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D. Philosophy of Mind

24

Mind in Theravāda Buddhism

MARIA HEIM

The most precise and intricate model of mind from the tradition we now refer to as the Theravāda¹ is developed in the Abhidhamma. The term “*abhidhamma*” can be said to have several referents. It refers, first, to one of the three branches of canonical texts and, second, to the post-canonical tradition of commentary and compendia that interpreted and developed further this canonical material. But perhaps most importantly, “*abhidhamma*” refers to a distinctive *method* (*naya*) said to have been deployed by the Buddha to elucidate and expand the essentials of the Dhamma. The Abhidhamma method entails discerning phenomena from an ultimate sense (*paramattha*) and classifying them into various categories that show how they work. Buddhaghosa, regarded by the Mahāvihāra authorities as the translator and editor of the main Abhidhamma commentaries, says that classifications of phenomena are incomplete in the Suttanta, but the Abhidhamma provides them in detail; in this respect the Abhidhamma can be said to “exceed and surpass” the Dhamma as articulated in the Suttanta (Dhs-a.3–4).²

In keeping with these ideas, my approach to mind in the Pāli intellectual tradition is particularly attentive to method, aiming to introduce a method for thinking about the mind as much as a theory or system of it. As important as it is to discern *what* the basic features of consciousness are, our knowledge of them will be undeveloped unless we can understand *how* this system works by training us to see the mind differently than we do ordinarily. It does so through lists of phenomena and classifications that define and elaborate what those phenomena do. While the first book of the canonical Abhidhamma provides a useful schema to enter into this method, its phenomenology, consisting mostly of lists with little comment on how to interpret them, is rather spare. We can turn to the early commentarial tradition on it (represented primarily by Buddhaghosa)³ for a sophisticated approach on how to read and interpret these lists and for its development of them into a rich and complex psychology. My analysis will center mostly on this early commentarial layer of Abhidhamma reflection. Modern scholars

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have sometimes leapt quickly to the medieval compendium the *Abhidhammatthasaṅgaṇī*, which, useful as it is as a distillation or summary, does not display the same attentiveness to the possibilities of method as Buddhaghosa provides.

The basic Abhidhamma analysis of human experience proceeds through breaking it down into its smallest components, regrouping them into various functional classifications and exploring their interrelations. In its analysis there are 82 factors or phenomena (*dhammas*) classified into a fourfold division of reality: 28 *dhammas* are material (*rūpa*), 52 are mental (*cetasika*), one is conscious awareness (*citta*), and one is unconditioned and enduring (*nibbāna*). Our concerns will center on the two kinds of mental phenomena (*cetasika* and *citta*) and, to a lesser degree, on material phenomena (*rūpa*) when we consider the relationships between mind and matter. (*Nibbāna* is unconditioned, exists outside space and time, is not characterized by the many kinds of processes we will consider here, and remains largely outside of our purview.) The conditioned *dhammas* are momentary events rather than things or states. Though in some sense these factors cannot be further reduced or broken down, they are not essences or discrete, isolated particles of reality. Rather, while each *dhamma* has a definition, it is also conditioned by and “open,” as Nyanaponika puts it, to other factors in the relational system in which it occurs (1998, 40). The qualities and intensity of a factor vary according to which other factors occur with it in any given moment. The Abhidhamma’s various classificatory schemas aim at depicting how these complex interrelations yield almost infinite possibilities for experience.

Much of the first book of the canonical Abhidhamma, the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* (“The Enumeration of Factors”), breaks down conscious awareness into its constitutive mental factors. Consciousness or mind (*citta*) is not an enduring entity but rather a momentary unit of conscious awareness that, when analyzed at the closest level possible, is seen to be made up of any number of the 52 mental factors (*cetasikas*). What we normally experience as a continuous stream of awareness can be parsed into these very tiny momentary events, fractions of a second in duration. As evanescent as these conscious events are, they are comprised of many factors in complex relationships with one another.

The Abhidhamma’s dissection of thoughts is the product of meditative introspection and a tool for meditative cultivation. The Buddha is said to have attained this knowledge through his enlightened introspection. His ability to analyze mental experience in this way is regarded as extremely difficult, likened to a person at sea scooping up a handful of water and determining which drops in it came from which rivers (Dhs-a.142; Miln.87). The analytical insight he provided is then put to the service of meditative practice (practiced today in Burma, for instance), which aims at fundamentally restructuring ordinary mental experience to bring about happiness and freedom. The Buddha was very interested in how much the mind can change through moral and meditational practice and how intractable minds are when not developed: “Monks, I know nothing so supple and malleable as the mind when highly cultivated” and “nothing so intractable as the untamed mind” (AN.I.9; AN.I.6).

Buddhaghosa says that the Abhidhamma method destroys latent defilements because its wisdom opposes them (Dhs-a.22). Shedding light on how the mind works is the key to freeing it from bad experience. The first chapter of the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* begins with an opening question that frames its inquiries into mind. It asks: “what

factors are good?" (Dhs.8). By "good" (*kusala*), the text signals an important designation operative throughout its treatment of mind. Mental experience can be good, bad, or neutral, a classification crucial to a system aimed at manipulating psychological experience. But what is meant by "good"? Buddhaghosa defines *kusala* as fourfold: healthy, faultless, productive of happy results, and skillful, with the first three senses operative in this particular context (Dhs-a.38). The term often has moral value. *Akusala* or bad factors are described as the opposite of *kusala*, and there are also "neutral" factors (Dhs-a.39).

The *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* goes on to supply a list of 56 mental factors (*cetasika*) that can occur in one kind of a good moment of conscious awareness (*citta*). Although there are only 52 mental factors in the system as a whole, certain of them are repeated under different subheadings and classifications in this listing. This particular list describes a type of conscious awareness associated with happiness and connected to knowledge and that occurs in the realm of desire. In other words, this first list depicts relatively ordinary conscious experience, not that known to those residing in the heavenly spheres or in advanced stages of meditation that correspond to those spheres. The 56 factors that can occur in this moment of good conscious awareness are given in table 24.1, along with additional factors added by the commentary; in separate columns are lists of representative bad and neutral thoughts. First in each column are five factors present in every moment of conscious awareness, understood as a distinct grouping by the commentary: contact, feeling, perception, intention, and consciousness itself. These five operations of the mind, since they are ever present and fundamental to all mental experience, will occupy much of our attention below and will serve as our chief schema for interpreting mind. But some constellation of the 56 factors will occur in every instance of this particular kind of good conscious experience, though not all of them will appear in any given moment. The *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* provides many lists for other types of good, bad, and neutral conscious awareness in their many varieties. We can examine these three lists, following closely Buddhaghosa's commentary on them, to begin to appreciate the types of mental experience possible, and to discern how the entire relational model works.

