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Neither Existence nor Non-Existence:

*The Momentarily Effecting Respect
of Dependent Origination*



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According to the Sūtra “To the Kālāmas”, Buddha Śākyamuni admonished the Kālāmas roughly like this:¹

• »(...) The Kālāmas asked the Bhagavan: “There are, Lord some Śramaṇas and Brāhmaṇas, who come to us: Each of them explains and elucidates his own doctrine, but disparages, debunks, reviles and vilifies the doctrines of all the others. For us, Lord, there is perplexity and doubt as to which of these good men speak truth and which of them speak falsehood!”

And the Bhagavan answered: “It is fitting for you, Kālāmas, to be perplexed and to be in doubt; for doubt has arisen in you about a perplexing matter!

Come, Kālāmas! Do not go by oral tradition, by lineage of teaching, by hearsay, by a collection of scriptures, by theoretical reasoning, by conceptual reasoning, by inferences from mere opinions, by acceptance of a view after mere pondering it, by seeming competence of a speaker, or because you think: “This one is our teacher, therefore he is right!”

But when you know for yourselves: “These things are unwholesome; these things are blamable; these things are censured by the wise; these things, if undertaken and practised, lead to harm and suffering!”, then you should abandon them. (...)

But when you know for yourselves: “These things are wholesome; these things are blameless; these things are praised by the wise; these things, if undertaken and practised, lead to welfare and happiness!”, then you should engage in them. (...)

In accordance to this advice, I will try to analyze and to investigate the transmitted texts of the Bhagavan’s doctrine of Dependent Arising.

The doctrine of Buddha Śākyamuni, as is well known, consists of the Four Noble Truths which describe two non-noble realities and two noble realities:

(1) the non-noble reality of suffering, described by the Noble Truth [of the reality] of Suffering;

(2) the non-noble reality of the origin of suffering, described by the Noble Truth [of the reality] of the Origin of Suffering;

(3) the noble reality of the ending of suffering, described by the Noble Truth [of the reality] of the Ending of Suffering; and

(4) the noble reality of the path which leads to ending of suffering, described by the Noble Truth [of the reality] of the Path which Leads to Ending of Suffering.

The Fourth Noble Truth does almost not belong to the subject of this talk. And the First Noble Truth needs be treated only insofar as the concept of suffering is to be clarified. In order to do this, it is not sufficient to study only the report of his teaching given to his first five disciples, where it is said:

¹ See: AN-III.65.

- “All the pains of the body are suffering; being separated from one’s friends is suffering; in short: The five heaps [= piles] are suffering.”

This is what these five disciples remembered and reported; and this is not to be understood without any explanation concerning physical and mental pain in relation to the five heaps, whatever they may be.

But the short explanation of Śāriputra leads to that insight, which is taught in detail at the school of Geshe Tandim Rabten. For Śāriputra explains suffering[ness] [= duḥkhatā] as follows:²

- “There are these three kinds of suffering[ness]:
 - * the suffering[ness] of suffering [= of (physical or mental) pain];
 - * the suffering[ness] of transience [of one’s relation to something]; and
 - * the suffering[ness] of formation [of mind–speech–body].”

The suffering may arise by transient pain; and the first kind of suffering-[ness], indeed, is related to such pains, which are beyond one’s control. The second kind of suffering[ness] may be related to either of pain or of neither-pain-nor-happiness or of happiness, in as far as they are beyond one’s control; and beyond our sight and our control is furthermore our transient relation to each of these three kinds. The third kind of suffering-[ness] is related to the formations of mind–speech–body, which means: one’s mind–speech–body being causally formed, being therefore driven and tainted by ignorance, namely by ignorance concerning the kind of existence of the objects to be perceived as well as of the perceiver himself, i.e.: of oneself.

On the other hand, the Noble Disciple, when arriving at the state of being free from the being formed by ignorance, sees and knows:

- »Recognizing his body [= kāya] and his mind [citta] as being impermanent, the Noble Disciple becomes disenchanted. Being disenchanted, he becomes dispassionate. Through dispassion, liberation [arises]. When liberation [arises], knowledge [and seeing] arises: “[That’s] liberation!”. And [the Noble Disciple] understands: “The aim of cleanness is gained! What was to do is done now: No longer [is] this world!”«

Thereby, *this world* consists of nothing but *suffering[ness]*, which originates from the *Six Ones*, namely: from the clinging to the view of inherent existence of the five outer realms of perception and the one [threefold] inner realm of perception, whereby this clinging arises by being driven by the tainted ignorance:³

- »[At some day, the Bhagavan answered to related questions of someone concerning thirsting w.r.t. the world, concerning the mind w.r.t. the world, concerning nāma (= the five mental powers firmly connected with the consciousness, with vijñāna) w.r.t. the world, and concerning the six (kinds of perceiving) w.r.t. the world]:

² See DN 33.27 –

Engl. „suffering“ is the usual translation of Sanskrit „duḥkha“. Then the question arises how to translate Sanskr. “duḥkhatā”, whereby “-tā” is to be translated by “-ty” or by “-hood” or by “-ness”. In order to create an artificial technical term, I am using “suffering[ness]” as the translation of “duḥkhatā”.

³ See: SN-I. 61-70. See also: SN-XII.43-44.

“The world is led around by thirsting;
by thirsting it’s dragged here and there.
Thirsting is the one that has
all under its control!”

“The world is lead around by mind;
by mind it’s dragged here and there.
The mind is the one thing that has
all under its control!”

