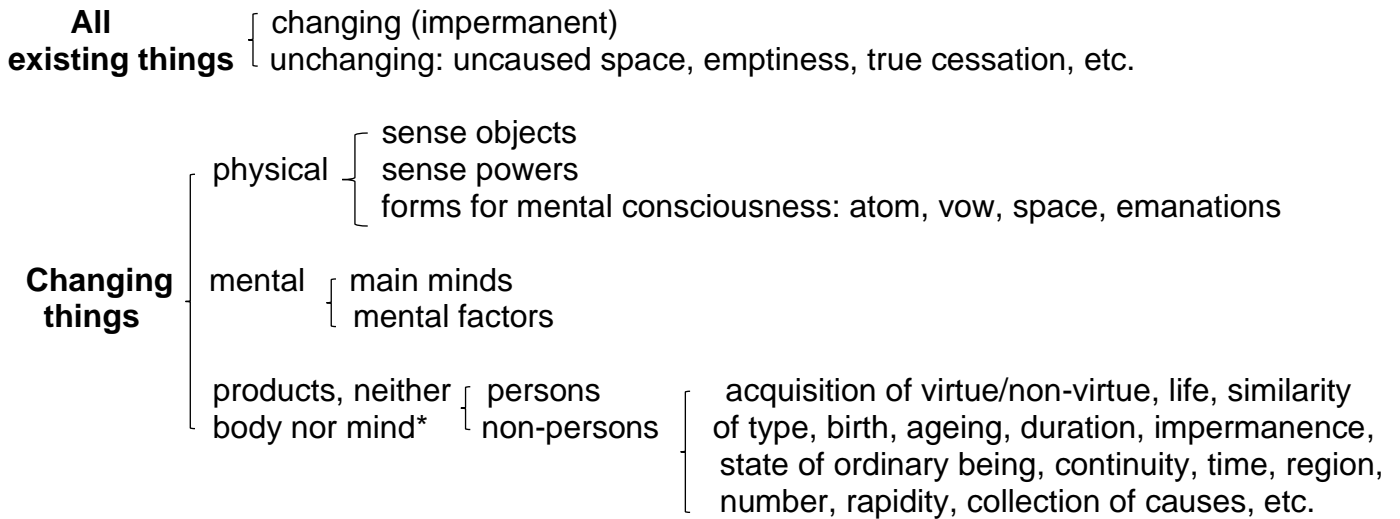


Dependent Origination



*Produced things that are neither body nor mind are designations to states that allow for the aggregation of causes and conditions and for the production, abiding, and cessation of products.

Causes and conditions for material and mental things to arise:

- 1 **Existence of a cause:** something cannot come from nothing; whatever exists must come from something else of similar type.
 - (i) *Substantial cause:* in terms of physical things refers to the continuum of matter; in terms of mental things refers to a continuum of mind or awareness.
 - (ii) *Co-operative conditions:* refers to things such as moisture and warmth required for the germination of a seed, or the appearance of an attractive object in the generation of attachment.
- 2 **Impermanence:** without the ability to change moment-by-moment, nothing can produce a result. "Permanent cause" is an oxymoron.
- 3 **Potentiality to produce a corresponding result:** the result must correspond to its cause. An apple tree cannot produce bananas; when conditions are there, love, anger, and so on arise from mental seeds.

- 1 **Natural causality** is the arising of our bodies and minds through natural causes – food, drink, genes, continua of consciousness – as well as things occurring in the environment due to physical properties, chemical activity, electromagnetic or gravitational forces, and so on: growth of plants, rain, winds, tides, volcanoes, earthquakes etc.
- 2 **Karmic causality** refers to the intentions behind conscious or subconscious physical, verbal, or mental actions that establish potencies borne by the mere person that can ripen to connect the person with future pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral experiences. The mere existence of our bodies and minds is a result of natural causality, but the fact that a person has a human body is a result of that person's karmic causality, as are all pleasant and painful experiences. *Contaminated karma* refers to causal mental intentions arising in a mind contaminated by manifest self-grasping ignorance. In general, *uncontaminated karma* refers to causal mental intentions arising subsequent to direct realisation of emptiness; the potencies left on the mind are also uncontaminated.