The First Five Factors: Contact, Feeling, Perception, Intention, Consciousness

Conscious experience is always intentional in the phenomenological sense of intentionality: mental phenomena are characterized by an essential or immanent relation to their objects. As Buddhaghosa puts it, consciousness arises with its sensory or mental object (*ārammaṇa*) (Dhs-a.107); there is no "bare" consciousness. While consciousness is fundamentally *about* its object, we can refer to sensory contact or stimulation (*phassa*), the first factor on the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*'s list, when we want to state more precisely *how* it is that consciousness arises. *Phassa* refers to the contact of conscious experience with the objects of the six senses – that is, the five sensory organs and the mind sense.

Using the commentator's standard interpretative device of naming a phenomenon's characteristic, function, manifestation, and proximate cause, Buddhaghosa defines sensory contact as follows: "Contact means 'it touches.' Its characteristic is 'touching';

Table 24.1 Lists of mental factors

Good mental factors (Dhs.8)	Bad mental factors (Dhs.75)	Neutral mental factors (Dhs.87)
Contact (<i>phassa</i>)	Contact (<i>phassa</i>)	Contact (<i>phassa</i>)
Feeling (<i>vedanā</i>)	Feeling (<i>vedanā</i>)	Feeling (<i>vedanā</i>)
Perception (<i>saññā</i>)	Perception (<i>saññā</i>)	Perception (<i>saññā</i>)
Intention (<i>cetanā</i>)	Intention (<i>cetanā</i>)	Intention (<i>cetanā</i>)
Conscious awareness (<i>citta</i>)	Conscious awareness (<i>citta</i>)	Conscious awareness (<i>citta</i>)
Initial thinking (<i>vitakka</i>)	Initial thinking (<i>vitakka</i>)	
Sustained thinking (<i>vicāra</i>)	Sustained thinking (<i>vicāra</i>)	
Joy (<i>pīti</i>)	Joy (<i>pīti</i>)	Equanimity (<i>upekkhā</i>)
Pleasure (<i>sukha</i>)	Pleasure (<i>sukha</i>)	
Oneness of mind (<i>cittassekaggatā</i>)	Oneness of mind (<i>cittassekaggatā</i>)	Oneness of mind (<i>cittassekaggatā</i>)
Faculty of faith (<i>saddhindriya</i>)		
Faculty of energy (<i>vīriyindriya</i>)	Faculty of energy (<i>vīriyindriya</i>)	
Faculty of mindfulness (<i>satindriya</i>)		
Faculty of concentration (<i>samādhindriya</i>)	Faculty of concentration (<i>samādhindriya</i>)	
Faculty of wisdom (<i>paññindriya</i>)		
Mental faculty (<i>manindriya</i>)	Mental faculty (<i>manindriya</i>)	Mental faculty (<i>manindriya</i>)
Faculty of happiness (<i>somanassindriya</i>)	Faculty of happiness (<i>somanassindriya</i>)	Faculty of equanimity (<i>upekkhindriya</i>)
Faculty of vitality (<i>jīvitindriya</i>)	Faculty of vitality (<i>jīvitindriya</i>)	Faculty of vitality (<i>jīvitindriya</i>)
Right view (<i>sammādiṭṭhi</i>)	Wrong view (<i>micchādiṭṭhi</i>)	
Right thought (<i>sammāsaṅkappa</i>)	Wrong thought (<i>micchāsaṅkappa</i>)	
Right effort (<i>sammāvāyāma</i>)	Wrong effort (<i>micchāvāyāma</i>)	
Right mindfulness (<i>sammāsati</i>)		
Right concentration (<i>sammāsamādhi</i>)	Wrong concentration (<i>micchāsamādhi</i>)	
Power of faith (<i>saddhābāla</i>)		
Power of energy (<i>vīriyabāla</i>)	Power of energy (<i>vīriyabāla</i>)	
Power of mindfulness (<i>satibāla</i>)		
Power of concentration (<i>samādhibāla</i>)	Power of concentration (<i>samādhibāla</i>)	
Power of wisdom (<i>paññābāla</i>)		
Power of shame (<i>hiribāla</i>)	Power of shamelessness (<i>ahiribāla</i>)	
Power of apprehension (<i>ottappabāla</i>)	Power of brazenness (<i>anottappabāla</i>)	
Non-greed (<i>alobha</i>)	Greed (<i>lobha</i>)	
Non-hatred (<i>adosa</i>)		
Non-delusion (<i>amoho</i>)	Delusion (<i>moha</i>)	
Non-covetousness (<i>anabhijjhā</i>)	Covetousness (<i>abhijjhā</i>)	
Non-malice (<i>abyāpādo</i>)		
Right view (<i>sammādiṭṭhi</i>)	Wrong view (<i>micchādiṭṭhi</i>)	

Table 24.1 *Continued*

Good mental factors (Dhs.8)	Bad mental factors (Dhs.75)	Neutral mental factors (Dhs.87)
Shame (<i>hiri</i>)	Shamelessness (<i>ahirika</i>)	
Apprehension (<i>ottappa</i>)	Brazenness (<i>anottappa</i>)	
Tranquility of body (<i>kāyapassadhi</i>)		
Tranquility of mind (<i>cittapassadhi</i>)		
Lightness of body (<i>kāyalahutā</i>)		
Lightness of mind (<i>cittalahutā</i>)		
Softness of body (<i>kāyamudutā</i>)		
Softness of mind (<i>cittamudutā</i>)		
Workableness of body (<i>kāyakammaññatā</i>)		
Workableness of mind (<i>cittakammaññatā</i>)		
Proficiency of body (<i>kāyapāguññatā</i>)		
Proficiency of mind (<i>cittapāguññatā</i>)		
Uprightness of body (<i>kāyujukatā</i>)		
Uprightness of mind (<i>cittujukatā</i>)		
Mindfulness (<i>sati</i>)		
Meta-attention (<i>sampajañña</i>)		
Calmness (<i>samatha</i>)	Calmness (<i>samatha</i>)	
Insight (<i>vipassanā</i>)		
Exertion (<i>paggāha</i>)	Exertion (<i>paggāha</i>)	
Balance (<i>avikkhepa</i>)	Balance (<i>avikkhepa</i>)	
“and other factors” (Dhs-a.131)	“and other factors” (Dhs-a.250)	“and other factors” (Dhs-a.264)
Attention (<i>manasikāra</i>)	Attention (<i>manasikāra</i>)	Attention (<i>manasikāra</i>)
Initiative (<i>chanda</i>)	Initiative (<i>chanda</i>)	
Resolve (<i>adhimokkha</i>)	Resolve (<i>adhimokkha</i>)	Resolve (<i>adhimokkha</i>)
Impartiality (<i>tatramajjhataṭṭā</i>)		
Compassion (<i>karuṇā</i>)		
Sympathetic joy (<i>muditā</i>)		
Abstention from bodily misconduct (<i>kāyaduccaritavirati</i>)		
Abstention from verbal misconduct (<i>vacīduccaritavirati</i>)		
Abstention from wrong livelihood (<i>micchājīvavirati</i>)		
	Conceit (<i>māna</i>)	
	Envy (<i>issā</i>)	
	Avarice (<i>macchariya</i>)	
	Rigidity (<i>thīna</i>)	
	Sluggishness (<i>middha</i>)	
	Agitation (<i>uddhacca</i>)	
	Remorse (<i>kukkucca</i>)	

