controlling Others' Emanations</i>
		<i>Heaven Enjoying Own Emanations</i>
		<i>Joyous Heaven (Tushita)</i>
		<i>Heaven Without Combat</i>
Earth-dwelling	{	<i>Heaven of the Thirty-Three</i>
		<i>Heaven of Four Great Royal Lineages</i>

(ii) Demigods (*asuras*)

(iii) Humans

(iv) Animals

(v) Hungry ghosts (*pretas*)

(vi) Hell beings

The mental continuum can never be destroyed. It travels with time, repeatedly taking new bodies in different birth states determined by the ripening power of karma. Potencies established on the mind through intended actions ripen at death to cause the rebirth status of a sentient being, and other potencies ripen during each rebirth to influence one's character, one's experiences, and even one's environment. In general, the collective karmic potencies of beings give rise to the

worlds they inhabit, and individual potencies give rise to particular individual experiences within the common world.

Birth-states not included within the wheel of life can occur in 'pure lands' – places created through the accumulations of wisdom and merit in a Buddha's mind to provide the best conditions for sentient beings to complete the path to enlightenment. Bodhisattvas who have attained the direct realisation of emptiness may be born in highest pure lands, *Akanishta*, where Buddhas exist with the physical form of an Enjoyment Body (*Sambhogakaya*). Enjoyment Bodies are immortal in that, even though they change moment-by-moment, they remain forever, effortlessly teaching the Mahayana doctrine to their retinue of arya bodhisattvas. For ordinary beings, as well as those who have realised emptiness, the Enjoyment Body manifests pure lands where Emanation Bodies (*Nirmanakaya*) teach either the Mahayana or the Hinayana doctrine according to the dispositions of those who have created the cause to be born there.

Akanishta (None Higher) pure lands are technically at the level of the fourth form realm concentration, while *Nirmanakaya* pure lands can be at other levels. *Tushita* (Joyous) pure land is at the level of the Joyous Heaven, and *Shambala* pure land is at the human level. They are not included among the realms of rebirth in the suffering cycle of death and rebirth because rebirth in pure lands is the result of a pure intention and not contaminated karma.

The *abhidharma* mentions that the hell realms are located at various distances beneath the surface of the earth. This cannot be taken literally; the great Indian bodhisattva, Shantideva, said:

Who intentionally created
All the weapons for those in hell?
Who created the burning iron ground?
From where did the women (in hell) ensue?

The Mighty One has said that all such things
Are (the workings of) an evil mind.
Hence, within the three world spheres,
There is nothing to fear other than my mind.

In one region of hell experience, beings have instant hatred for each other. Taking up weapons that fall from the sky, they fight until nearly dead, revive, fight until mortally wounded, revive, fight again, and so on for aeons and aeons. There are hot hells and cold hells; the ground of the hot hells is experienced as red-hot iron. In another region, the 'women' mentioned in Shantideva's verse refers to attractive apparitions, male or female, who resemble those towards whom one has had past attachment. From the top of a tree is heard an irresistibly appealing voice and, driven by desire to be with that person, the hell being climbs the tree, being cut to pieces by its sword-like leaves. Upon reaching the top, the enticers are found to be giant birds with iron beaks that peck at one's eyes and brains. The 'evil mind' that creates hell is the karmic ripening within one's own mind.

Hell beings are said to be born spontaneously and their environment is produced with them through their own karma. When they eventually die, their environment ceases. Hell is a personal or uncommon karmic appearance, it is not a place waiting for us, but is still real for the individual who is experiencing it. The apparitions, weapons, and so on are not like hallucinations or mistaken appearances, they are an objective reality for that individual. Karmic appearances can be common or uncommon. For humans, a common karmic appearance would be a hot day; the uncommon factor is the different ways in which people relate to the heat: some see it as pleasant and love it, others see it as unpleasant and hate it. For spontaneously born beings, such as hell beings, *bardo* (intermediate state) beings, and devas, their environment and resources are uncommon appearances; their world is born with them and ceases with them.

In a commentary to the above two verses, Geshe Jampa Tegchok, said:

The sufferings of the hells are not mere hallucinations that are not really being experienced. It is not that they are non-existent. If they were mere hallucinated

appearances, they could not function as they appear. For example, when a mirage appears to be water there is no water for us to use because it is an hallucinatory appearance. Or, when we see the moon (reflected) in a body of water, that is just a mistaken appearance. The moon is not actually down there in the water. But here it is not like that. We really do experience suffering from the instruments of torture in the hell realms when we have been born there, and we really do experience feelings of pain from the burning hot iron ground. Therefore they are not mere hallucinations or mistaken appearances.

For example, when a deva, human, and hungry ghost, who have accumulated different strong karmas, look together at a bowl of water, what appears to the deva is nectar, water appears to the human, and pus and blood appear to the hungry ghost. These individual karmic appearances are not mistaken or hallucinated appearances because they are there to be used (experienced) as they appear.