Dependent-arising of all things is their conventional nature or way of existence. There are 3 types:

- 1 Arising in dependence upon causes and conditions: all products.
 - 2 Arising in dependence upon its parts or comparison: all things, permanent and impermanent.
 - 3 Arising in dependence upon mental imputation: all things, permanent and impermanent.
- Conventional reality is established simply by giving a name to a basis of designation *without analysis*. Upon analysis, conventional things cannot be found. If they could be found they would exist inherently but, to ignorant minds, things still appear to exist inherently. When an apparently inherently existing thing is looked for and cannot be found, one realises the emptiness of inherent existence of that thing.

Emptiness of inherent existence of all things is their ultimate nature or way of existence. Whatever exists is one entity with its own emptiness. "Form is emptiness, emptiness is form," means that because that-which-is-suitable-to-be-form is empty of inherent existence it can appear as form.

The twelve links of dependent origination

IGNORANCE → VOLITION → CONSCIOUSNESS → BODY & MIND → 6 SOURCES → CONTACT → FEELING → CRAVING → GRASPING → EXISTENCE → REBIRTH → AGEING & DEATH → SORROW, LAMENTATION, GRIEF, UNHAPPINESS, DISTURBANCE

The entity of the ignorance link The ignorance link is unpredicted by Buddha to be either virtuous or non-virtuous. It has both intellectually acquired and innate aspects, and is finally abandoned by the path of meditation. It belongs to the aggregate of compositional factors, and it manifests only in the continuum of an ordinary being, it cannot manifest in an arya.

Ignorance link: innate or acquired self-grasping of person, is unpredicted.

Root of cyclic existence: innate self-grasping of person or phenomenon, is also unpredicted.

Ignorance of cause and effect: acquired denial of karmic cause and effect, is non-virtuous.

Meritorious karma Every karmic action has an initial *causal motivation* that arises before the action and an *immediate motivation* at the moment the action is performed. Meritorious karma is created by first desiring the happiness of future rebirth as a human or as a god of the desire realm and then performing an appropriate virtuous action to attain this result. The causal motivation contains the ignorance link and is unpredicted; the immediate motivation is virtuous.

Unwavering karma When we seek the higher bliss of the form or formless realms we meditate on the approaches to samadhi and create unwavering karma to be born at those levels. The ignorance link occurs during the causal motivation and the immediate motivation is virtuous.

Non-meritorious karma is performed through attachment to happiness of this life, the pursuit of which leads to the ten non-virtuous actions. The ignorance link occurs within the causal motivation and the ignorance of cause and effect exists within a non-virtuous immediate motivation.

Diagram of the Wheel of Life The Buddha standing outside indicates he has gone beyond the wheel of life. He is pointing to the full moon that symbolises liberation from darkness and is saying: Exert armour-like effort in following the path; go beyond the wheel of life and attain nirvana. In dependence upon the Doctrine, practise the three higher trainings and destroy all mundane creations like an elephant destroying a house of mud. Vanquish the Lord of Death and overcome the sufferings of birth, sickness, ageing, and death that are due to karma and afflictions. Be mindful in your three doors of body, speech, and mind and engage in the eight-fold path. May all suffering be brought to an end by abandoning rebirth taken through karma and afflictions.

1 Ignorance The *ignorance link* is a mental factor that, through not knowing reality, grasps at a truly existent self and is a motivation for a throwing karma belonging to its set of twelve links. It is not the ignorance of cause and effect even though this latter ignorance can be a motivation for a throwing karma. *Symbol:* blind man with a stick. Just as a person with no eyes depends upon something else to find his way, ignorance is a lack of clarity that obscures our minds and we depend upon something else – the wisdom-eye of Buddha – to find our way to liberation

2 Karmic formation is the mental factor of intention that arises after a motivation of ignorance and which creates a throwing karma that will ripen in the future. It can be meritorious, unmeritorious, or unwavering. Karmic formation belongs to the aggregate of volitions; it is either virtuous or non-virtuous by association with other mental factors, and is an object to be abandoned by the path of meditation. This link is a karmic path with all four branches complete, and is a contaminated karma.