its function is ‘impact’; its manifestation is ‘coinciding’; and its proximate cause is the object coming into the field of experience” (Dhs-a.108). We learn from this and from Buddhaghosa’s further discussion that there is a kind of “touching” and “impact” that describes the contact of consciousness with its object. He mentions the theory of doorways, a metaphorical way of referring to where contact takes place in each of the thresholds of the six senses. “Coinciding” can be said to be contact’s manifestation, the way it presents itself in experience, “because it is known through its own cause which is said to be the coinciding of three things” – that is, external object, sensory organ, and consciousness, according to the *Majjhima* (MN.I.111, which he cites here). And finally, its proximate cause is the (sensory or mental) object that has come into the field of awareness (Dhs-a.108–9).

Feeling (*vedanā*) is the next of the five universally present mental factors. Upon contact there is a basic response to the object which is the feeling or affective experience of it, whether painful, pleasurable, or neutral. Feeling is the “hedonic tone” in the consciousness of an object. Buddhaghosa says, “its characteristic is ‘what is felt’, its function is ‘enjoying,’ or, alternatively, its function is enjoying what is desirable in it; its manifestation is ‘tasting’ [other] mental factors; and its proximate cause is ‘tranquility’ ” (Dhs-a.110). Like a king who gets to relish the delicacies prepared for him (unlike the cook, who merely prepares them), *vedanā* is the direct affective experience or tasting of the mental or sensory object and its coinciding consciousness. Buddhaghosa does not offer much explanation of why “tranquility” is the proximate cause of feeling; he says only that “a tranquil body causes the feeling of pleasure,” suggesting that some element of calmness or relaxation in the body must be present for feeling (or at least pleasurable feeling) to occur (Dhs-a.110).

The third factor in all moments of conscious awareness is *saññā*, perceptual judgment or conception. This refers not to a passive perceiving of an object but to the “recognizing (or naming) of an object, such as ‘blue’ ” (Dhs-a.110). This mental factor has various processes associated with it, including selecting out an object’s salient property and labeling it (“blue”). Buddhaghosa defines *saññā*’s characteristic as “perceiving” and its function as “recognizing that which had been noted before.” This occurs, he suggests by way of example, when a carpenter recognizes particular pieces of wood he earlier tagged or when a person recognizes a man by the dark mole on his face observed previously. Buddhaghosa suggests a possible alternative interpretation: its characteristic is “perceiving by way of general inclusion,” while its function is making marks that are the ground for later perception (Dhs-a.110). He defines its manifestation as the fixing on the object according to how its distinguishing mark has been grasped. Perception or forming a conception about an object is thus a matter of noticing, labeling, and memory, or, as Nyanaponika puts it, “the taking up, the making, and the remembering of the object’s distinctive marks” (1998, 121).

Buddhaghosa offers another account of *saññā*’s manifestation: “alternatively it has briefness as its manifestation, like lightning, because of its manner of not plunging deeply into its object” (Dhs-a.110). Perception so defined is not a matter of probing analysis into things, but rather the all too quick (and often false) labeling of the things in our experience and recalling them. Its proximate cause is whatever is present to the field of perception, illustrated by the example of a young deer having the conception “man” arise when presented with a scarecrow.

The fourth universally present factor, intention (*cetanā*), is the most constructive and creative of these five processes. Buddhaghosa defines it as what “puts together (*abhisandahati*) with itself accompanying factors as objects” (Dhs-a.111). That is, intention brings together some arrangement of other mental factors to construct the objects of experience. Recall our list of 56 *cetasikas* that can occur in this particular kind of *citta*. Intention is the dynamic process of arranging or coordinating which of these potential factors will be present in the experience of the object. In this effort it is an active volitional force: “exceedingly energetic, exceedingly striving, it does double effort, double striving” (Dhs-a.111). Buddhaghosa proposes several similes to illustrate its activity. Like a head carpenter who works and makes the other workers work on a project, intention marshals the other mental factors to their tasks and toils alongside them. Similarly, it is like a head student who sees the teacher coming and learns his lesson and rallies the other students to theirs. It rallies accompanying mental factors to their efforts by “recollecting urgent work,” thus connecting up present experience with past experience.

Above all, intention “produces its object by its own work, and makes the other associated factors produce it with their own actions” (Dhs-a.111). This assertion refers to the very active role the mind plays in creating and constructing the objects of experience. Intention, by pulling together and animating particular arrangements of mental factors “produces its object.” Just as the head carpenter together with his subcontractors produce an object of their labors, such as a building, intention, with the other mental factors, produces the objects of all experience. Objects do not arrive unmediated and unprocessed in consciousness but are fashioned by intentional activity. This is not idealism; the reality of external objects is presupposed (though perhaps not philosophically defended) in the Theravāda; moreover, Buddhaghosa is here making phenomenological rather than epistemological or ontological claims. Though we might wish he had worked out more precisely how this works, it is clear that, for him, the mind has a large role in constructing the world we experience, and the factor of intention plays the leading part in this construction.