When a friend looks at the face of a person he likes, he sees a face that is good and pleasing. When an enemy who dislikes that person looks at his face, he sees something unpleasant. And when someone who is neither a friend nor an enemy looks, he has a neutral appearance. The appearance of all three forms (pleasing, displeasing, and neutral), is established by valid cognition. In each case, the same person is the referent condition. When the eye consciousness of the friend meets the form of that person (the referent condition), to the eye consciousness of the friend there is a form-appearance of pleasant form. That pleasant form is established as the appearance to him. When the person's form acts as a referent condition meeting with the visual consciousness of the enemy, due to the enemy's karmic appearance, at that moment a new form-appearance of displeasing form occurs. Similarly, hell comes from the karma of the person experiencing the suffering of hell. More precisely, it is made from the 'evil mind' of that person. The place where the suffering of hell is experienced, and the suffering itself, are established together.

Buddhist Cosmology

The ancient Buddhist description of the origins of the universe has interesting parallels with the process of death and rebirth. Growth of an embryo involves the elements of fire emerging from wind, of water emerging from fire, and of earth emerging from water. The reverse occurs when dying. This coarsening of the four physical elements occurs in correspondence with coarsening of the mind resulting from ripening of karmic potencies borne on the mind-stream, and the reverse occurs at death. Similarly, the coming and going of a galaxy has emergence and decay of the four physical elements, and it occurs in dependence upon the ripening of the collective karmic potencies of beings inhabiting that galaxy. How this happens is the question.

Buddhism sees the universe as composed of a vast number of *world systems* coming into and going out of existence. If an event such as a *big bang* did occur, as Buddhism asserts that present matter cannot have come from nothing, our physical world must have come from something similar such as the matter residue of a previous world system that has collapsed. It is said that the underlying cause of the formation and eventual destruction of world systems is the interaction between the collective karma of the beings inhabiting them and minute particles of matter. A world system is said to contain a thousand million solar systems of stars and planets which may or may not be inhabited. It seems that a 'world system' must refer to a galaxy such as the Milky Way and not the entire universe. Or perhaps it may refer to a single solar system. Each world system comes and goes over four equal and extremely long periods of time: the periods of formation, abiding, destruction, and emptiness.

The coming and going of different world systems, or galaxies, is not in phase. While some are being destroyed, others are abiding, and so on. The living beings inhabiting a particular world system can be reborn again and again in the same world system or, according to their karma, they can migrate from one world system to another. If one's karma for hell rebirth is not finished and one's own world system is entering the period of destruction where no hell birth occurs, one's mind will be reborn in a hell state belonging to another world system where hell rebirth still occurs.

The period of emptiness

A period of emptiness follows the period of destruction of a previous galaxy. During this period the sentient beings in that region all abide at the second level of the form realm or above. There is no gross matter, no desire realm, just empty space. This is not a vacuum. There are no atoms but, according to His Holiness the Dalai Lama in quoting the *Kalachakra Tantra*, at this time matter exists in the form of extremely subtle “space particles”.

The immense duration of the period of emptiness finishes when the sentient beings' karma to abide at the second level of the form realm or above begins to expire and, correspondingly, a cool wind moving the space particles signals the beginning of the period of formation. This wind is said to be gentle at first and, over many years, it gathers momentum and heats up. Perhaps to the level of having the power of a big bang, I don't know. The important point is that it occurs as a result of the collective karma of those living beings and thus, according to Buddhism, it is our minds that cause the world, or galaxy, or universe to appear, and not the other way around. The appearance of a galaxy does not happen without a cause or by chance, and it does not occur through the will of an omnipotent creator.

The period of formation

At the beginning of the period of formation, the gentle wind gives rise to the environments of the first form realm level and then the four heavens of the sky-dwelling devas of the desire realm. These five celestial realms become inhabited by those who had been abiding at the second level of the form realm or above. As the wind gains strength, fire, water, and earth qualities manifest. Condensation and precipitation of earth quality forms suns, planets, and moons. On suitable planets, great rains fall, creating oceans and continents, and the remaining desire realm environments appear. For the remainder of the period of formation, sentient beings begin to inhabit the other levels of the desire realm, from the lowest hells (first) up to the earth-dwelling devas. The period of formation ends when all levels become inhabited.

The period of abiding

At the beginning of the period of abiding, the first humans are like gods. They are spontaneously born, and have bodies of light. Surviving on bliss alone, they have a very long lifespan. Gradually, due to coarsening of their collective karma, these humans, and those who follow, experience the five degenerations:

- (i) The average lifespan decreases.
- (ii) The times degenerate: food becomes scarce and of poor quality, violence and disharmony increase in families, between groups, and between nations.
- (iii) The disturbing emotions of hatred, desire, and so on, become stronger.
- (iv) People hold strongly to wrong views, such as denial or distorted versions of karmic cause and effect.
- (v) People's bodies become gross, short in stature, ugly, and weak, and their minds become feeble.

During this decline, there is a point when humans lose their god-like form and appear in bodies like our own, or more primitive forms. This karmically-caused degeneration of humanity from god-like forms to modern *Homo sapiens* does not contradict the observed facts of evolution. Although the ripening of karma is a main condition for the environment that we experience, it is not the only condition, and the material world cannot be said to be karma. Also, the physical and chemical activity of matter is not karma. If earthly life did begin in the hypothetical primordial soup of simple organic compounds, it is quite conceivable that, through physical and chemical activity alone, primitive, non-sentient, reproducing life-forms may have arisen. As these organisms diversified, some would have gone in the direction of becoming plants, without minds, and others would have evolved towards sentience. From the Buddhist point of view, there would have been a time when the bodies of the latter became suitable supports for consciousness, and the minds of beings who had died from higher or lower realms would find suitable physical supports to indulge in their

emerging (from latency) sensory desires, such as eating gross substances and sexual activity. With the combination of body and mind, the first truly animate creatures, sentient beings of the animal realm, would have appeared.

