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Paṭiccasamuppāda, Kamma and Freedom of Choice
A Study of the Nikāyas and Some Modern Interpretations

by

Daniel M. Veidlinger, B.A.

A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of Religion

Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario

August 1st, 1994

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A Study of the Nikayas and Some Modern Interpretations**

**submitted by Daniel Veidlinger, B.A.
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts**

Nalini Devdas, Thesis Supervisor

Chair, Department of Religion

Carleton University

8 September 1994
date

Abstract

This thesis explores the relationship between the two seminal Buddhist concepts of *paṭiccasamuppāda* and *kamma*, and draws out the implications of their relationship for human development and freedom of choice. By interpreting *paṭiccasamuppāda* as a "middle way" between the extremes of determinism and chance-origination, it becomes clear that *kamma* also is neither completely determined, nor subject purely to chance. In coming to an understanding of the relationship between *paṭiccasamuppāda*, *kamma* and freedom of choice, what emerges from our study of the Pāli Nikāyas is a conception of *paṭiccasamuppāda* as a process of conditioning in which both linear and mutual causality are interwoven. The second part of this thesis is concerned with how two modern Buddhist scholars, Joanna Macy and David Kalupahana, interpret some of the problems which are presented in the first part.

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List of Abbreviations

AN Aṅguttara Nikāya
DN Dīgha Nikāya
MN Majjhima Nikāya
SN Saṃyutta Nikāya
Sn Sutta Nipāta
Dhp Dhammapāda

DA Dīgha Commentary
MA Majjhima Commentary
SA Saṃyutta Commentary

PTSD Pāli Text Society Dictionary

Asl Atthasālinī
Vsm Visuddhimagga

Note : Unless otherwise noted, all translations are from the Pāli Text Society editions, except DN, which are from Walshe.

Citations from the Nikāyas follow the PTS book and section numbers.

Introduction

The conception of causality known as *paṭiccasamuppāda*¹ is a seminal notion in Buddhism. This is attested to in the scriptures where it is said that "whoever sees *paṭicca-samuppāda* sees the *dhamma*" (MN i, 191). *Paṭiccasamuppāda* is a very powerful idea which provides causal explanations for the way things happen, and puts them into a "Buddhist" perspective. Another important concept in Buddhism is *kamma* (Skt. *karman*), which holds that all morally charged action will lead to appropriate results either in this life or in a future one. These two foundational concepts are in fact closely related; as will be shown in this thesis, *kamma* is a specific application of *paṭiccasamuppāda* to the sphere of human volitional behaviour.

The features of *paṭiccasamuppāda* must logically apply to any other process which can be subsumed within it. In particular, since *paṭiccasamuppāda* is understood as the "middle way", where things arise due neither to predetermined fate nor to mere chance, the operations of *kamma* can also be shown to be neither deterministic nor fortuitous. This "middle way" has important implications for the Buddhist conception of human action. In particular, it means that humans have the freedom to redirect their lives, and ultimately choose to pursue the path to liberation.

1. Background and Assessment of the Problem

In the intellectual ferment that characterized sixth century BCE India, when Buddhism began, there were many different ideas pertaining to the nature of both causation and human action (*kamma*). Some sects, such as the Ājīvikas, preached a doctrine of determinism, which stated that all events are fixed and must occur according to the movement of destiny (*niyati*) (Kalupahana 1975, 36). In this case, *kamma* must be denied because it is unalterable destiny rather than human action that brings forth consequences (Kalupahana 1975, 38). At the other extreme were those who believed that no form of causality exists, and that one's actions and their effects are therefore governed purely by chance (*yadṛccha*).² This acausal philosophy which amounts to indeterminism was known as *adhiccasamuppāda*³. It also rejected the idea of *kamma* because this would imply a causal connection between actions and results. Buddhism, however, is known as "The Middle Way⁴," because it does not side with one extreme or the other. As we will see, the notion that allows the Buddha to take the middle way in approaching many of the philosophical questions of his contemporaries is that of *paṭiccasamuppāda*.

As the causal theories of other sects have implications for their theories of *kamma*, so too does *paṭiccasamuppāda* establish the rules by which *kamma* must operate. Because this governing causal principle of Buddhism is a middle way between determinism and indeterminism, and because we will show that

kamma is a subset of *paṭiccasamuppāda* according to the texts, we would also expect *kamma* to be neither completely deterministic, nor purely subject to chance. Before exploring this question further, it is important to examine the nature of the two extremes which are avoided by the middle way, paying special attention to their connection to action.