The overlaps of this Buddhist notion of intention and the modern phenomenological sense of intentionality should not go unnoticed: *cetanā* names the particular ways the mind is related to its objects (that is, it constructs them). But also like the English word “intention” in one of its other meanings relating to purposeful action, *cetanā* is also inherently linked with karma. This is evident when Buddhaghosa identifies intention’s function as “accumulating” (*āyūhana*). He says that, in good and bad thoughts, intention “accumulates good and bad karma” (Dhs-a.111). This can be understood in reference to the linking of karma and intention, a formulation in the *suttas* that has garnered much modern scholarly notice. The Buddha was said to have identified the interior dimensions of karma with intention: “it is intention (*cetanā*) that I call action (*kamma*); intending, one acts by body, speech, and mind” (AN.III.415). The significance of this identifying intention as the principal part of action has been interpreted variously, but, from an Abhidhammic perspective, what is being said is that *cetanā*, in its process of putting together conscious experience by assembling and activating other *cetasikas*, is karma, and karma is the accumulating of further karma that keeps us trapped in *saṃsāra*. Intention is the mental side of morally relevant action that gathers and causes, karmically, present and future experience.

This sense of accumulating that connects intention to karma also links it to the important category of “constructions” or “formations” (*saṅkhāra*), though on this point we go outside the *Atthasālinī* to the *Sammohavinodanī*, where “*cetanā* is the principal *saṅkhāra*” because “of its well-known sense of accumulation” (Vibh-a.20). *Cetanā* is frequently regarded as foremost of this broad category of constructed and constructing processes and phenomena known as *saṅkhāras*, the mental factors, temperaments, dispositions, and habits that condition the nature and quality of all conscious experience. *Saṅkhāras* are the past psychological constructions we bring to all (unawakened) experience as well as the active, creative ways we make present and future experience. *Cetanā*, intentional activity, is at the forefront of them and sometimes stands in for this entire category.

When we assemble all of these interrelated aspects of intention – its arranging and rallying of other mental factors in the construction of the objects of sensory and mental awareness, its identification with karma and karma’s logic of accumulating conditions, and its link with the constructing and constructed activity of *saṅkhāra* – we locate intention’s centrality to a range of ethical and soteriological doctrines. When modern scholars have tried to interpret intention’s role in karma by pairing it with English words for will, choice, rational decision-making, and so on, they have missed this basic *sutta* and Abhidhamma sense of the creative activity of the mental construction of experience. The subjective or internal aspect of karma is not moral choice, but a much more elementary putting together of the mental factors that shape our present and future experience. This is not to deny agency, but rather to define it as the very basic process by which the mind puts together its processes to construct the world of experience; this activity is, at bottom, what karmic action is all about.

Finally, conscious awareness (*citta*) is the fifth factor of the pentad: all conscious awareness is defined by *citta*, which Buddhaghosa glosses as that which thinks of (*cinteti*) or cognizes (*vijānāti*) its object. The identifying of consciousness (*citta*) as a distinct factor in a moment of conscious awareness (*citta*) is not as redundant as it may seem. The Abhidhamma method names various items in lists that can be taken in several ways and under different headings; *citta* is both one of the four divisions of reality (*citta*, *cetasika*, *rūpa*, and *nibbāna*) and itself a *cetasika*. Buddhaghosa argues that, though *citta* in the first sense is derivative of or constituted by the first four *cetasikas* just described, it is in another sense (as a *cetasika*) distinct from them or even prior to them (Dhs-a.113–14). (This suggestion may not have been ultimately persuasive to later scholastics, as we will see, since *citta* is eventually dropped in listings of *cetasikas*).

Buddhaghosa says that, as a *cetasika*, *citta* has “cognizing” as its characteristic, “preceding” as its function, “connecting” as its manifestation, and “mind and body” (*nāma-rūpa*) as its proximate cause (Dhs-a.112). It is “preceding” in that it is prior to or a condition for sensory contact, and it manifests as “connecting” because it is connected to the immediately preceding moment. The temporal aspects of the pentad are subtle: even though listed first, contact is not really first in that it initiates conscious experience. Rather, *cetasikas* occur concurrently in a given moment of conscious thought, even while sometimes it is deemed useful to try to understand how one might be viewed as the condition for the other or how two (or more) might be mutually conditioning. Because contact is the impact of consciousness and the object or the coinciding of the object, sense organ, and consciousness, consciousness is in this sense conceived as prior.

However, the quality and nature of consciousness will be determined by its object, which, as we have begun to see, rests on all of the other mental factors that occur with and construct it.

When Buddhaghosa defines the manifestation of consciousness as “connecting,” he is assigning it a role in effecting continuity across time. Nyanaponika shows how each moment of consciousness has “depth in time”: it is founded on energies from the past and it functions as a potentiality for the future (1998, 97, 105). As we have seen, Buddhaghosa defines *saññā* (perception) in temporal terms as involving *memory* of the past and a “tagging” of an item for future reference, and he defines intention as “recollecting urgent work” in its activity of arranging and marshalling mental factors. These elements of memory attempt to show how thought moments are connected to one another within the flow of experience. Though Abhidhamma analysis is focused on the contents of discrete momentary events, it interprets these events with an eye for how they work in time.

Citta is frequently used interchangeably with other terms for mind and consciousness, and the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* lists several terms overlapping or related to *citta* (*mano mānasam hadayaṃ paṇḍaram mano manāyatanaṃ manindriyaṃ viññāṇaṃ viññāṇakkhandho*; Dhs.10). Glossing these, Buddhaghosa says that “*citta* is so called because of its being variegated (*vicitta*)” (Dhs-a.140), an etymology which picks up on the constantly changing and variable nature of conscious awareness. Mind (*mano*), a synonym for *citta*, is so called “because it knows by measuring (*minamāno*) the object,” which means, he says, that it exercises a kind of governing role over mental factors as it sizes up the object (Dhs-a.123, 140). This notion of governing other factors goes some distance in explaining *mano*’s role also as the “mental faculty” (*manindriya*), listed as a *cetasika*, since faculties govern other factors. *Mānasa*, mental action, is the same as mind (*mano*). There is also *mano* as sense sphere (*āyatana*), which is like the other five senses, except its objects are ideas or mental experiences, not external objects. Sense sphere (*āyatana*) covers much ground, referring simultaneously to the sense organ (the “origin,” *sañjāti*), the sense object (the “cause,” *karaṇa*), and the “meeting” of them (*samosaraṇa*) (Dhs-a.141).