“Nāma has weighed down everything;
nothing is more extensive than nāma.
Nāma is the one thing that has
all under its control!”

“In Six the world has arisen;
in Six it forms intimacy.
By clinging to Six the world
is harrassed with regard to Six!”«

When within the sūtras the *sensations* are divided into *six* kinds – i.e.: into five outer kinds and one inner kind –, I then regard them as *perceptions*; however, when *sensations* are divided into *three* kinds – i.e.: unpleasant, neutral, pleasant –, I regard them as *feelings*, i.e.: as *emotions* which are associated with perceptions.

Concerning the Second Noble Truth, the doctrine of Buddha Śākyamuni contains more than one answer, each of them related to the different faculties of his particular disciples. The Third Noble Truth is related to it. In fact, the Second Noble Truth describes the Dependent Arising of Suffering[ness]; and the Third Noble Truth describes the Dependent Cessation of Suffering[ness].

These two insights were gained by Buddha Śākyamuni not immediately at the arriving from the state of awakeness but – as is reported by Upāli in his postscript “Mahāvagga” to the “Vinaya” – a week later:⁴

• »And seven days after the Lord gained the awakeness, sitting there at the foot of the bodhi-tree, and enjoying the bliss of awakeness [as well as analyzing the roots of being fettered and of becoming free, he summarized the insight which he then gained by these headlines of eleven chapters]:

“[This is the root of being subdue to Māra:]

- * due to preceding [tainted] ignorance: formation;
- * due to preceding formation: consciousness;
- * due to preceding consciousness: concept–form;
- * due to preceding concept–form: six[fold] realm;
- * due to preceding six[fold] realm: contact;
- * due to preceding contact: sensation;
- * due to preceding sensation: thirst[ing];
- * due to preceding thirst[ing]: clinging;

⁴ See: MV-1.

- * due to preceding clinging: becoming;
- * due to preceding becoming: birth;
- * due to preceding birth: ageing in death[fulness]⁵, [with its manifestations like:] sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure, despair: This is the arising of the whole mass of suffering[ness].

[And this is the root of blinding and destroying Māra:]

- * due to complete cessation of [tainted] ignorance: cessation of formation;
- * due to cessation of formation: cessation of consciousness;
- * due to cessation of consciousness: cessation of concept–form;
- * due to cessation of concept–form: cessation of six[fold] realm;
- * due to cessation of six[fold] realm: cessation of contact;
- * due to cessation of contact: cessation of sensation;
- * due to cessation of sensation: cessation of thirst[ing];
- * due to cessation of thirst[ing]: cessation of clinging;
- * due to cessation of clinging: cessation of becoming;
- * due to cessation of becoming: cessation of birth;
- * due to cessation of birth: cessation of ageing in death[fulness], namely: of grief, sadness, agony, lamentation, despair: This is the cessation of the whole mass of suffering[ness].”«

Of course, these headlines sound simple; and some decades later, this appearance of being simple was discussed as follows:⁶

- »[The venerable Ānanda spoke:] “Lord, this chain of Dependent Arising is so profound; and, nevertheless it appears clearly, catching the eye!”

[But the Bhagavan replied:] “Don’t speak in this manner, Ānanda! [For this Dependent Arising does not catch the eye!] Deep and profound is this Dependent Arising, not easily understood, not attained by mere reasoning, but recognized by the wise ones!”«

Obviously, this was to be observed by the Bhagavan already at the end of the third week after he received awakeness. For on one of these days two merchants passing that road, stopped there in order to honour the Bhagavan. But it should not be forgotten that during these years many of the merchants were lay persons of Mahāvīra, the founder of Jainism; it therefore may be supposed that these two merchants were lay persons of him, believing now that this ascetic performed his asceticism according to their teacher’s order. They took refuge at the Bhagavan; and certainly they received instructions from him. But surely, too, he recognized that they understood these instructions according to the doctrine of Jainism.

The report of the “Mahavagga” of Upāli may be summarized as follows:

- »Therefore, some days later, the Bhagavan rose and went to the fig tree of the goatherds, yet did not sit down there. He then thought:

⁵ Sanskr. “māra” is to be translated by Engl. “death”. But “maraṇa” means something where an English expression is not available; I therefore use here the artificial technical term “death[fulness]”, created by me for this purpose.

⁶ See: DN-15, and SN-XII.60.

“This doctrine [of the Dependent Arising] which I analyzed and penetrated, is profound and solemn; it is sublime and brings peace to the mind. But it is hard to understand and to see; for these connections [seen by me] are subtle and not to be attained by mere reasoning. [This Dependent Arising] is visible, but only for the wise ones. For the mundane ones delight in adhesion [to their conceptions]; they are burning in the fire of desire [= lobha], of hatred [= dveṣa] and of delusion [= moha]; their eyes [of their minds] are covered with dust; they will be unable to cleanse their eyes in order to see this Dependent Arising. Thus, I will not teach it.”

But then the Brahmā Svayampati, recognizing the thoughts of the Bhagavan, appeared before him and asked him: “May the Lord transmit the doctrine! For there are people whose eyes [of mind] are covered with very little dust: They will understand that doctrine; yet without being introduced to it they cannot receive the salvation!”