Humans as we presently define ourselves would have appeared with the emergence of the dominant *Homo sapiens* from the evolutionary line that gave rise to ape-like creatures that could be classified either as human or animal. For a while, some of the original god-like humans may have co-existed with humans having coarse bodies and minds like our own, I don't know. There probably aren't any god-like humans around these days, even though some of us may think we belong to that category.

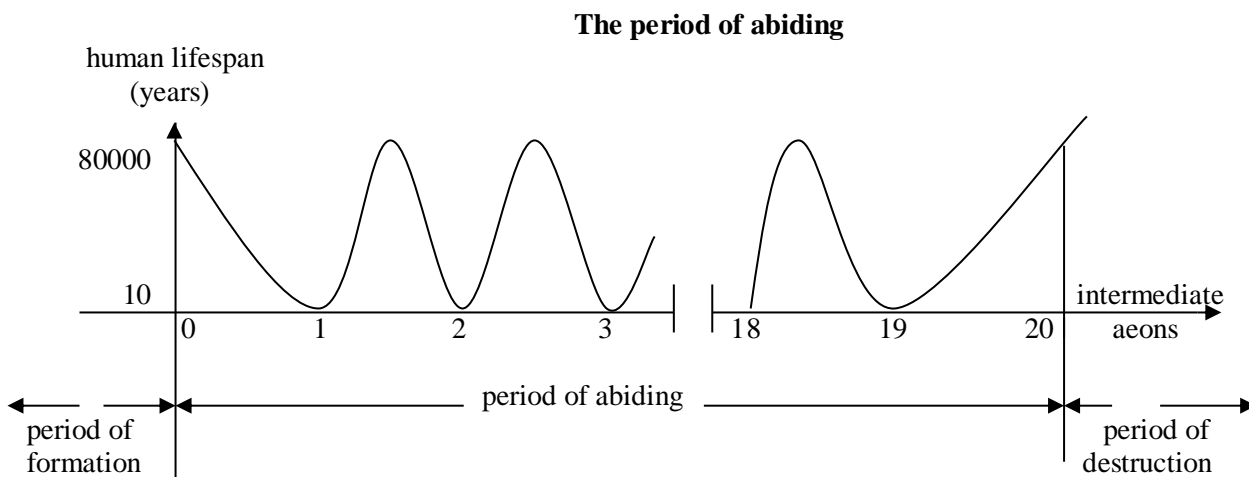
His Holiness the Dalai Lama once gave an interesting answer to the question: "Will computers ever become intelligent?" His answer was something like, "Perhaps, if computers evolve to the point where they are suitable supports for consciousness." In other words, we cannot create awareness newly, but we might be able to produce something in which a pre-existing mind-stream may take up residence. I doubt it, but computer geeks had better watch out.

The *abhidharma* texts say that when, due to the five degenerations, our newly evolved human society on this Earth reaches its nadir, there will be death on a massive scale due to war, epidemics, or famine. It is said that our present society will be destroyed by weapons of war. Shocked by the slaughter, the survivors will be inspired by Maitreya, the coming Buddha, to practise the fundamental morality of non-harmfulness, and things will improve. At that time, Maitreya will appear with a tall and handsome body that will inspire faith in his teachings. He will not appear as a wheel-turning Buddha until much later, during the next period of five degenerations.

As a result of the collective practice of morality, the five degenerations will be reversed, and the lifespan will again become very long. Then the five degenerations will begin all over again. On our Earth, we are experiencing the very first of twenty lesser periods that occur during a period of abiding. This period of long descent from maximum to minimum lifespan will be followed by eighteen cycles during which the lifespan increases to the maximum and then decreases again to the minimum. During the twentieth lesser period there will be a long increase from the minimum lifespan to the maximum, the attainment of which will mark the beginning of the period of destruction.

The period of destruction

Cessation of the period of abiding coincides with cessation of rebirth in the lowest hell, the attainment of peak human lifespan, and the beginning of the period of destruction. The inhabitants of our galaxy of worlds will be reborn in progressively higher realms in this galaxy or, if their karma for low rebirth has not yet expired, in the lower realms of other galaxies. Eventually, the beings of our galaxy will all be at the second form realm level and above, and the period of destruction will end with burning of the desire realm environments by a fire that leaves no ash or smoke. The next period of emptiness will then begin, and so on.



In relation to our Earth, we are at the point during the first of the twenty intermediate aeons when the average human lifespan is about 80 years. Many planets have evolution of life-forms similar to what has occurred on the Earth, but whether Buddhas appear and teach the Dharma or not is dependent upon the collective karma of the humans on that planet. Sometimes worlds can pass through all four great periods with no Buddhas appearing, or just a few. The collective karma of the humans on our planet, however, is said to be extremely fortunate because, during our period of abiding, a thousand Buddhas will appear and teach the Dharma.