A further overlap with *citta* is heart (*hadaya*). *Citta* is “said to be the heart in the sense of being the interior part,” not the actual physical organ (Dhs-a.140). As with English “heart,” the physical organ is but just one of the senses of *hadaya*. “White” (*paṇḍara*) means “clear” in connection to the *bhavaṅga*, the life continuum, in accordance with the Buddha’s claim that “this consciousness is very bright but it is defiled by added depravities” (Dhs-a.140, quoting AN.I.10). Though morally bad, a *citta* may be said to be “white” because it issues forth from the *bhavaṅga*, like a tributary of the Ganges issues forth from the River Ganges (Dhs-a.140). This reference to *bhavaṅga* posits a clear and luminous mind that underlies other forms of consciousness which are contaminated by external taints, a doctrine suggested (though not fully elaborated) in the Suttanta and somewhat incompletely treated even in the Abhidhamma.⁴ Finally, in its list of terms related to or interchangeable with *citta*, the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* mentions *viññāṇa*, consciousness, and *viññāṇakkhandha*, the aggregate of consciousness. *Viññāṇa* means cognizing, while the aggregate of consciousness (one of the five aggregates, as we have seen) refers to a “heap” or group of conscious processes. But here, Buddhaghosa says, since *citta* means only one momentary event of consciousness, just part of the

aggregate, the word “aggregate” is said only conventionally (Dhs-a.141). Both *viññāṇa* and *mano* are often used as synonyms of *citta* (Dhs.10; Dhs-a.123; Vism.452), referring to the momentary element or phenomenon (*dhātu*) in the fivefold group (Dhs-a.141).

This group of five provides the rudimentary operations always present in the making of our experience. Post-canonical Abhidhamma texts became more explicit and precise in specifying a finite list of factors described as present universally (*sabbacittasādhāraṇa*) and arrived at a list of seven such factors: contact, feeling, perception, intention, bringing-to-mind, the faculty of vitality, and attention (*manasikāra*), dropping *citta*, and replacing it with three factors, the first two of which are, in fact, present in all of the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*'s lists (Nārada and Bodhi 1993, 77); the other addition, attention, will be discussed below. In any case, these five elementary factors of all conscious experience given in the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* provide a useful introduction to mind in this early stratum of the tradition. As Nyanaponika points out, they are “the briefest formulation, by way of representatives, of the four mental aggregates,” which together with material phenomena (*rūpa*) comprise all human experience: feeling and perception are represented by themselves, sense contact and intention together represent the aggregate of the *saṅkhāras*, and *citta* represents the consciousness aggregate (*viññāṇakhandha*).⁵ Insofar as these five processes constitute the immaterial aggregates, they are at the bottom of all human psychological experience. The five aggregates doctrine is used to delineate the possibilities for human experience as much as to undermine our sense of their substantiality, as evident in an extended analogy given in the *Samyutta*: physical reality is like a lump of foam, feeling, like a bubble, perception, a mirage, constructions (*saṅkhāra*), a plantain stem, and consciousness, an illusion (SN.III.140; discussed in Vibh-a.32–4). All of these images reinforce the cardinal Buddhist doctrine that at the core of our experience are processes that are fundamentally impermanent, insubstantial, and deluded.

These first five mental factors also occur either directly or by way of categories they represent in the formula of dependent origination, a formula that, like the five aggregates, could have served equally well as an organizational schema for entering into the larger system. Lists function as matrices that imbricate, subsume, and suggest further lists, which in turn develop ideas in different directions. No matter with which list one begins, one will, eventually, be brought round to other lists and to the doctrines they convey. The doctrine of five aggregates serves to dismantle human experience in such a way that no stable self can be posited, while dependent origination serves to refine our understanding of the conditionality that creates human experience.⁶

The Other Factors

The remaining factors present in each of the three good, bad, and neutral *cittas* in table 24.1 are variable in that they may or may not appear in any particular thought; they are thus not as essential to our study of the basic workings of mind as the first five. Many of them, however, have much to offer the study of moral phenomenology, which we can only touch on here. Each of them is classified into various groupings by Buddhaghosa and we can treat them according to their groups. The next five items on the lists of both good and bad factors, called “factors of absorption” (*jhānaṅga*) in the

commentary, intensify and differentiate awareness in ways that are cognitive (initial and sustained thinking), affective (joy – that is, both rapture and interest, and pleasure), and focusing (oneness of mind with the object).⁷ These items, like the first five, can be either good or bad depending upon which other factors are present. Similarly, other functions are shared by both lists: certain varieties of energy (and effort and exertion) and concentration (and balance), stated in different ways, are part of both good and bad consciousness. Good and bad thoughts alike require an energy towards their object, as well as a focus on or directedness towards it.

The remaining items on the list of good factors belong to groups of morally and soteriologically valuable mental activities familiar from other contexts, such as elements of the Eightfold Path, certain faculties, the seven powers, and the moral sentiments of shame and apprehension. The several instances of repetition of items on the list may seem unsatisfactory given the precision with which the topic is approached: why should concentration, for example, occur four times, as a faculty, a power, a path factor, and separately? Buddhaghosa takes up this problem and argues that, by repeating items in their membership in different groupings, attention is drawn to their functions and aspects in those groupings; just as a king hires an artisan who may be able to offer several kinds of crafts and belong to several different guilds, so the same factor can perform different functions according to its membership in groups. Since classification is a key instrument for the development of meaning and possibility, seeing to which groups each item belongs suggests important variations in its qualities and intensities.⁸ Here Buddhaghosa teaches us to read *Abhidhamma* as a *method*: its method is to consider factors in their functionally classificatory roles, which will entail diverse roles for many of them.

The motivational roots or causes (*mūla* or *hetu*) are of particular importance in Buddhist psychology. Among the good factors, three motivational roots are listed – non-greed, non-hatred, non-delusion – together with their intensified states, non-covetousness, non-malice, and right view. The significance of these factors of mind is hard to overstate. They are largely the criteria by which a thought is good, bad, or neutral. Except for “right view,” all the good factors are described in the negative – that is, they are the opposites of the bad roots (greed, malice, delusion) and the abstentions from the bad mental actions (covetousness, malice, and wrong view). Their statement in the negative is significant; chiefly they are the abstinence from the bad motivations and bad mental actions. The bad motivations listed are greed, delusion, covetousness, and wrong view, opposites of the good motivations; greed and delusion are two of the three roots at the heart of all entrapment and woe in *saṃsāra*. Notably absent in the table are the motivational roots hatred and malice; this is because this particular listing is for bad thoughts that occur accompanied by joy (*somanassa*). The *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* gives another list of bad factors that occur in the presence of distress (*domanassa*): many of the same items are listed but, instead of elements of joy, pleasure, happiness, greed, and covetousness, we find suffering, distress, and the motivational roots hatred and malice (Dhs.83). It is in the eradication of the three deeply seated roots greed, hatred, and delusion (not to speak of their three amplifications – covetousness, malice, and wrong view) that *nibbāna* is attained (Vibh-a.53).