Then the Bhagavan considered the men to which he should transmit this doctrine: With regard to his two former teachers, he was sure that their eyes [of mind] were covered with very little dust, enabling then therefore to understand this doctrine within a short period; but he was informed that they were already dead. He then decided to transmit this doctrine to five Śramaṇas, [without being sure that these ones were able to understand this doctrine at some time or other].«

It turned out that he was in the right. But Aśvajit – one of the five ascetics – was discovered later on by Śāriputra. Therefore he and his companion Maudgalyāyana were led to the Bhagavan, which then was the starting point of the (Highest) Saṃgha. For they indeed were able to understand the profound content of the doctrine of Dependent Arising within a short time; afterwards, they were introduced by the Bhagavan as co-teachers of the other bhikṣus.

As to others, it seems to me Buddha Śākyamuni was a distinguished teacher. Furthermore, because of several reasons – which cannot be explained during the short length of this lecture – I believe that he divided his lessons and the lessons given by Highest Saṃgha into four classes; the students of the two first classes were not yet educated in epistemology which, in contrast, was the main subject of teaching of the two remaining classes. Therefore, obviously more than two disciples gained the aim of understanding completely the doctrine of Dependent Arising. In my view, Katyāyana-gotra was one of them. This is transmitted:⁷

• »[*This I have heard*: On one occasion the Bhagavan was dwelling] at Śrāvastī. On one of these days, the Venerable Katyāyanagotra approached the Bhagavan, paid homage to him, sat down by his side, and asked him: “Venerable Sir, it is said: “right view”! In what way is there a right view?”

“For most of human beings, Katyāyana,” [the Bhagavan explained], “this world depends on a twofold conception: either on the conception of existence, or on the conception of non-existence.

But someone who with correct wisdom sees the origin of the world, as it really is, has no conception of the non-existence with regard to the world; and someone who with correct wisdom sees the cessation of the world as it really is, has no conception of the existence with regard to the world.

For these multitude, Katyāyana, this world is shackled by engagement, by clinging, by adherence.

⁷ See: SN-XII.15; see also: SN-22.90.

But someone [with the right view] does not become engaged, does not become clingy, does not become adhered to any mental standpoints and its underlying tendencies; and he especially does not take a stand on [the concept] “my Self”. [For he has no perplexity or doubt that the only thing that arises is suffering[ness], and that the only thing that ceases is suffering[ness]. His knowledge about this is independent of others. In this way, Katyāyana, there is a right view!

Katyāyana! “Everything is existent”, this is the one extreme; “Everything is non-existent”, this is the other extreme.

Without veering towards either of these extremes, the Tathāgāta – maintaining thereby the middle position – teaches the connections in this way:

- * due to preceding [tainted] ignorance: formation;
- * due to preceding formation: consciousness;
- * due to preceding consciousness: concept–form;
- * due to preceding concept–form: six[fold] realm;
- * due to preceding six[fold] realm: contact;
- * due to preceding contact: sensation;
- * due to preceding sensation: thirst[ing];
- * due to preceding thirst[ing]: clinging;
- * due to preceding clinging: becoming;
- * due to preceding becoming: birth;
- * due to preceding birth: ageing in death[fulness], [with its manifestations, like:], sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure, despair.”

Such is the arising of the whole mass of suffering[ness]. Therefore, Katyāyana, this is called “arising through the previous”!

* But through the remainderless fading away and cessation of [tainted] ignorance: cessation of formation;

- * through cessation of formation: cessation of consciousness;
- * through cessation of consciousness: cessation of concept–form;
- * through cessation of concept–form: cessation of six[fold] realm;
- * through cessation of six[fold] realm: cessation of contact;
- * through cessation of contact: cessation of sensation;
- * through cessation of sensation: cessation of thirst[ing];
- * through cessation of thirst[ing]: cessation of clinging;
- * through cessation of clinging: cessation of becoming;
- * through cessation of becoming: cessation of birth;
- * through cessation of birth: cessation of ageing in death[fulness], [with its manifestations, like:] sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure, despair.”

Such is the cessation of the whole mass of suffering[ness]. [Therefore, Katyāyana, this is called “cessation through the previous”!

[And then the Bhagavan explained these connections to the Venerable Katyāyanagotra in many ways.

That’s what the Bhagavan said; and the Venerable Katyāyanagotra was satisfied and delighted by the words of the Bhagavan.]«

Immediately after the Mahāparinirvāṇa of the Bhagavan, some degeneration happened to the lower saṃgha, as may be observed by carefully reading the proceedings of the first two councils. And, most probably, two or three centuries after this Mahāparinirvāṇa the content of these two-times eleven headlines was forgotten.

About a millennium after this Mahāparinirvāṇa, Buddhaghosa tried to create a meaningful interpretation of this doctrine of Dependent Arising according to his own abilities of understanding. He argued that three lives are involved thereby, namely:

- past life:
 - * ignorance [= avidyā],
 - * formation [= saṃskāra],
- present life:
 - * consciousness [= vijñāna],
 - * mind and body [= nāmarūpa],
 - * six-base [= śaṭāyatana],
 - * contact [= sparśa],
 - * sensation [= vedanā],
 - * thirst[ing] tṛṣṇa],
 - * clinging [= upādāna],
 - * becoming [= bhava],
- future life:
 - * birth [= jāti],
 - * old age and death [= jarāmaraṇa].

Surely, almost all Buddhists are not troubled by that interpretation; for it is accepted not only by Śrāvakayāna-[= Hinayāna-]Buddhism but – somehow astonishing! – also by Bodhisattvayāna-[= Mahāyāna-]Buddhism.

Thus, I seem to be one of the very few Buddhists who is not able to follow that interpretation; for in my view, it does not make a deep and profound sense.