In attempting to understand the notions of determinism and indeterminism, it must be stated that the debate, as it was conducted in the Buddha's day, was always in relation to the quest for a specific goal, namely freedom from sorrow. That goal itself was understood in many different ways by different sects. In sects, such as Buddhism, where rebirth was accepted, the goal necessarily entailed freedom from entrapment in continual rebirth (*saṃsāra*).

In examining the question of how that goal may be reached through human effort, we can see three distinct possibilities. The doctrine of determinism (*niyati*) says that everything, including one's actions, occurs due to unalterable destiny, and therefore one will be released from the round of rebirth only when the fixed course of destiny leads one to this goal. The doctrine of *adhiccasamuppāda*, understood as "unsupported origination" holds that things do not occur through conditions and cannot be meaningfully related to what has occurred before. Therefore, according to that doctrine, one cannot be released from suffering due to one's own effort. No conditions would be set up by this effort which would be able to give

rise to the desired effect. One would have to rely on what can best be described as chance or "luck" for salvation. In both these extreme cases, then, a fool would have just as much probability of achieving liberation as a wise person.

In contrast to these, *paṭiccasamuppāda* holds that events do arise supported by conditions. Consequently, one can be assured that if the requisite conditions for salvation are set up through one's action and effort, then one will thereby reach the desired goal.

In the context of this thesis, then, the discussion of freedom of choice will focus around the question of whether and how one is free to choose to enter the Path to liberation and, through one's own actions, bring about bliss and release from suffering. We will see that in describing the general causal process obtaining in the universe as conditioned co-origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) and in subsuming *kamma* within this middle way, the Buddha avoided the extremes of determinism and indeterminism wherein human action would be ineffective, and aimed to give humans the freedom to attain liberation.

2. Aims

The present work has two aims. The first aim is to show that there is evidence in the Pāli suttas to bear out the thesis that as a specific application of the general concept of *paṭiccasamuppāda* to the sphere of human behaviour, *kamma*

functions along a middle way between the extremes of determinism and chance-origination. This first aim will be reached in two stages. The first stage will establish that *kamma* is indeed a function of *paṭiccasamuppāda*. This will be done by looking at some passages wherein the two are related directly. This information will be supplemented through an analysis of the operation of *kamma* in terms of *paṭiccasamuppāda*. It will be seen that the features of both concepts display a distinct similarity and interconnection. Having established that *kamma* is an applied function of *paṭiccasamuppāda*, the second stage will seek to demonstrate that because of this, since *paṭiccasamuppāda* lies on the middle way between chance and determinism, *kamma* and therefore human action is neither fully determined nor fortuitous, but rather allows for meaningful, effective choices to be made. A textual study of the workings of *kamma*, which will be undertaken in the body of this thesis, will demonstrate that this is indeed the case.

The second aim of this thesis is to lay bare the internal dynamics of the so-called middle way. This is in response to the question of *how* the Buddha's causal system actually works. We will have seen from the texts that it is neither fully determined, nor fortuitous, but it will require some further philosophical inquiry to understand just how it is that this is actually possible. For example, in the case of Na-Rangsi, a Thai scholar who has written a thoughtful book about *kamma*

and rebirth, he concludes that

A man in his present existence is reaping the results of his previous karma and at the same time accumulating new karma. His new karma will in turn form the conditions under which he will be reborn in the future. A man has a free will to act wisely or foolishly. If he, by his free will, reacts against his karmic conditions wisely and befittingly, by performing good actions, his meritorious karma will result in happiness... (Na-Rangsi 50)

Na-Rangsi's statement is true to an extent, but it still does not explain how it is that in a world where "no entity or being springs into existence without its antecedent condition" (Na-Rangsi 47), and where indeed one's very "condition and environment...are determined by the karma of his previous births" (Na-Rangsi 50), one can exercise "free will." Yet, as we will see, the possibility of freedom within a universe governed by causes and conditions is the case according to the suttas. To explain this, then, is the second aim of this thesis.

3. Synopsis

The first part of the thesis will be a textually based look at the relationship between *kamma* and *paṭiccasamuppāda* and the related questions that have been presented thus far. The second part of this thesis will deal with the way this relationship has been approached by two contemporary Buddhist scholars who are also well versed in modern scientific theories. Their work will be used to clarify some features of the Buddha's causal system. Part one, therefore, will deal

with both aims presented above. It will provide evidence from the suttas for a middle-way interpretation of *kamma* and will also attempt to explain how this middle-way operates, based on insight from the canonical texts. Part two will deal only with the second aim to explain how the process works.