The basic ignorance of not knowing reality gives rise to the wrong view grasping at the aggregates as I and mine. This is followed by attachment and hatred. Through *improper engagement*, these mental factors grasp at superimposed qualities that the object does not possess. Attachment superimposes beauty, and through craving the exaggerated object we may wish to separate two people to obtain the object of our desire. The mental *intention* to separate the couple arises, and we act by telling a lie to cause a division. This intention is *intentional karma*. Actually speaking the lie is *operational karma*. Anger superimposes qualities in a negative sense. Exaggerating the negative qualities of an enemy leads to an intention to cause harm (intentional karma), and then we engage in an action of body or speech to cause harm (operational karma). Operational karma is either physical or verbal, each action has its concordant mental intention occurring with the actual deed.

Symbol: a potter making pots of many shapes. Many types of throwing karma can throw us into the great variety of life-forms within the six realms.

3 Consciousness As the intention finishes, it becomes the entity of a potency deposited on the primary mental consciousness or the mere-I. This is now the consciousness link; it lasts until the first moment of rebirth thrown by that karma. *Causal consciousness link* is the consciousness link from the time the karma is created until just before the rebirth. *Resultant consciousness link* is the first moment of consciousness in that new life.

The Prasangikas say that the karmic potency is created in the first moment and then, because it is a compounded phenomenon changing moment-by-moment, it disintegrates. This disintegration results in a new karmic potency, which is also impermanent, and in the next moment this also disintegrates. This process of moment-by-moment change goes on until finally a karmic potency will arise at the moment when there are all the conditions necessary for its maturation. At this time, its natural disintegration will give rise not to a new karmic potency but to the karmically ripening result. The Prasangikas say it is this very phenomenon of moment-by-moment disintegration that maintains the karmic energy and its ability to give rise to the result.

Symbol: a monkey in a tree. Just as a restless monkey moves from one thing to another, the consciousness is always moving on to new existences. The monkey swinging from branch to branch can also mean that, just as the branches of the tree support the monkey, the consciousness acts as a basis upon which the karmic imprints are held until they ripen and give rise to their result.

4 Name and form is the five aggregates that exist (as an embryo) from the moment of rebirth until the moment the six sense organs are fully developed.

Symbol: a man steering a boat. Name (mental aggregates) and form (body) are like a vessel, they carry all the karmic potentials and mental afflictions.

5 The six sources are the six sense bases from the moment they are fully formed until the moment after birth when they come into contact with their respective objects.

Symbol: A full house. Not only are name and form present, but also the six sense bases are complete. This illustration can also be an empty house, in which case it signifies that the six sense bases are complete but not yet occupied by their respective sense consciousnesses. If an empty house is used to symbolise name and form, the man in the boat is used to symbolise the six sources coming to fill that empty house.

6 Contact is the mental factor of contact at the time of contact between the body sense base, the tactile consciousness, and its object – which it distinguishes as being pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral.

Symbol: man and woman embracing: coming together of the sense base, consciousness, and object.

7 Feeling is the mental factor of feeling, either pleasure, pain, or indifference, that arises upon contact with a pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral object. Contact is aware of the causes of feelings, whereas feeling is the actual experience resulting from that contact. Each feeling is the ripening of a completing karma created in the past.* *Symbol:* an arrow piercing a man's eye.

8 Craving: the mental factor of attachment that nourishes the potency left on consciousness by the karmic formation performed by the ignorance belonging to its own set of 12 links. When persistent ignorance accompanies feeling, craving arises to not separate from happiness, to be separated from unhappiness, or for neutral feeling to remain. Mostly, the 8th and 9th links refer to craving and grasping near the time of death. *Symbol:* a layperson drinking wine. Our desire for wine increases the more we drink; this is like the unsatisfied craving we have for all sense pleasures.

9 Grasping: intensified desire that, like moisture enabling a seed to germinate, increases ripening potential of karmic imprint made by ignorance. *Symbol:* a monkey picking fruit. Through grasping we want more and more even though we have sufficient.