First of all, this interpretation is established upon four misunderstandings, namely:

(1) The concept “avidyā” is not distinguished from the concept “moha”. But “moha” means “defilement”, i.e.: “being in error concerning things *in* this world”, while “avidya” means “[tainted] ignorance concerning things *of* this world”, [i.e.: regarded from an epistemological point of view].

(2) The concept “rūpa” must not be identified with the concept “kāya”, at least not by those ones who intend to belong to the Bodhisattvayāna and its epistemology; for “rūpa” denotes that part of perception which is directed at its perceived object, namely earth[like]–water[like]–fire[like]–air[like] and its forms; thereby the consciousness-companions of sensitivities create these forms out of the sense-impressions and lead them to the consciousness.

(3) The concept “nāma” is used nowhere in the sense of “mind”: almost everywhere it is used according to “concept; and in two cases – where the Dependent Arising is explained by the Bhagavan and by Śāriputra – it is used in the sense of “caita”; for “rūpa” denotes that part of perceiving which is directed to its i.e. of: “the five immediate consciousness-companion”, which consist of: attention, intention, sensitivities, distinguishing, concentration, i.e.: used in order to determine these five powers firmly associated with the consciousness which create concepts in order to bring them to the consciousness.

(4) The concept “maraṇa” must not be identified with the concept “māra”. For “māra” means “death, death-bringer, murder”, while “maraṇa” means something like

“deathful[ness], dying[ness]”. Therefore “jāramaraṇa” is to be translated by “ageing in deathful[ness], deathful ageing”.

But despite of these points, the Theravāda-texts do not contain even one direct or indirect hint that this Dependent Arising is to be distributed amongst three lives. Furthermore, the first nine members are easily to be understood in its epistemological meaning.

And finally, for me it is all but easy to understand Buddhaghosa’s interpretation in its soteriological meaning, in its meaning according to the Master’s doctrine of salvation, of well-being: If this interpretation is not to be regarded seriously, then it may be disregarded. But if it is supposed to be regarded seriously, then the outcomes are, e.g.:

(a) Suppose that some person was not able to destroy his tainted ignorance in his past life completely, but succeeded to cease it in this present life; then he nevertheless will suffer from thirsting and clinging in this life and will become old and will finally die in his next life, due to that tainted ignorance of his past life.

(b) Suppose some person who was able to cease his tainted ignorance in his past life completely; then he nevertheless has to die in this life but will not become old and will not die in his next life.

Due to such incongruous consequences, it seems sensible to me to regard some short-period-interpretation of this important doctrine of Dependent Arising, which is congruent with the Bhagavan’s epistemology which was taught in the two final classes of training one’s mind. Yet then I have to regard that the former Prince Siddhārtha Gautama was educated in the philosophies of his time as well as in the elder philosophies, and that a lot of expressions of everyday life was used in these philosophy as technical terms of the respective Philosophy. Take e.g. the expression “ocean”; the Bhagavan’s kind of using it is transmitted by:⁸

• »[On one occasion the Bhagavan said:] “Bhikṣus! The uninstructed wordling speaks “the ocean”. But that is not [the right name of] the ocean in the Noble One’s Discipline; for that [denotes] only a great mass of Water, a great expanse of water.

The eye[-sense], bhikṣus, is the ocean for a person; its current consists of forms. One who understands that current consisting of forms is said to have crossed the ocean of the eye[-sense] with its waves, whirlpools, sharks, and demons. Crossed over, gone beyond, the Brahmin stands on high ground.

The ear[-sense], (...), the mind[-sense] is the ocean for a person; its current consists of forms. One who understands that current consisting of forms is said to have crossed the ocean of the eye[-sense] with its waves, whirlpools, sharks, and demons. Crossed over, gone beyond, the Brahmin stands on high ground. (...)”«

In this very sense, I propose attempting to receive an interpretation of the Bhagavan’s doctrine of Dependent Arising (I) which obeys his epistemology and (II) which lines up my *just-now* tainted ignorance to my *just-now* deathful ageing.

⁸ See: SN-XXXV.228.

When the Bhagavan taught the connections – i.e.: the dharma – to the five ascetics, he experienced that it will cause serious misunderstandings if they were instructed concerning things which they were not able to understand, in their case: with regard to the features and peculiarities of epistemology. Thus he finally decided to instruct them, epistemology being not involved seriously.

Surely this is one of the reasons why the outcome of the first council does nowhere contain the complete chain of the twelve members of Dependent Arising. With the exceptions of Upāli and Ānanda, it was the decision of Mahākaśyapa who was to participate at this council, Mahākaśyapa being all but a philosopher in general and an epistemologist in particular.

On the other hand, the Bhagavan did not hesitate to also explain the epistemological details to philosophers which were not members of the order of his disciples and not even lay followers:⁹

• »[*This I have heard*: On one occasion the Bhagavan dwelled] at Śrāvastī. On one of these days, the naked Śramaṇa Timbaruka approached the Bhagavan, exchanged greetings and cordially talk to him, sat down at his side, and asked him: “How is it, Master Gautama: Are pleasure and pain created by oneself?”

“[I do] not [speak] so, Timbaruka!”, answered the Bhagavan.

“Then, Master Gautama: Are pleasure and pain created by someone other?”

“[I do] not [speak] so, Timbaruka!”

“Then, Master Gautama: Are pleasure and pain created by oneself and [simultaneously] by someone else?”

“[I do] not [speak] so, Timbaruka!”

“Then, Master Gautama: Are pleasure and pain arisen fortuitously, being created neither by oneself nor by another one?”