The thousand Wheel-Turning Buddhas only appear during times of degeneration, when humans are actively seeking the cause of suffering, unlike the ascending times when things are getting better all the time. The first four to appear were Buddha Kakutsunda, Buddha Kanakamuni, Buddha Kashyapa, and Buddha Shakyamuni. The next will be Buddha Maitreya who, at present, is said to be teaching in the Tushita Pure Land.

Mind

A dictionary says mind is, “that which thinks, knows, feels, and wills.” This is a good description of mental activity but is not a clear definition of mind itself. According to the scientists, it could equally be a description of cerebral activity. But the belief that mind is a mere epiphenomenon of brain, something directly arising from brain as its substantial cause, is not proven. Buddhism asserts that the ‘substance’ of mind is awareness, a non-physical entity. There is no widely accepted scientific definition of mind so we must explore the Buddhist definition of mind:

Definition of mind: mind exists as a never-ending continuum of clarity and awareness.

- (i) **Clarity** refers, in general, to the non-physical nature of mind: its lack of colour, shape, or material dimension. At a deeper level, clarity is that function of mind which gives rise to appearances or images of the things that are known, like a mirror gives rise to reflected images of objects. Such appearances are potentially accurate and ‘clear’ because distorted awareness due to disturbing emotions is superficial and not one with the nature of mind. When there are no disturbing emotions the image is accurate. At an even deeper level, clarity of mind refers to the mind’s final nature of non-inherent existence.
- (ii) **Awareness** is not possessed by mirrors; it is the activity of apprehension, knowing, or cognitive engagement in the five sense objects or in objects appearing to thought.
- (iii) **Mere** excludes the need for any significant strength of comprehension of the object: deep sleep is also a mental experience. It also excludes an independent, self-reliant me or mind within the head that is an agent having or controlling the experience.

Further important points:

- Clarity and awareness of a particular object of mind occur simultaneously.
- Mind cannot be extinguished like the dousing of a flame; it is a self-perpetuating continuum of awareness and clarity that has no beginning or end.
- The present moment of awareness of an object arises in dependence upon the meeting of the object, the immediately preceding moment of clarity and awareness (mind), and a sense organ (the ‘sense organ’ for thought, or conceptual mind, is the continuum of consciousness itself).
- The natural capacity of mind to know clearly whatever exists is temporarily obscured by distorted mental conceptions and their habits. Such obscuration is superficial, like waves on the surface of the ocean, and can be eliminated by the wisdom seeing ultimate reality. Thus every sentient being, even the fly on the wall and those who have committed the most heinous crimes, has the potential to become a Buddha.

Six main types of awareness are included within mind: the five senses – visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, and tactile consciousness – and mental consciousness. The latter is the main domain of

our awareness. It receives sensory input and engages in thinking or conceptualising about what has been experienced.

Thoughts experience their object indirectly, through an idea, or mental image of it. This leads to an element of mistake because we confuse the actual object with our idea of it. Through the power of concentration, however, mental consciousness can attain *direct perception* that does not rely upon an intermediary mental image. Based upon perfect concentration, the wisdom of higher-seeing, *vipassana*, is first cultivated at the intellectual or conceptual level, and then one leaves behind the mental image of the object and attains direct, non-conceptual awareness of it. In relation to the emptiness of inherent existence, conceptual wisdom understanding emptiness does not have the power to abandon self-grasping ignorance. The wisdom that directly realises emptiness does have that power, and thus the aim of Buddhist meditation is to cultivate direct perception of emptiness.

The dictionary definition of mind, '...that which thinks...etc.,' gives the impression that mind is a particular entity, an independent agent, that does the thinking, knowing, feeling, and willing. The Buddhist definition of mind excludes this assumption with the term 'mere,' which preserves the status of mind as being only nominally existent. Mind is merely imputed upon the combination of clarity and awareness; it does not exist independently or in its own right. Thinking, knowing, feeling, and willing *are* mind.

When meditating on our own clarity and awareness, even though we are observing the base of imputation of mind, and not mind in its own right, it is suitable to say we are observing mind. Other than mind itself, there is no instrument that can directly observe clarity and awareness. Scientists who believe they are observing mind when their instruments show areas of the brain lighting up during thought activity are as far away from observing mind as a palaeontologist is from observing a dinosaur by seeing fossilised footprints.

At school we learn that, in the constant change of physical things from one state to another, no new matter or energy arises from nothing and no old matter or energy disappears into nothing. A similar principle applies to the non-physical mind asserted in Buddhism. Every person has mind, a continuum of mere clarity and awareness that exists as a functioning thing undergoing moment-by-moment change just as things of the physical world are constantly changing. Even though the proton in a particular hydrogen atom never remains the same for more than a split second, as long as we are aware of its momentary nature it is not inappropriate to regard that proton as something existing over a period of time – as a continuum. In a similar way, mind is a constantly renewing continuum in that the present moment of a particular person's mind arises in dependence upon cessation of the previous moment and, in turn, its own cessation gives rise to the next moment of mind. In this way, mind is a beginningless and endless continuum.