- (i) **Grasping at pleasure of five sense objects** within desire realm. In the form realm there are no odours or tastes and therefore grasping at the pleasure of the 5 desire realm senses is most dominant.
- (ii) **Grasping at views** is grasping at wrong views asserted by non-Buddhists, such as the Tirthikas.
- (iii) **Grasping at wrong ethics and conduct to be supreme:** grasping at mistaken ideas such as one can gain supernatural powers or complete purification by leaping onto a trident, bathing in the Ganges, or simply by fasting.
- (iv) **Grasping for a self:** view of transitory collection or view that sees the self as highest of all.

10 Existence is the mental factor of intention that is the fully ripened result of the karmic potency established by ignorance and karmic formation and has been prepared for ripening by craving and grasping. (Geshe Sopa: a third ripening cause is a secondary karma, usually mental, created at this moment; a thought that is of similar ethical tone – virtue or non-virtue – to the main karmic seed that ripens). Existence is not just the potency created by karmic formation, it is the fact of that potency being greatly intensified. Karmic formation and existence are both involved with the karmic potency, but the potency itself is not “karma” – the mental factor of intention. A karmic potency is a non-associated compositional factor – a compounded phenomenon that is neither mind nor matter. The link of existence is the mental factor of intention, it is not a non-associated compositional factor and it is different from the link of karmic formation because that link is the actual karma, the mental factor of intention that created the karmic potency. Existence is the same karma but the potency has been intensified and brought to the point where it is about to give rise to its result. Karmic formation is like a dry barley seed and existence is like a barley seed swollen with water and about to germinate. The potency carried between the links of karmic formation and existence is “non-manifest intention.” In general, “existence” means cyclic existence, there are four types:

- (i) **Existence of the intermediate state:** existence between death and rebirth. A person in the bardo has a shape similar to the body of the future life. There is no bardo for beings born in the formless realm. The bardo is like the existence we have in a dream – where we live in our own personal world but, in the end, return to our usual human existence. The intermediate being has the power, like clairvoyance, to go wherever it wishes. It can pass through any object except its mother’s womb. All six sense bases are present, even though they may not all be present after the rebirth has been taken.
- (ii) **Rebirth existence** is existence at the moment of conception.
- (iii) **Existence prior to death:** from second moment in the womb up until the moment before death.
- (iv) **Existence at death** occurs when the clear light vision of death has arisen. These four types of existence are not the existence link, they are the different existences that occur within samsara. The existence link is simply the state where the karmic seed is ripened and ready to throw a future rebirth.

Symbol: a woman ready to give birth. Signifies the moment when the karmic imprint is enriched and about to give forth its result. All unfavourable conditions have ceased and everything is ready for that result to happen.

11 Rebirth is the karmically-acquired aggregates taken at the first moment of conception due to the previous ripening of the karmic seed. *Symbol:* a woman giving birth

12 Ageing and death occurs from the moment after conception until death, the moment when the karmically-acquired aggregates are abandoned. *Symbol:* a corpse being carried to the cemetery.

13,14,15,16 Sorrow, lamentation, grief (at losing loved ones); **mental unhappiness and disturbance** (of dying yourself). These extra “links” are mentioned to remind us of the unsatisfactory nature of cyclic existence.

Two sets of cause and effect indicate the nature of suffering through two approaches: results that are true sufferings projected (thrown) by projecting causes, and results that are true sufferings actualised by actualising causes:

- **Three projecting causes:** ignorance (sower), karmic formation (seed), causal consciousness (earth).
- **Four projected results:** name and form, six sources, contact, feeling (*bases of suffering*; ready to give rise to suffering)
- **Three actualising causes:** craving, grasping, and existence.
- **Two actualised results:** rebirth, ageing and death (*entities of suffering at the time of their fruition*).