The list of good factors includes six pairs of qualities that can describe both body and mind, for a total of 12 qualities which always arise together: tranquility (being

quiet and composed), lightness (agility and buoyancy), softness (being pliable, resilient, and adaptable), workableness (the right balance of softness and firmness “which makes the gold – that is, the mind – workable”), fitness (health and competence), and uprightness (sincerity and straightforwardness) (Dhs-a.150-1; see Nyanaponika 1998, 71–81). These dispositions are not treated in much detail, but they suggest attributes that dispose one to good action through mental and physical composure, malleability, health, readiness, and rectitude. Following them we have several potentialities: mindfulness, mental clarity, and insight, which refer to distinctive aptitudes in the development of mental culture. Lastly, calmness, exertion, and balance (present in both good and bad thoughts) overlap with some of the earlier items and provide elements of steadiness, energy, and concentration necessary for good and bad action.

A full description of the factors will also depend upon understanding their relations to one another and external conditions (the primary concern of the Abhidhamma book the *Paṭṭhāna*). The richness of this moral psychology suggests that scholars of Buddhist ethics might fruitfully train their attention on a phenomenological treatment of Buddhist moral thought. For our purposes, we have gained a glimpse of the factors that make up the varieties of conscious experience.

Additional Factors

At the end of its lists of the factors that may be present in every type of thought, the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* leaves open the possibility that there may be more factors present than it has listed, concluding each list by gesturing to “whatever other factors” might be present (as, for example, Dhs.9, 75, 87). This detail is highly significant for our interpretation of what the canonical Abhidhamma is up to. While sometimes mistakenly taken to be a reductive account of mind, the lists – and the glimpse of mind that they offer – are not intended to be exhaustive or complete. While perhaps the later tradition lost sight of this early resistance to closure and came to treat the lists more like catechisms, this early canonical and commentarial period was importantly open.

Buddhaghosa makes much of the idea that the Abhidhamma is not closed. Since the Dhamma itself, in the sense of “the teaching as thought out in the mind,” is endless and immeasurable, the Abhidhamma – “that which exceeds (*abhi*) the Dhamma” – goes even further (Dhs-a.15, 2). He suggests that, although the Abhidhamma texts are finite in how long it takes to recite them, they are in fact “endless and immeasurable when expanded” (Dhs-a.7). Even though the Abhidhamma was taught straight through without stopping in three months’ time, which must have seemed like a single moment to its audience, the Dhamma that was taught is endless and immeasurable (Dhs-a.15). To ponder the depth and reach of the Abhidhamma method one should picture the ocean. As vast and seemingly endless is the sea for one drifting in a lonely boat upon it, one knows that it is still bordered by land below and on all sides. But the limits of the Abhidhamma cannot be known (Dhs-a.10–12).

When we place the Abhidhamma in the context of meditative practice we can also discern its open and dynamic nature. Rupert Gethin advises that the Abhidhamma’s method is, in the end, practical. Its breaking up of wholes into parts undermines our

constant and fruitless tendency to grasp and fix the world of experience. The restless re-examination of these arrangements through proliferating lists is itself a method for destabilizing our yearning for a fixed and stable sense of the world: “the indefinite expansions based on the *mātikās* continually remind those using them that it is of the nature of things that no single way of breaking up and analyzing the world can ever be final” (Gethin 1992, 165). As much as Abhidhamma phenomenology advances a *model of mind* – and we do come to know what the elemental components of mental life are and how they interact – its very method destabilizes an overly fixed or final version of it. It is not an ontology designating the smallest “reals” that constitute experience, but rather a method for shaking up and reconsidering experience from new vantage points; chiefly it penetrates things from an ultimate sense (*paramattha*) to seek factors of experience that cannot be broken down further, even while the relations between them can extend and vary almost infinitely. Buddhaghosa says that the Abhidhamma is taught expressly for those who falsely hold onto a sense of self in what is really just a heap of changing factors (Dhs-a.21). Dismantling that heap in diverse ways provides a dynamic *model* for mind that facilitates new ways of exploring human experience.

When the canonical list suggests that there may be additional factors present in this kind of good conscious experience that it has not named, Buddhaghosa readily offers, on the basis, he claims, of knowledge of the *suttas*, nine additional factors. In particular he adds attention (*manasikāra*), a factor that increasingly gained traction in lists of universally present factors as the Abhidhamma tradition developed. Here its presence in all three types of thought suggests that Buddhaghosa saw it as a universally present factor, and indeed, as we have seen, it was taken to be so in other texts (Miln.56; Vism.589; Nārada and Bodhi 1993, 77–81). Attention is, according to Buddhaghosa, what “makes the mind different from how it was before.” He sees it in this context as the process which can make the mind advert or shift to a different object. It has the characteristic of “driving,” the function of “yoking associated mental factors to the object,” the manifestation of “facing the object,” and it belongs to the *sankhāra* aggregate (together, we recall, with contact and intention). It “should be seen like a coachman driving the associated factors to the object” (Dhs-a.133; Vism.466). Attention, like others among the basic factors, shows how the mind changes over time; it is that distinctive process of shifting from one object to another.

Buddhaghosa also adds “resolve” (*adhimokkha*) to the lists of good, bad, and neutral thoughts, and, though, unlike attention, it does not make it into later lists of universally present factors (where *ekaggatā*, one-pointedness of mind, may, in effect, assume its basic duties), he sees it present in every list that he provides. Its “characteristic is ‘ascertainment,’ its function is ‘not wandering,’ its manifestation is ‘steadfastness,’ and its proximate cause is ‘a factor that should be ascertained.’ It should be seen like a doorstep in its fixedness to the object” (Dhs-a.133). When we take resolve and attention together we see two counter aspects of mind, both present in the mind grasping an object: one keeps the mind focused on it and the other makes it possible for it to shift from it. A third important process, initiative or desire-to-act (*chando*), absent in neutral thought moments, is a movement of the mind reaching towards an object that results in action. The remaining factors added by the commentary are further good and bad sentiments that need not detain us here.