In part one, we will look at the relationship between *paṭiccasamuppāda* and *kamma* as shown in passages which link the two directly. This will be supplemented with a fuller understanding and comparison of their respective characteristics garnered from the suttas. We will also look in detail at the twelve-membered chain of causation known as the wheel of life (*bhavaṇṇa*). This *bhavaṇṇa* is a specific application of causality to the arising of sentient existence. An examination of the *bhavaṇṇa* will show that humans are, in fact, free and able to pursue the Noble goal of liberation, and, furthermore, that it is precisely because *paṭiccasamuppāda* operates in the realm of human action that liberation is possible.

Finally, in the study of *kamma*, the importance of intention (*cetanā*) will be considered. It will be shown that the emphasis on the intention behind the deed not only characterizes the Buddhist system of *kamma*, but actually allows it to be conditioned, yet remain unfixed.

The first scholar who will be looked at in part two, David J. Kalupahana, is concerned with demonstrating that

paṭiccasamuppāda does not signify a completely determined type of causality. Kalupahana brings insights from Anglo-American psychology, empiricism and logical positivism into his field of enquiry. He emphasizes that the mind is a dynamic entity which is capable of processing experience. He also shows that *paṭiccasamuppāda*, as a dynamic process, replaces the idea that the inherent nature (*svabhāva*) of a cause determines the nature of the effect. His notions of psychological causation and his argument against *svabhāva* will be explored in part two with a view to explaining some of the questions that have emerged in part one.

Like Kalupahana, Joanna Macy also emphasizes that the dynamics of *paṭiccasamuppāda* are not deterministic. She, however, approaches the topic from the perspective of general systems theory. Her focus is on the non-linear features of *paṭiccasamuppāda*, which she claims have a strong basis in the *suttas*. From these, she concludes that *paṭiccasamuppāda* signifies a process wherein co-present factors are connected by intricate relationships of mutual causality. According to general systems theory, these features of mutual causality allow the mind-body complex to process the input it receives from raw experience and output something novel and unpredictable, all the while following strict laws of organization.

4. Boundaries

The present topic is one which is potentially quite large, for it concerns some of the most important and complex concepts in Buddhism. The first part of this thesis, therefore, will be concerned solely with the *Theravāda* school of Buddhism, and its Pāli literature. Because this is still a vast corpus, this thesis will focus on only a part of the *Theravādin* literature, notably the *Nikāyas*. These books purport to be collections of sermons of the Buddha or his immediate disciples, and form a large part of the *Suttapiṭaka*, which is the second of the three "baskets" of the Pāli canon. Because they consist of *suttas*, the term *Nikāya* will be used interchangeably with *sutta* herein. The collections of sermons which will serve as the basis for the present study are the *Dīghanikāya*, *Majjhimanikāya*, *Samyuttanikāya* *Aṅguttaranikāya*, and to a lesser extent, the earlier portions of the *Khuddakanikāya*. These collections are supposed to contain all the most basic and important teachings of the Buddha, and therefore present us with a good source of information about normative *Theravāda* Buddhism.⁵

There remains a large amount of Pāli literature which is relevant to the present study, notably the *Abhidhammapiṭaka*, and various post canonical works such as the *Milindapañha*, the *Visuddhimagga* and the *Abhidhammatthasangaha*. These will not be the focus of this thesis. In the case of the *Abhidhamma*, while canonical, this collection is the product of certain

scholastic developments of the ideas present in the *Suttapitaka*, and therefore does not represent the earliest notions of Buddhism. Whereas the suttas were most likely delivered at the time of the Buddha and remembered by his disciples from then on, the *Abhidhamma* was compiled about two centuries later at the third Buddhist council (Schumann 34-38; Kalupahana 1976, xi-xiv). The *Visuddhimagga* is a useful systematic work of Buddhist philosophy and doctrine by the great commentator Buddhaghosa. Although based on the *Sutta* and *Abhidhamma* texts, it was written in the fifth century and includes some concepts which developed in later times. The *Abhidhammatthasangaha* is an eleventh century systematic rendering of the *Abhidhamma*, and as such, it was used in this thesis as our major source for *Abhidhamma* concepts.

In part two, each modern scholar will be represented by some books which deal directly with the questions which have been brought up hitherto. We will be looking at David Kalupahana's book *Causality : The Central Philosophy of Buddhism* and to a lesser extent, *The Principles of Buddhist Psychology*. Joanna Macy's *Mutual Causality in Buddhism and General Systems Theory* will be examined as representative of her philosophy.