*Up to the link of feeling, all members of one set of twelve links have been covered except ageing and death; ageing begins the moment after conception. Before we complete this set of twelve links at death, at the link of feeling, in our pursuit of pleasure and avoiding pain, we create new karmic formation links that will cause us to be thrown into future lives where we have to go through new cycles of twelve links over and over again. Animals and beings in other realms are also continually creating enormous numbers of new sets of links. No matter how many new karmas we create, they are never lost. Each one can bear its result without losing strength even after hundreds of

aeons, unless it is either purified by applying the four opponent powers or destroyed by anger. The purpose of studying the twelve links is not to simply know how we cycle within cyclic existence, but also to know how we continually create so much new karma and that we will be forced to take continual future rebirths. When this is well understood, the result of meditation on the twelve links is achieved. Understanding the limitlessness of rebirths gives a feeling of distress at being trapped within samsara.

Meditating on the twelve links shows how all things arise from ignorance; investigating how to abandon ignorance, we realise that we have to attain the exalted wisdom realising selflessness. We also understand that to gain this wisdom we need stable concentration, to have stable concentration we need the basis of perfect morality, and to practise morality we need to rely upon the instructions of a perfect teacher – whose explanations on concentration and wisdom are also essential. When we realise that we need to depend upon a perfect teacher, we know that we have to rely upon the Sangha as helpers on the path, and that we need to follow the path of the Sangha.

The words “three higher trainings” are not mentioned, but are implied. Also implied is the importance, preciousness, and impermanence of the perfect human rebirth. We are led to the meditations of the beings of small, middling, and great scope, and this is why it is said that a single practice includes the entire path. When we hold one flower of a garland, we hold them all. Solitary realisers attain their goal by profound meditation upon dependent-origination. Meditating on our own sets of twelve links, we see how we are constantly reborn within cyclic existence, and so we can understand how all others are caught up in the same way. We know that other beings are constantly beginning new sets of twelve links even before they have completed the set that threw the present birth and, as a result, they will experience continual suffering in the future. This meditation causes a yogi to develop compassion, the path of the great being.

The number of lives in which a set of twelve links is experienced 12 links are present within this life, but they do not all belong to the *same set* because the throwing cause of this life occurred in a previous life. The minimum number of lives to complete all 12 links is two. In the first life, ignorance and karmic formation create a potency that is ripened at death by craving, grasping, and existence, and thus the six causes occur in that life. After death, these give rise to the six results in the present life: rebirth, name and form, six sources, contact, feeling, ageing and death.

Dependent-arisings belonging to the side of purity Each affliction has antidotes: attachment has meditation on repulsiveness of the object, hatred has meditation on love, and pride has meditation on classification of the elements. Meditation on the twelve links is a panacea for all afflictions. These remedies are only temporary; they lessen the power of manifest afflictions but cannot remove them forever. To completely uproot the afflictions, we need to cultivate the exalted wisdom realising selflessness. The twelve dependent-arisings belonging to the side of purity begin by stopping the beginning, ignorance; this stops karmic formation, which stops consciousness, and so on. To stop ignorance, we must realise the emptiness of the self-identity, and so we rely upon wisdom; thus this is *meditation on the True Path*.

Meditation on the reverse order on the side of purity is *meditation on True Cessation*: contemplating ageing and death we realise it can cease by stopping rebirth, which can be ceased by stopping existence, and so on. Only the direct realisation of selflessness can totally eliminate self-grasping, the other remedies such as love and compassion cannot eliminate the afflictions together with their root – the self-grasping conception. These remedies are not opposite to the self-grasping conception, only the wisdom realising emptiness apprehends the object in a way that is contradictory to the way in which self-grasping apprehends its object. This is the positive mind that destroys the negative root of ignorance.

Nagarjuna:

From the three arise the two;	(1, 8, 9 – 2, 10) – true origins
From the two, the seven arise,	(2, 10 – 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 11, 12) - true suffering
And from the seven, three arise –	(1, 8, 9)
That is the wheel of life going around and around and around.	

Karmic formation and existence arise from the afflictions of ignorance, craving, and grasping and in turn give rise to the seven factors of suffering. As we experience the pleasure and discomfort of those resultant factors, other afflictions, such as attachment and hostility, emerge in response. They in turn set in motion another round of actions – one set of results instigates yet another set of causes. This illustrates how the cause of all cyclic existence is karma and affliction.