Mind and Cosmos

Mind can be supple, but it is also highly conditioned. Intentional processes that construct reality are conditioned by previous karma. Thus mind is not what it is just for the willing of it, but rather is shaped – though not determined – by past experience: the dispositions, latent tendencies, and the forces of habit implicit in the term *saṅkhāra* influence all moments of unawakened experience. At the same time, key to understanding the fundamentally dynamic nature of mind is to recognize all the factors just described as “possibilities” or “potentialities,” to employ Nyanaponika’s interpretation (1998, 55, 90). Mind is not mechanical, with factors simply operating according to their working definitions, factory-style, in the manufacturing of conscious awareness. Rather, factors represent potentialities for both present and future. The presence or exclusion of a given factor in a particular moment of conscious awareness affects the strength and quality of the other factors (ibid., 112–13). Moreover, they shape the quality of mind in the immediate future as well as distant future lives. A mind habituated to moments of mindfulness and insight, for example, can increasingly perpetuate these experiences in this human life, as well as create the quality of consciousness in the formless realms that may be experienced in a future rebirth.

Nyanaponika refers to some of these factors as “seeds of ‘another world’ ” present in ordinary human mental experience, “where they are waiting to be nursed to full growth and fruition” (1998, 56). The factors of absorption (*jhānaṅga*), in particular, when strong and accompanied by mindfulness, are also the key ingredients of advanced stages of meditation (*jhāna*) that correspond to spheres in the cosmos where celestial beings inhabit increasingly rarified experiences of joy and equanimity. “On the other hand,” as Nyanaponika shows,

the possibilities latent in average human consciousness may also lead downward to rebirth in the animal realm . . . If human consciousness did not share certain features in common with the lower and higher worlds, rebirth as an animal or in the celestial spheres would not be possible.

(Ibid., 57)

This insight that factors are open to upward and downward trajectories for future experience suggests the range in quality that human minds are capable of experiencing, from the basest processes of sense gratification common to animals to the most sublime encounters with joy and equanimity that characterize the experience of celestial beings. These trajectories are a matter of karmic processes; since karma is about how we make and construe the world of experience, we are creating our experience – and the types of beings we become – in present and future.

Rupert Gethin has shown that there is a “general principle of an equivalence or parallel in Buddhist thought between psychology on the one hand and cosmology on the other” (Gethin 1997, 189). We can discern a hierarchy in the 56 states we have considered, beginning with rudimentary sense consciousness and moving upward to various capacities for mindfulness, calmness, and insight.⁹ The cosmos, too, is hierarchically ordered, from the lowest realms of *saṃsāra*, in which hell beings, animals, humans, and lower deities function mostly (but not entirely) from within the realm of

sense experience, to higher realities of pure form, and thence to the highest formless echelons. The mind can “inhabit” these various realms either by perpetuating base, lustful, and violent thoughts, which are the abodes of hell beings and animals, or by journeying through the celestial realms in advanced stages of meditation (*jhānas*). In this sense, the mind is a microcosm of the cosmos. The shift of scale is a primarily a temporal one:

the mind [of certain beings] might range through the possible levels of consciousness in a relatively short period – possibly in moments. A being, in contrast, exists at a particular level in the cosmos for rather longer – 84,000 aeons in the case of a being in the realm of “neither consciousness nor unconsciousness” – and to range through all the possible levels of being is going to take a very long time indeed.

(Ibid., 195)

The same shift of scale, Gethin points out, is implicit in the model for change articulated by dependent origination: it provides a model for momentary conscious experience as well as the process of rebirth over large spans of time.

Mind and Matter

One of the aims of the Abhidhamma method is to teach the distinctions between mind and matter (Dhs-a.21), which, as we have seen, are often paired in a single formulation: *nāma-rūpa*. Buddhaghosa treats *nāma-rūpa* as a fundamental topic of wisdom in the *Visuddhimagga*, and focuses on it in several chapters that explain the refinement and fortification of wisdom. *Nāma-rūpa* is easily dismantled into its smaller components. *Nāma* refers to the four immaterial aggregates (feeling, perception, *saṅkhāra*, and consciousness) which, as we have seen, collectively comprise all mental processes;¹⁰ it also is known “by the grouping of the five starting with contact,” bringing us full circle back to our initial schema of mind (Vism.626). The four aggregates are all “*nāma*” (literally “name”) because they are “name-making”; each names its experience spontaneously as it arises (Dhs-a.392). This means, I extrapolate, that when we feel, say, pain, it arises announcing itself as “pain” in our awareness, or when we perceive (*saññā*) blue there arises a conception labeled as “blue.” To have these experiences is to *name* them at some level. They are also called *nāma* in the sense of “bending” (*namana*) and causing to bend (*nāmana*), “because they bend towards their objects and because they cause one another to bend towards the object,” which is another way of stating their intentionality, their relatedness to objects (Dhs-a.392; Vibh-a.135). Buddhaghosa also says that *nāma*’s “characteristic is bending, its function is association, its manifestation is not being separated into components, and its proximate cause is consciousness (*viññāṇa*)” (Vbh-a.136). We can take it as the experience of “mentality” manifested as a whole, in effect, the four aggregates (or first five factors) operating as a functional unity rather than dismantled, for the sake of analysis, into its parts.

Rūpa, materiality or form, is familiar from other listings: it serves as one of the four divisions of reality (*rūpa*, *citta*, *cetasika*, and *nibbāna*), and it serves as one of the five aggregates. *Rūpa* “has the characteristic of being molested (*ruppāna*), its function is

dispersing, its manifestation is undeclared” (that is, it manifests variously depending on the particular material form), and its proximate cause is, as with *nāma*, consciousness (Vibh-a.136). It is “molested” – that is, changed or destroyed by other things such as cold (Vism.443). We can break it down into its four component elements (earth, water, fire, air) or into its 28 *dharmas* (the four elements and 24 additional classifications of materiality) (Vism.443–50).

Thus, while *nāma-rūpa* itself and both parts of it can be readily dissembled into smaller bits, the pair often functions in this coarser grouping of “mind–body” (more precisely “mentality–materiality”). Though much of Abhidhamma analysis is based on resolving wholes into parts, the categories of *nāma* and *nāma-rūpa* are retained as useful precisely in contexts in which further resolution is not helpful. In one of his chapters on the refinement of wisdom, Buddhaghosa says that there are several different kinds of understanding: one involves analysis of the specific characteristics of particular factors, and another involves “comprehension by groups,” which is recognizing general characteristics shared among factors.¹¹ The value of the method of “comprehension by groups” is sometimes overlooked, but in this chapter Buddhaghosa argues forcefully for it, since there is a kind of understanding possible only by general inclusion rather than by reductive analysis. He applies it to *nāma-rūpa* with considerable creativity, examining all the ways that groupings shed light on it.