Positive and negative qualities present in one moment of mind will necessarily influence the character of the next moment of mind. Fortunately, negative qualities such as self-centredness, anger, and desire, are superficial distortions and can be diminished and even totally stopped without harming the mental continuum in any way. Even in the material world temporary appearances can stop forever, for example, ocean waves disappear when the conditions for their existence cease, and the water itself is not harmed in any way. The *energy* of the waves is preserved in other forms, but the waves themselves cease.

Where does mind come from?

Whereas an atom can be broken up into its component parts, even though a mental continuum does have parts, these cannot be physically separated like particles of matter. One mind cannot divide into separate minds, and separate minds cannot unite to become a single mind. Because mind is indivisible, our first moment of consciousness cannot have come from the minds of our parents. Also, it cannot have come from the developing nervous system because matter and mind are completely different things. They have no substance in common and, even though they can influence each other, they cannot be substantial causes for each other. Finally, as our first moment of consciousness cannot have come from nothing, it must have arisen from a previous moment of consciousness. Therefore our mind must have come from a previous life. This is how the reality of rebirth is established: it is the mind that goes from life to life.

At death, mind does not disappear into nothing. In dependence upon the karmic potential activated during the death process, the mental continuum conjoins with another gross physical support and rebirth occurs in either a pleasant or an unpleasant state. Thus there can be no beginning to our mental continuum taking birth in the wheel of life and there can be no end to the continuity of our mind. It will take rebirth again and again or it will become the ongoing mind of a future Buddha.

Awareness is not a simple thing. Each moment of awareness bears memory imprints of this life and all past lives, habits of our past constructive or destructive emotions, and potencies created by our past intentional actions. These imprints, habits, and potentials have a profound influence on the way things appear to our mind and the way in which we apprehend them. Also, the ways in which things appear to and are apprehended by mind are influenced by whatever emotion, constructive or destructive, is manifest at the time of observation. Thus awareness is both a conditioned and a subjective phenomenon. So, how can one claim to see reality if one's observations are subjectively conditioned?

No problem. The path to Buddhahood requires three levels of correct knowledge:

- (i) *The knowledge of listening and observing*: valid information gained from our observations and from hearing teachings and reading books. Even though this is correct belief, without a strong foundation of logic we can be talked out of our belief by clever but deceptive reasoning.
- (ii) *The knowledge of analysis* is unshakeable inferential understanding acquired through the effort of reflecting upon and analysing the meaning of our knowledge of listening and observing.
- (iii) *The knowledge of meditation* Based upon the above two, is the inferential and then the direct wisdom perceiving reality supported by a perfectly concentrated mind associated with the unprecedented bliss of mental suppleness (calm abiding).

While cultivating these three types of knowledge, listening, observing, and analysing will oppose subjective distortion due to wrong views and will enhance right views. Finally, the wisdom of direct, non-conceptual awareness of reality based upon single-pointed concentration will oppose all imprints associated with ignorance-confusion and will begin the permanent extinguishment of ignorance and the power of karmic potencies. The waves of obscuration will cease and our mind, an ocean of awareness, will abide in its natural state of perfect clarity and tranquillity. A Buddha's mind sees both conventional and ultimate reality at all times without subjective distortion.

Objects of knowledge

Whatever exists can be known by mind, and all knowable things are either apparent or hidden:

- (i) **Apparent things** are those that can be observed directly through our senses.
- (ii) **Hidden things** are not immediately obvious to sense consciousness; we come to know them through inference.
 - (a) *Slightly hidden things*, like subtle impermanence and emptiness, are able to be first understood through logical reasoning and then they are known directly.
 - (b) *Very hidden things*, such as the intricate workings of karma, can be understood by ordinary beings through the reasoning of relying upon a valid authority, such as a Buddha. As we progress on the path to enlightenment, our mental consciousness will eventually directly perceive even very hidden things.

The 51 mental factors: 6 *primary minds* apprehend the mere entity of objects and 51 *mental factors* distinguish specific features of the object. "Primary mind" is the totality of a sensory or mental state composed of a variety of mental factors. A primary mind is like a hand and the mental factors are the fingers, palm, etc. A primary mind and its attendant mental factors have a similar base, duration, aspect (of the object), referent (object), and 'substance' (perception, conception, correct, wrong, etc.)

5 ever-present mental factors are needed to experience an object; they accompany every main mind.

1 **Feeling:** the experiences of pleasure, pain or indifference that arise when the mind contacts a pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral object. *General function:* to experience the ripening effects of past actions. *Specific function:* leads to reactions of attachment, aversion, and bewilderment, through which further karma is created.

2 **Discrimination** (recognition), distinguishes the particular features of an object, identifying them to be one thing as opposed to another: good, bad; blue, red etc. It is essential in identifying the negatee in the view of selflessness.

3 **Intention** moves the mind towards the general object. Intention is equivalent to karma. On the causal side, intention is the main factor in establishing karmic imprints; on the resultant side, karmic imprints ripen in the form of an intention which connects us with a pleasant or an unpleasant object.

4 **Contact** connects the main mind, a sense faculty, and the object; the basis for one of the three feelings, it distinguishes the object as attractive, unattractive, or neutral.