“[I do] not [speak] so, Timbaruka!”

“How is it then, Master Gautama: Is there neither pleasure and pain?”

“This is not the case, Timbaruka: There is pleasure; and there is pain!”

“Then is it that Master Gautama does not know and see pleasure and pain?”

“This is not the case, Timbaruka: I do know and see pleasure and pain!”

“(…) After all these answers to my questions, may I ask you now: Venerable Sir, let the Bhagavan explain pleasure and pain to me (…)!”

“Timbaruka! The thought: “Feeling, this is the same as, the one who feels” [arises] with reference to someone existing from the beginning, [leading therefore to the judgment]: “Pleasure and pain [being the results of former actions] are created by oneself”. But so I do not speak.

For the thought: “Feeling, this is that one, and the one who feels that is someone else” [arises] with reference to one who is stricken by the judgement: “Pleasure and pain [being the results of former actions] are created by another one”. But so, too, neither do I speak.

Without veering towards either of these extremes the Tathāgāta – maintaining thereby the middle position – teaches the connections – the dharma – in this way:

- * due to preceding [tainted] ignorance: formation;
- * due to preceding formation: consciousness;
- * due to preceding consciousness: concept-form;
- * due to preceding concept-form: six[fold] realm;

⁹ See: SNXII.18.

- * due to preceding six[fold] realm: contact;
- * due to preceding contact: sensation;
- * due to preceding sensation: thirst[ing];
- * due to preceding thirst[ing]: clinging;
- * due to preceding clinging: becoming;
- * due to preceding becoming: birth;
- * due to preceding birth: ageing in death[fulness], [with its manifestations, like:], sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure, despair.”

Such is the arising of the whole mass of suffering[ness]. Therefore, Timbaruka, this is called “arising through the previous”!

- * But through the remainderless fading away and cessation of [tainted] ignorance: cessation of formation;

- * through cessation of formation: cessation of consciousness;
- * through cessation of consciousness: cessation of concept–form;
- * through cessation of concept–form: cessation of six[fold] realm;
- * through cessation of six[fold] realm: cessation of contact;
- * through cessation of contact: cessation of sensation;
- * through cessation of sensation: cessation of thirst[ing];
- * through cessation of thirst[ing]: cessation of clinging;
- * through cessation of clinging: cessation of becoming;
- * through cessation of becoming: cessation of birth;
- * through cessation of birth: cessation of ageing in death[fulness], [with its manifestations, like:] sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure, despair.”

Such is the cessation of the whole mass of suffering.”!

[And then the Bhagavan explained these connections to the naked Śramaṇa Timbaruka in many ways.]

When this was said, the naked Śramaṇa Timbaruka asserted: “ Magnificent, Master Gautama, indeed magnificent! The connections¹⁰ were made clear in many ways by Master Gautama, as though he were turning upright what was turned upside down, or revealing what was hidden, or showing the way to one who was lost, or holding up a lamp in the dark for those with eyesight to see forms. Therefore I go for refuge to Master Gautama, for the [wheel of] connections, and for the [highest] circle of bhikṣus! From today on let the Master Gautama remember me as a lay follower who has gone for refuge for life!”«

Timbaruka obviously was familiar with the philosophies of the ancestors in general and their epistemologies in particular. Therefore the Bhagavan did not hesitate to explain to him the Dependent Arising in two kinds of ways, namely: in its physical respect, and furthermore in its epistemological respect.

On the other hand, he recognized that some of the bhikṣus were to be instructed at first – or perhaps solely – according to the physical respect of Dependent Arising; for much later – maybe still in their present lifetimes, but maybe in one of the next

¹⁰ Originally, Sanskr. “dharma” meant Engl. “law, connection, dependent arising”. Later on, the term “dharmacakra” – i.e.: “the connection’s doctrine” – was abbreviated to “dharma”, comparable to the German expression “Auto” which is not used according to “Self, ātman” but to “Automobil, motor car”.

Therefore, when “dharma” is used, it is to be investigated carefully whether it deals of connections (= dependent arising, law) or of some doctrine of connections.

lifetimes, depending upon their mental capacities – also its epistemological respect were to get taught to them.

Especially the first five disciples obviously were not able to understand the epistemological respect of the Dependent Arising of aging in deathfulness. Therefore, the Bhagavan finally decided with regard to them to leave out that essential part of his philosophy and soteriology and to wait up to the day when people like Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana will wish to become his disciples.

But these first five disciples reported to those ones who later on entered the saṃgha – alas, not exactly what they were taught by Buddha Śākyamuni but – how they had understood that what they were got taught by the Bhagavan, namely: the final part of the Chain of Dependent Arising:

★ Death is nothing but stopping respiration forever; and Ageing is nothing but becoming one's skin wrinkled and getting one's hair grey. Therefore Ageing–Death is nothing but getting one's skin wrinkled and becoming one's hair grey, followed then by respiration stopping forever, followed finally by sorrow and lamentation.

★ Birth is nothing but leaving the womb of one's mother.

★ Becoming – i.e.: coming into existence – is nothing but the prenatal development within the womb of one's mother, if birth happens via a mother and not otherwise.

★ Finally, Clinging is nothing but being fettered by the lovely things presented by the six senses and seen by delusion [= moha], which at that level of getting instructed may be identified with [tainted] ignorance [= avidyā].