For our interest in the relationship of mind and body this is significant. The Abhidhamma method dismantles them very effectively to show their insubstantiality and separateness, but at the same time treats them as a psycho-physical complex that functions in certain respects as a unity. *Nāma-rūpa* is featured most prominently as a single link in dependent origination (though some of the components of *nāma* occur as distinct links themselves), where it is conditioned by consciousness¹² and is the condition for sensory experience. It is useful, indeed indispensable at times, to conceive of mind and body as a dynamic, mutually constitutive pair that has a certain causal agency. Several metaphors for their interrelatedness are helpful: like a drum and sound, they occur together but are not mixed up; like two sheaths of reeds holding each other up, they depend on one another to stand; and like a ship with its crew they can journey only together (Dhs-a.595–6). There is no person over and beyond them, but there is also no person without them in their complex interdependence.

The Buddha is remembered for being, among other epithets, the “Knower of Worlds” (*lokavidu*), because he is said to know “the world in all ways.” There is the geographic world which can be known through travel, but this the Buddha does not describe. Rather, it is in “this fathom-long carcass with its conceptions and mind” that he makes the world known (Vism.204). Here again we encounter the logic of microcosm: the human entity is, in potential, the cosmic reality, and it is by exploring possibilities for human psychology that the vastness of the world can be known. Buddhaghosa goes on to say that Buddha is “Knower of Worlds” in that he knows the worlds of mental constructions (*saṅkhāras*), of beings (that is, all possible psychologies), and of cosmic space. The world of constructions can be known by groupings: “one world: all beings subsist by sustenance; two worlds: *nāma-rūpa*; three worlds: three kinds of feeling; four worlds: four kinds of sustenance; five worlds: the five aggregates; six worlds: the internal sense spheres,” and so on. Each classification, each grouping, is a “world,” a reality or mode of existence that the Buddha knows fully. The Buddha’s facility with enumerated

teachings and grouping phenomena, extended potentially endlessly, is the method by which one creates models of and for interpreting mind in an ultimate sense.

Notes

- 1 As Peter Skilling has observed, the widespread use of the term “Theravāda” is a modern development and does not serve us well if conceived of as a historical identity which pre-modern Buddhists in South and South-East Asia used to describe themselves, though, given its ubiquity in contemporary usage, it is a term difficult to do without (Skilling 2009). The intellectual tradition discussed in this chapter might more accurately be referred to as the Mahāvihāra lineage or the Pāli tradition.
- 2 All abbreviations follow the conventions of the Pali Text Society. Translations from Pāli texts are my own, unless otherwise specified, from the editions in the *Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana*: Vipassana Research Institute, 1995.
- 3 While aware of historical scholarship that casts doubt on Buddhaghosa’s involvement with some of the commentaries ascribed to him (the *Atthasālinī* in particular), I follow the Mahāvihāra authorities who attributed these texts to him because they saw (as I do) a systematic and conceptual coherence in the body of material he is said to have edited. Buddhaghosa refers here to the implied authorial voice of the *Atthasālinī*, the *Sammohavinodanī*, and the *Visuddhimagga*, the main commentaries explored in this chapter.
- 4 The best treatment of *bhavaṅga* is Gethin (1994). *Bhavaṅga* refers to a type of consciousness that is present between moments of conscious thought (in dreamless sleep, but also in between *cittas* in ordinary wakeful experience), is operative following death in linking to another rebirth, functions as a kind of steady consciousness that is a key aspect of one’s distinctive nature, and, as here, posits a radiant and clear “mind” that underlies sullied conscious thought (AN.I.10; AN.I.60).
- 5 Nyanaponika (1998, 48). The *Sammohavinodanī* defines the *saṅkhāra* aggregate as consisting of sense contact, intention, and attention (Vibh-a.169).
- 6 We might also have begun our study of mind with a classification schema of 89 classes of consciousness, a post-canonical formulation of the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*’s chapter on *cittas* (Dhs-a.6; Vism.XIV.81–110; Nārada and Bodhi 1993, 1–5). While useful, this schema involves multiplying a number of variables to increase the number of classes of *citta*, but the basic elements used in its systematization are presented by the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*. See Gethin (1994, 16, 24–8).
- 7 Nyanaponika (1998, 53–5). He notes that these *jhānaṅgas* are here presented as rudimentary aspects of mind, but they can also be developed “upward” into the highly advanced meditative stages (*jhānas*).
- 8 Dhs-a.135–6. Nyanaponika offers a very helpful and sympathetic amplification on Buddhaghosa’s treatment of factors according to function or application or degree of intensity among these factors (1998, 37–42, 88–92).
- 9 More often the 89 classes of conscious experience are mapped onto the 31 realms of *saṃsāric* existence, but the basic parallel can be shown in the lists of table 24.1. See Gethin (1997, in particular his table on p. 194; 1998, 121–3).
- 10 There are different parsings of this, however: in some places the texts say that *nāma* is three aggregates – *vedanā*, *saññā*, *saṅkhāra* (which includes *phassa*, *cetanā*, and *manasikāra*). The difficulty is consciousness: in the sense in which consciousness is a condition (*paccaya*) for *nāma-rūpa*, it should not be considered one of the aggregates in *nāma*, but, in the sense of it as a *cetasika*, it is assumed to be present (Vibh-a.169; Vism.558). In most analyses

- nāma-rūpa* comprises the five aggregates, with *rūpa* corresponding to the material aggregate and *nāma* to the immaterial aggregates (Dhs. §1314, which also includes “the uncompounded element” (*nibbāna*) in *nāma*; Dhs-a.392; Vism.452; Vibh-a.254, 265).
- 11 There are three kinds of worldly understanding: full understanding of what is known (analysis of specific characteristics of *dharmas*), full understanding as investigation (i.e., comprehension by groups), and full understanding as abandoning (the wisdom achieved by recognizing the insubstantiality and transience of all things) (Vism.606–7, ch. 20).
 - 12 Its relationships with consciousness, as suggested above, are complex in part because *nāma-rūpa* includes consciousness in an important sense; yet, as we have seen elsewhere, sometimes it is still useful to conceive of *nāma-rūpa* as the “proximate cause” of consciousness and, conversely, with consciousness as the condition (*paccaya*) for *nāma-rūpa* in dependent origination. Here descriptions of various kinds of interrelationships in the *Paṭṭhāna* are helpful; theirs is a kind of “mutual arousing and consolidating” relation (see Ronkin 2005, 217).

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