5 **Mental engagement** (attention): focuses and holds the mind on the specific details of the object, as opposed to intention which moves the mind to the general object.

5 object-ascertaining mental factors ascertain their objects by distinguishing a specific characteristic of the object, virtuous or non-virtuous. Here, we discuss these factors in relation to concentration on virtuous objects.

1 **Aspiration** seeks a virtuous object of meditation or practice with interest and faith that it is valid and wishes not to separate from it. In seeking Dharma realisations, based on faith, aspiration is the basis for the virtuous factor of enthusiasm, which generates pliancy, and this overcomes laziness. All four are antidotes to laziness.

2 **Conviction** (belief, interest) stabilises the mind focused on the aspired object and prevents it from being distracted. If we lack conviction, the effort of aspiration fades and we start daydreaming.

3 **Mindfulness** based upon conviction, mindfulness retains the object in memory clearly and without distraction. Its three qualities of familiarity with the object, not forgetting the object, and remaining undistracted are the basis for concentration.

4 **Concentration** Superior to mindfulness, remains focused on the object for as long as we like. Not yet meditative stabilisation, it is the stability of mind we have now. It functions as the basis for acquiring knowledge and to bring all mundane and supra-mundane phenomena under control.

5 **Knowledge** (intelligence) examines qualities of object with fine analysis. Functions to remove doubt, maintain the mind in virtue, and to see concealed phenomena through insight, (*vipassana*). It can be innate from past lives or acquired from listening, contemplation, and meditating:

11 virtuous mental factors are virtuous from their own side. Whenever they are manifest, the entire mind becomes virtuous – the main mind as well as all other mental factors operating at that time. In general, a virtuous mind is smooth, harmonious, and pleasant, whereas an afflicted or non-virtuous mind is disturbed.

1 **Faith** appreciates and admires virtuous qualities and beings who possess such qualities, and wishes to attain them. It functions as the basis for aspiration to create virtue; it has 3 types:

(i) *Convictional faith* Through listening to the teachings and contemplating their meaning we see that they are both logical and in accord with our own experience. The more we listen, study, and then meditate, the stronger becomes our believing faith (based on wisdom of meditation).

(ii) *Admiring faith:* admires the good qualities of, for example, the Three Jewels. It is a joyful mind that decreases jealousy. Sometimes "clarifying faith" because it makes the mind clear, we can see where we are going. It is the foundation of all virtue.

(iii) *Aspiring faith:* we contemplate the objects of faith, virtuous goals such as renunciation or bodhicitta, and feel convinced that such goals are attainable and we aspire to do so.

2 **Shame** (conscience) refrains from non-virtue through personal disapproval. Having decided it is wrong to steal, kill, etc., when the impulse to steal or kill arises we do not follow that impulse because we feel it would be shameful to do such an action which we know is wrong.

3 **Consideration** (embarrassment) also avoids engaging in non-virtue, through considering feelings of others. Non-virtue meets the disapproval of one's teacher, the Buddhas, and bodhisattvas. Consideration also refrains from non-virtue by thinking it would harm the faith others

have in oneself and in the Triple Gem. Some say shame and consideration are the roots of all virtue; they occur at times of turning away from evil.

4 **Non-attachment** views desire as faulty and deliberately restrains desire. Non-attachment to pleasure of this life is required for renunciation of the person of lower scope; to the pleasures of cyclic existence in general is required for renunciation of the person of medium scope; to the bliss of the nirvana of hearers and solitary realisers is required for renunciation of the person of great scope. Non-attachment is not simply an absence of attachment, it is an active, positive state of mind able to experience pleasure without clinging to the object or the experience itself; it keeps the mind focused upon virtuous goals.

5 **Non-anger** sees anger as faulty and deliberately restrains anger. It has no intention to harm others because it has the aspect of loving-kindness. Four ways to train the mind in non-anger:

- (i) Not blaming others when they blame us.
- (ii) Not striking others when they strike us.
- (iii) Not getting angry with somebody who is angry at oneself.
- (iv) Not criticising others when they criticise us.

6 **Non-confusion** either an innate or an acquired mental factor that can distinguish between virtuous and non-virtuous behaviour. It opposes confusion by understanding cause and effect and clarifies how we can live our lives in virtue. (It is not a form of knowledge itself but is a lucid quality of mind accompanying the firm intelligence that bears a relationship of similarity with either enthusiasm or concentration).

7 **Enthusiasm** delights in virtue and is an opponent to laziness. *Armour-like enthusiasm* is great joy in merely the thought of virtuous actions. *Applied enthusiasm* is joy while doing an action. *Unshakeable enthusiasm* overcomes discouragement once one has begun a virtuous action. *Irreversible enthusiasm* is a sense of capability, "I can do," not feeling inferior or unable to do the action. Finally, *enthusiasm of not being satisfied* with virtue that has been accomplished, wanting to do more.

8 **Pliancy** enables the mind to remain focused on virtuous object as long as one wishes. Generated during meditative stabilisation, it leads to physical pliancy: body remains effortlessly in meditative posture.

9 **Conscientiousness** by cherishing the accumulation of virtue and guarding the mind against that which causes afflictions to arise – loss of mindfulness and alertness – it prevents non-virtuous actions under control of afflictions. It is aware of non-virtue and has the attitudes to purify past negative karma, to avoid future negative karma, and to avoid creating negative karma in the present.