Nevertheless, these five disciples obviously needed weeks and weeks in order to understand at least these everyday meanings of “ageing-death”, “birth”, “coming into existence”, “clinging”, “moha”. Therefore, neither they nor later on the thousand former firepriests were called “saṃgha” by the Bhagavan; but they were called then “kāya of bhikṣus” [= “body (= corporation) of the monks”]. The saṃgha [= the Highest Saṃgha] arose as soon as Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana gained the liberation from the tainted ignorance.

According to (a) the four classes of instruction which are mentioned in the Boḍhisattvayāna-texts which were discovered about a century ago in Northwestern China as well as to (b) the Four Philosophical Schools of Buddhism which arose centuries after the parinirvāṇa of Buddha Śākyamuni, I am sure that they correspond to four classes of education and mental training which were established already during the first years of the Bhagavan's teaching in accordance to the different mental capacities of his disciples, namely:¹¹

- the two elementary schools where epistemology was not yet taught:
 - (1) the *first class*, where the chain of Dependent Arising – regarded from backward on – started at jarāmaraṇa [understood as Aging and Dying] and ended

¹¹ The assumption of four classes was made by me at first by regarding the four philosophical schools of later Buddhism.

Later on, I regarded that this assumption explains in a natural kind the different reports on the Dependent Arising at DN-XV as well as at SN-XII.

By the way: The full Chain of Dependent Arising is unknown to the DN!

already at upādāna [= clinging], whereby avidyā [understood according to moha, i.e.: to defilement] was added;

(2) the *second class*, where the chain of Dependent Arising started at jarāmaṇa [understood here, too, as Aging and Dying] and ended either at tṛṣṇa [= thirsting] or at sparśa [contact], whereby avidyā [understood here, too, according to moha, i.e.: to defilement] was added;

- the two advanced schools where also epistemology was taught:

(3) the *third class*, where the chain of Dependent Arising starts at jarāmaṇa [understood here most probably according to *Aging in Deathfulness*] and ends – including between sparśa [= contact] and vijñāna [= consciousness] – at avidyā [tainted ignorance] the whole epistemology, where [most probably] this chain is not only taught in the gross sense [of some part] of one life but in addition in the subtle sense of momentary Dependent Arising;

(4) the *fourth class*, where the momentary arising is attempted to be experienced and where the points of feedback to avidyā [= (tainted) ignorance] are analyzed. This may be glimpsed by Śāriputra’s report on that Chain of Dependent Arising:¹² He distinguishes ignorance and taints, whereby taints arise depending on ignorance, and ignorance arises depending on taints; of course, this does not happen simultaneously but as a mutual time-dependent and time-consuming interplay.

It seems certain that at least the first part of the “Long Collection” is virtually identical to the collection which was established by the majority of the First Buddhist Council. But alas, *nowhere* within this collection the chain of Dependent Arising is mentioned *completely*. Therefore it was argued that the complete chain was not yet known to Buddha Śākyamuni, assuming that it therefore was established by later commentators.

I agree with these scholars in accordance to the premises of their argumentation but not with its conclusion. For there exist several reasons to cause strong assumption that the Buddha discovered this chain at the time when he received awakening, according to the “Mahāvagga” of Upāli: about one week after the Master gained this – first! – aim of his fighting against Māra.

Therefore the reason of the fact that the “Long Collection”, indeed does not contain the complete chain must be searched for at the president of this council as well as at the participants of this assembly which were almost completely chosen by its president. Then, of course, it would be obvious that the *Bhagavan* knew the complete chain and its interpretation, but *not* this *president* and his *followers*; this does not contradict the fact that most of the members of this first council believed strongly that they knew the complete teaching of the Master: They obviously were not moved into the two higher classes of instructions. But they obviously practiced and mastered the two first classes of the wheel of the connections, of the dharmacakra.

But it has to be noted that also these partial chains of the “Long Collection” do nowhere provide description of two lives or even three lives, but for one life only, strictly speaking: for the final part of the respective present life, namely: from now on to the end of this present lifetime, *either* starting with the present delusion [and the associated taints], *or* starting with the present cessation of delusion [and its associated taints], if liberation is already received.

¹² See MN 9, compared with SN-XII.2.

Yet I do believe that Śāriputra’s teaching is in accordance with the Master’s one.

By the way, they obviously did not know how to analyze and how to distinguish ignorance [= avidyā] and delusion [= moha], thereby identifying these two closely connected but different kinds of essential versus conventional error, these two distinct but connected misdirected items.

Naturally, ignorance appears as the beginning of the chain only at a gross analysis. Yet, if ignorance itself were not caused, it were not subjected to destruction. The cause – i.e.: the condition, the nutriment – of [present] ignorance depends on [former] delusion, which, of course, itself depends on [still former] ignorance:¹³

- »[At some time the Bhagavan said:] “A first beginning of ignorance cannot be discerned, of which it can be said: “Before that, there was no ignorance, and it came to be after that!”. Though this is so, yet a specific condition of ignorance is discerned.

For ignorance, too, has its nutriment, and it is not without nutriment. The nutriment of ignorance are the five hindrances, namely: sensual desire, ill will, slope and torpor, restlessness and worry, doubt.

But the five hindrances, too, have their nutriment, and they are not without nutriment. The nutriment of the five hindrances are the three ways of wrong conduct, namely: greed, hatred, delusion.

But the three ways of wrong conduct, too, have their nutriment, and they are not without nutriment. The nutriment of the three ways of wrong conduct is lack of sense restraint.

But lack of sense restraint, too, has its nutriment, and it is not without nutriment. The nutriment of lack of sense restraint are: lack of mindfulness and clear comprehension.