10 **Equanimity** in general, holds mind on virtue and gives no opportunity for afflictions to arise. Specifically, equanimity here is when meditating on a virtuous object one attains mental balance. It is unaffected by excitement and laxity and is also free of unnecessary application of the antidotes.

11 **Non-harmfulness** is compassion unable to bear suffering of others. It includes the courage and willingness to face any difficulty in rescuing others from suffering, and the absence of any intention to harm others. Simple compassion wishes others to be free from suffering; non-harmfulness will not hurt others even if they are harming oneself. It is the essence of all Buddha's teachings.

6 root afflictions In general, an affliction is a mental factor whose nature is disturbing and which prevents peace in the mind, making it difficult to subdue. The one root affliction is ignorance; the three root afflictions are ignorance, hostility, and attachment; and the six root afflictions are presented as five non-views and five afflicted views:

1 **Attachment** sees a contaminated object (arising from karma and afflictions) as attractive and wishes to acquire it. A non-aversion to cyclic existence, it grasps at exaggerated attractiveness of object and wishes to not separate from it; it wants happiness but results in suffering by disturbing the mind. Love and compassion do not exaggerate; are only concerned with the welfare of others; and increase our sense of well-being. Seeking virtue is not attachment if the mind is peaceful. Attachment seeks the pleasures of all three realms of samsara. Other afflictions are easy to abandon, like washing dirt from cloth, attachment is difficult because it believes its projections to be true and cannot bear to be separated from the object, or it pines for objects not possessed. It is like oil on cloth, difficult to separate.

2 **Hostility** (anger) observes a contaminated object, exaggerates its bad qualities, sees it as undesirable, and wishes to harm it. Hostility can be directed towards a sentient being, suffering in one's own continuum, or an inanimate object. Wanting to inflict harm is a state of internal agitation and it disturbs our environment.

3 **Pride** arises from I-grasping ignorance and feels own qualities are superior to others. Inflated opinions about self with respect to our power and influence in society, our physical strength and appearance, wealth, family background, knowledge, and so on. Pride functions to have no respect

for others and to belittle them; it makes the mind agitated and unhappy. It is an obstacle to virtue, to admitting mistakes and applying the four opponent powers. Arrogance (haughtiness) focusses only on own qualities and doesn't compare them with others.

Seven types of pride:

- (i) *Simple pride* feels we are better than those who are socially inferior to ourselves.
- (ii) *Superiority* even amongst our peers we feel we are special, we are actually better than them.
- (iii) *Extreme pride* feels superior even to those who are higher than us.
- (iv) *Egotism* pride of our body and mind; "I look so good." Aloofness regarding our education.
- (v) *Pretension*: wrongly assuming spiritual realisations, we act in a contrived holy manner.
- (vi) *Slight inferiority* or false modesty: we act in a humble way in the presence of greatly superior persons but feel we are almost like them.
- (vii) *Wrong pride*: Arrogantly thinking we are above ordinary morality, we think we are virtuous whereas in reality our mind is non-virtuous.

4 **Ignorance**, as a non-view, is mistaken understanding of the reality of phenomena, a mental darkness, especially of cause and effect. As a view, ignorance is the self-grasping that is opposite to the wisdom realising selflessness. Within our general unknowing of how things actually exist, things appear to exist in a wrong way. This wrong appearance of true self-existence is an illusion that appears to our mind as a result of imprints from past lives. Not knowing any better, we grasp at these false appearances to be true and behave accordingly. Believing in a truly existing "I" and "mine," we become self-centred in our attitude to the world and the afflictions of pride, attachment, anger, and so on are unleashed.

5 **Deluded doubt** wavers between the correct and incorrect understanding of selflessness, cause and effect, etc., and obstructs the attainment of liberation and enlightenment. Specifically, it refers to doubt in relation to the reality of the Four Noble Truths. It is called *deluded doubt* because it is not simply a mind which cannot decide, it is a mind which leans towards the incorrect conclusion.

6 **Afflicted views** 'Views' are beliefs held as true; they are innate or acquired.

- (i) *View of the perishable group as real I and mine* observes the I and mine of own continuum of body and mind and holds the I to be intrinsically existent. It regards the five aggregates to be a truly existing self or the possessions of a truly existing self
- (ii) *Extreme view* observes the I or mine of one's own continuum and conceives the I to be either eternal or annihilated at death.
- (iii) *Holding one's false view as supreme* regards one's perishable, extreme, or wrong view to be correct and best for gaining realisations. It also arises in relation to one's heaps.
- (iv) *Holding wrong morality and asceticism as supreme* sees physical, verbal, or mental wrong actions to be correct and superior methods for attaining liberation.
- (v) *Wrong view*: intellectually-acquired mistaken idea denying existence of karma, rebirth, etc., things that are necessary to understand in order to attain liberation and enlightenment.