But lack of mindfulness and clear comprehension, too, has its nutriment, and it is not without nutriment. The nutriment of lack of mindfulness and clear comprehension is: improper attention.

But improper attention, too, has its nutriment, and it is not without nutriment. The nutriment of improper attention is: lack of faith.

But lack of faith, too, has its nutriment, and it is not without nutriment. The nutriment of lack of faith is: listening to wrong teachings.

But listening to wrong teachings, too, has its nutriment, and it is not without nutriment. The nutriment of listening to wrong teachings is: association with bad people.

Hence, when association with bad people prevails, listening to wrong teaching will prevail.

When listening to wrong teachings prevails, it will cause lack of faith prevail.

When lack of faith prevails, it will cause improper attention to prevail.

When improper attention prevails, it will cause lack of mindfulness and clear comprehension to prevail.

When lack of mindfulness and clear comprehension prevails it will cause lack of sense restraint to prevail.

When lack of sense restraint prevails, it will make the three ways of wrong conduct to prevail.

When the three ways of wrong conduct prevail, it will cause the five hindrances to prevail.

When the five hindrances prevail, it will cause ignorance to prevail. (...)”«

¹³ See: AN-X.61.

Buddha Śākyamuni did not subdivide the [tainted] ignorance into ignorance and taints. But when this is done – like it was done by Śāriputra – then already in the initial place there exists this feedback:¹⁴

★ “By presence of ignorance, taints arise; and by the presence of taints, ignorance arises.”

Nevertheless, the taints appear somehow as a bad horse carrying a bad rider, which means: The ignorance causes the direction of the taints; and the taints cause the power of the ignorance.

Because of the presence of tainted ignorance, the [tainted] formations arise in its threefold kind: as formations of the mind, as formations of the speech, as formations of the body [but, of course, not necessarily also as formations of the form, i.e.: of the shape, of the rūpa]. The actions of mind–speech–body, performed by such a formation, will have respective immediate imprints at the most subtle level of the mind as an effect. And the imprints of insalubrious actions will, of course, effect back to the [tainted] ignorance by increasing and strengthen it.

But the [tainted] formation of the mind determines *the kind* of momentarily arising [also tainted] consciousness: The consciousness is without any rigid Self but a sequence of mental states, in which the decaying one causes the arising of the immediately next one. Therefore, it is *not* the *consciousness* which is caused here for the first time; for otherwise, this would mean (a) that before, there were ignorance without consciousness, and (b) that someone who abandoned ignorance were from thereon without any consciousness. But it is the *kind* resp. the *quality* of the [tainted] consciousness, which from moment to moment repeatedly arise from the tainted formation of the mind.

And this happens from moment to moment, to be more precise: from mind-moment to mind-moment.

Concerning the length of such a period, the Theravāda-texts are all but talkative; one of the very few hints is the following one:¹⁵

• »*Thus I have heard*: On some occasion, the Bhagavan was dwelling at Śrāvastī in the victor’s grove in Anāthapiṇḍada’s park. During one of these days he addressed the bhikṣus as such: “Bhikṣus!”; and they replied: “Venerable Sir!”. Then the Bhagavan continued:

“Bhikṣus! The not well-instructed one among the multitude is able to experience averting towards the [gross] body composed of the Four Great Elements; he might become dispassionate towards it and even be liberated from it. For what reason? Because growth and decline is seen in it; because taken up and laid aside is seen in it. (...) But to what is called “mind” and [in particular] “consciousness [associated with] mentality”, he is unable to experience averting towards it, to become dispassionate towards it, to become liberated from it. For what reason? Because for a long time this has been held upright by him, appropriated, and grasped as such: “This is mine; this is me; this is my self!” (...)

It would be better for this ill-instructed one to take as [his] Self the [gross] body composed of the Four Great Elements rather than the mind. For what reason? Because

¹⁴ See: MN-9. Engl. “taint” is the translation of Sanskr. “āsrava”, a Jainist concept which word-to-word means “flowing in”, and in Buddhist texts: “being driven, (instinctive) drive”.

¹⁵ See: SN-12.61.

this [gross] body is seen standing for years, or for decades, or for a century, or even longer. But this which is called “mind” and [in particular] “consciousness [associated with] mentality”, at day and at night it arises and ceases as one thing and the next. Just as a monkey roaming through a forest grabs hold of one branch, lets it go and grabs the next, lets it go and grabs still another, so too, that which is called “mind” and [in particular] “consciousness [associated with] mentality”, at day and at night it arises and ceases as one thing and the next.

Bhikṣus! [Concerning this arising and ceasing, the well-instructed noble disciple attends closely and carefully the origination through some previous one by realizing: “When this is the case, that comes to be; with the [previous] arising of this,, that arises. When this is not the case, that does not come to be; with the [previous] cessation of this, that ceases!”. That is [in particular]:

- * Due to preceding [tainted] ignorance: formation;
- * due to preceding formation: consciousness;
- * due to preceding consciousness: concept–form;
- * due to preceding concept–form: six[fold] realm;
- * due to preceding six[fold] realm: contact;
- * due to preceding contact: sensation;
- * due to preceding sensation: thirst[ing];
- * due to preceding thirst[ing]: clinging;
- * due to preceding clinging: becoming;
- * due to preceding becoming: birth;
- * due to preceding birth: ageing in death[fulness], [with its manifestations, like:], sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure, despair.”

Such is the arising of the whole mass of suffering[ness].

* But through the remainderless fading away and cessation of [tainted] ignorance: cessation of formation;

- * through cessation of formation: cessation of consciousness;
- * through cessation of consciousness: cessation of concept–form;
- * through cessation of concept–form: cessation of six[fold] realm;
- * through cessation of six[fold] realm: cessation of contact;
- * through cessation of contact: cessation of sensation;
- * through cessation of sensation: cessation of thirst[ing];
- * through cessation of thirst[ing]: cessation of clinging;
- * through cessation of clinging: cessation of becoming;
- * through cessation of becoming: cessation of birth;
- * through cessation of birth: cessation of ageing in death[fulness], [with its manifestations, like:] sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure, despair.”

Such is the cessation of the whole mass of suffering[ness].

Bhikṣus! Seeing this, the well-instructed noble disciple experiences averting [towards the appearances of body and mind, i.e.] towards form, averting towards feeling, averting towards distinction, averting towards [mental] formations, aversions towards [thus formed] consciousness. Experiencing averting, he becomes dispassionate; through [becoming] dispassionate, [he becomes] liberated. When liberation [arises], knowledge [and seeing] arises: “[That’s] liberation!”. And [the Noble Disciple] understands: “The aim of cleanness is gained! What was to do is done now: No longer [is] this world!”

[That’s what the Bhagavan said; and the bhikṣus were satisfied and delighted by the words of the Bhagavan.]«

Then of course the question arises as how to determine the length of such a mind-moment. The Theravāda-texts do not report a definite answer by Buddha Śākyamuni. Yet this is, in using solely the epistemological way of speaking, hard to do:¹⁶

- »[On one occasion the Bhagavan said:] “Bhikṣus! I unaware of any else that changes so quickly as the mind; and it seems hard to find a simile for this extremely fast changing of the mind!”«

Short sequences of such mind-moments – i.e.: of such momentary states of the mind – are comparable to the length of the period of the sound caused by snapping one’s fingers:¹⁷

- »[On one occasion the Bhagavan said:] “Bhikṣus! If a bhikṣu cultivates states of goodness of the heart – even if this is only for the short time span which takes to snap one’s fingers – if he expands this goodness and thinks about it, then he can claim to be some-one who does not practice immersion in vain, because he follows his master’s direct-ions and acts according to his instructions. He therefore does not consume the alms of the country in an unworthy way. Hence, what should be said about those who cultivate this state often?!”«

The length of the period of an eye-moment is about $5 \cdot 10^{-2}$ seconds; but the length of the period a mind-moment is, according to Geshe Tandim Rabten, approximately the $1/65$ of the length of the sound caused by snapping one’s fingers, which is approximately $16 \cdot 10^{-6}$ seconds. This by the way, is the reason why the mind may produce some thought which appears to the thinking person as having arisen immediately.

The tainted consciousness provides tainted nāmarūpa, whereby – according to Buddha Śākyamuni as well as to Śāriputra – nāma¹⁸ consists in the mentality which is firmly connected with the consciousness, existing as: intention–attention–feeling–distinguishing–concentration, and whereby rūpa consists in the Four Great Elements earth–water–fire–air und the forms determined by them.

The tainted nāmarūpa taints the [inner and outer] sixfold realm, which, when contacted with the consciousness, leads to a tainted contact. A tainted contact leads to a tainted sensation [consisting of a tainted sixfold perception and a tainted threefold feeling]; and a mind-moment later such a tainted sensation leads to being thirsty for [= grasping at] the inherent existence of that sensation.

This thirsting [= grasping] surely produces feedback to the ignorance: to that epistemic or fundamental or final ignorance, in short: to avidyā. This fundamental

¹⁶ See: AN-I.5.8.

¹⁷ See: AN-I.6.1-2.

¹⁸ Sanskrit „nāma“ may occasionally be translated by English “name”. But in most cases, the intension of “nāma” is that of “concept” or of “idea” or of “mentality” in the sense mentioned above.

In most cases, the context indicates uniquely whether “nāma” means (1) a pure expression, or (2) that expression associated with its conventional rule of using it, or (3) the judgements associated with that rule, or (4) the mental capacities upholding that rule.

ignorance regards that appearances which appear to one's mind as to be not merely appearances but attributes-in-itself of things-in-itself

Therefore, thirsting leads to clinging [= attaching]; and clinging leads to – and creates and maintains – the Three Poisons of Mind, consisting of: (1) desire [= lobha], (2) hatred [dveṣa], (3) delusion [=moha].

This clinging [= attaching] together with the Tree Poisons of Mind surely produces feedback to the taints, whereby these taints (a) strengthen the ignorance and (b) lead thereby to formation of mind–speech–body by ignorance and especially by the Three Poisons desire–hatred–delusion:¹⁹

- »[On one occasion the Bhagavan said:] “ (...) [Sentient] beings are owners of their actions, heirs of their actions; they originate from their actions, they have their actions as their refuge. (...)«

Due to the carrying out such actions, already a mind-moment later a new state of the mind is born which contains at its subtlest level the imprints of such acting. In this way, aging in deathfullness arises again and again, [with its manifestations, like:] sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure, despair. This is the origin of each new mind-moment of being unfree, of being subjected to suffering, of suffering[ness].

Of course, such feedbacks neither happen simultaneously nor back-in-time; for they always happen in the temporal order of events. Therefore, they must not to be compared with a circle but with a spiral.

This is an interpretation of the chain of Dependent Arising, *currently appearing to me* to be the preferable one.

Sarvaṃ maṅgalaṃ

¹⁹ See: MN- 135.20.