The twenty secondary afflictions are derived from one or more of three poisons:

- 1 **Belligerence** (wrath) makes our mind unhappy when we are close to an object of anger. Anger disturbs our mind simply when we think about our enemy, belligerence arises when the object is close by and is an intense attitude wanting to inflict harm.
- 2 **Resentment**: continual anger, grudge-holding, lasting belligerence; from hostility.
- 3 **Concealment** is the mental attitude of hiding our faults and also not accepting previous faults. It increases the strength of negative karma and should be opposed by immediate confession. It comes from attachment.
- 4 **Spite** is the wish to abuse others, it arises from anger and resentment, especially in situations when someone points out our faults.
- 5 **Jealousy** (envy) is being disturbed upon seeing the good qualities of others. Jealousy comes from anger but there is also desire for the good things possessed by others. When we are jealous we can never be happy because we are disturbed simply by seeing the good things possessed by others.
- 6 **Miserliness** (avarice): mind holds on to objects of attachment with intensity and we are unable to give them away. It is a branch of attachment and can be overcome by cultivating generosity.
- 7 **Deceit**: in order to deceive others and obtain something from them, we claim to possess a power, such as clairvoyance, that we do not have. It comes from ignorance and attachment.
- 8 **Dishonesty**: from attachment and ignorance; through desire to receive offerings, we hide faults by pretending to be clever. From the point of view of Dharma, this is a stupid action because no matter how much we pretend to be intelligent we cannot hide our faults from Buddhas and bodhisattvas.

- 9 **Haughtiness** (arrogance), a cause of *excitement*, a puffed-up mind delighting in social status, bodily appearance, education, cleverness, youth, friends, possessions, power or authority, feeling that we have superior qualities that we do not, in fact, possess. Derived from attachment.
- 10 **Harmfulness** (cruelty) a lack of compassion, wishing to disturb or harm the minds or bodies of others. Without any love we directly harm others, order someone else to harm them, or simply rejoice at the news or the sounds of others being hurt. Buddha condemned harmfulness, saying that anybody who indulged in harmfulness in any of these three ways was not a disciple of his. From anger.
- 11 **Shamelessness** opposite to virtuous mental factor of shame, can arise from ignorance, attachment, or anger and is an attitude of not restraining oneself from committing a negative action by not caring about a personal code of ethics.
- 12 **Inconsideration**, non-embarrassment, opposite to virtuous factor of consideration. One continues unwholesome activity without caring about others' opinion or effect of one's actions upon them. Factors 11 & 12 accompany every non-virtuous state of mind. From ignorance and attachment.
- 13 **Lethargy** accompanies all root and secondary afflictions; darkens mind and makes body heavy and inflexible, unwilling to do virtue or meditate. Indirectly prevents concentration because through its force laxity and excitement arise. *Laxity* is a darkness that obstructs clarity and *shamatha* and is distracted inwardly while cultivating virtue; being in the retinue of a virtuous mind, it is not the same as lethargy.
- 14 **Excitement** comes from attachment. Our mind is disturbed by thinking about contaminated, sensory objects and cannot remain focused on a virtuous object. Major obstacle to concentration.
- 15 **Non-faith**, opposite to 3 types of faith, is a branch of ignorance. By not believing truth, such as Buddha's explanation of cause and effect, it functions as a basis for laziness.
- 16 **Laziness**, a branch of ignorance, has no delight in virtuous activity and is distracted by wish to sleep or be amused. Only seeks happiness of this life; future lives and liberation are ignored.
- 17 **Non-conscientiousness**, opposite of conscientiousness, can arise from any of three root afflictions, is associated with not abstaining from bad actions but continuing on with them.
- 18 **Forgetfulness** from ignorance: mindfulness clouded by afflictions, forgets virtue.
- 19 **Non-alertness** is a type of deluded knowledge. It is the opposite of discriminating alertness – knowledge which sees things correctly.
- 20 **Distraction** causes the mind to leap away from virtuous object and follow an object of the three poisons. Virtuous distraction is where the meditating mind strays towards a virtuous object; neutral distraction is when a sense consciousness arises and the mind goes towards the external object. The mental factor of excitement is a distraction that specifically goes to objects of desire.

The 4 variable mental factors: virtuous or non-virtuous according to accompanying mental factors.

- 1 **Sleep** (makes mind unclear and withdraws sense consciousnesses from external objects. Can be either virtuous or non-virtuous depending upon purpose for sleeping.
- 2 **Regret:** concern and regretting for a previous action. It is virtuous when we generate sincere regret for a negative action. Regret can be non-virtuous if we regret having done a positive action.
- 3 **Investigation** investigates the nature of things in a general or superficial way.
- 4 **Analysis** goes into the specific qualities of things. Investigation and analysis are non-virtuous when planning a bank robbery and virtuous when we are investigating the nature of impermanence or emptiness.

Stages in the development of the afflictions and karmic deeds

- 1 **Wrong appearance** Due to innate imprints, things appear as inherently existing self-entities.
- 2 **Grasping at wrong appearance as true** Mind automatically grasps at this wrong appearance to be true. This leads to self-grasping of person and self-grasping of phenomenon.
- 3 **Inappropriate attention**, or improper engagement, induces afflictions by exaggerating or superimposing good or bad qualities upon pleasing or displeasing objects.
- 4 **Afflictions:** Cling to exaggerated good or bad qualities with attachment or with aversion and hostility.
- 5 **Karmic activities** Through the afflictions we perform karmic actions.