5. Method

Part one will be primarily a textual study. The *Nikāyas* will be discussed in terms of the evidence which they provide

for, and the light which they throw on, the argument that *kamma* is intimately connected to, and a subcategory of, *paṭiccasamuppāda*, and the effect that the non-deterministic nature of *paṭiccasamuppāda* has on the freedom of human action. The philosophical ramifications of the texts studied will be worked out in order to come to as full an understanding as possible of the system of causality in the realm of human action presented in the *Nikāyas*. Only where the wording of the chosen passages is ambiguous or the arguments they put forward are inconclusive, will the *Abhidhamma* and post-canonical Pāli texts be consulted. Divergences between what is said in the *Nikāyas* and the later works will be duly noted.

There will be no attempt to judge the historicity of the texts, nor will their correspondence to what may, or may not be the true nature of reality be assessed. Therefore, if a text says that the Buddha or one of his followers said something, it will be treated as if the person in question did in fact say it, whether or not this may actually have been so. In part two, we will see if the ideas of the modern scholars do in fact agree with what has been written in the canonical texts, and how they help to clarify some of the notions therein. In this thesis we will not be concerned with a critique of the scientific validity of their ideas but, assuming they are scientifically valid, will only discuss how they relate to the concepts we encountered in the Pāli *Nikāyas*.

6. Appraisal of Secondary Sources

The present project as a whole has not been dealt with at length by many scholars, although various aspects of it have figured individually as the subject of some study. Some of the most significant work in the area of *kamma* has been done by J.P. McDermott. In his *Development in the Early Buddhist Concept of Kamma/Karma* he has produced a systematic study of textual references to *kamma*. In the introduction, he calls our attention to "the centrality of the doctrine of karma of [sic] Buddhist thought," and laments "the absence of any previous systematic study of its development" (1984, xv). He has, as the title suggests, traced the historical development of the idea of *kamma*. However, he has not sought to explain systematically how *kamma* fits into the general Buddhist conception of causality. K.L. Seshagiri Rao, in his article "Karma in Hindu Thought", does point out that karma "represents the principle of moral causation, corresponding to the principle of causality of the physical world" (Pappu 23) but he does not, in his short article, examine the implications of this in detail, nor does he relate it to Buddhism. Na-Rangsi's *The Buddhist Concepts of Karma and Rebirth* complements McDermott's work well. Although less systematic, it is an illuminating and thorough study, and relates the idea of *kamma* to the Noble Path and liberation.

The approach of this thesis will differ from that of McDermott in that it will seek to synthesize the concepts of

kamma and *paṭiccasamuppāda* into a coherent system. While certainly owing much to McDermott's thorough investigation of the texts themselves, this thesis will also explore the more theoretical and philosophical side of the problem.

Gomez' article "Some Aspects of the Free-Will Question in the *Nikāyas*" raises some interesting questions. He agrees with our assessment of the *suttas*, namely that "the Buddhist denial of strict determinism is the affirmation of the effectiveness of human effort" (83). However, he claims that "it is not at all clear how the Buddhist can wriggle out of the deterministic quagmire into which his much cherished theory of conditioning *could* draw him" (87). We hope to show herein that a careful consideration of all the nuances of conditioning can rescue us from the "quagmire."

Overall, there is not a preponderance of scholarship that attempts to systematically describe the *Theravāda* understanding of *paṭiccasamuppāda*. Most books on Buddhism include a chapter explaining this concept, but rarely is it given more than a superficial rendering. To be sure, there is a greater amount of scholarship on *Sarvāstivāda* and *Mahāyāna* notions of conditioned co-origination (*pratītya samutpāda*).⁶ Collins' *Selfless Persons* does deal with *paṭiccasamuppāda* but is more concerned with the problem of continuity and the process of rebirth in the absence of a Self (*atta*). Other than the books specifically utilized in part two of this thesis, there is very little detailed examination of the

Theravāda conception of *paṭiccasamuppāda*.

7. Clarification of Terms

A) *Paṭiccasamuppāda*

Paṭiccasamuppāda is the term which, in a word, contains the essence of the Buddhist notion of causality. The Buddha himself felt that this concept is a very difficult one to understand. In the *Dīgha Nikāya*, Ānanda says,

It is wonderful, Lord, it is marvellous how profound this conditioned co-origination is, and how profound it appears! And yet it appears to me as clear as clear!

To which the Buddha replies,

Do not say that Ānanda, do not say that! This conditioned co-origination is profound and appears profound. It is through not understanding, not penetrating this doctrine that this generation has become like a tangled ball of string, covered as with a blight... (DN ii, 55)

As will be seen presently, *paṭiccasamuppāda* is quite complex. An analysis of both the term itself and the formula which it represents will show that *paṭiccasamuppāda* is a notion which holds together features of both linear causality and mutual causality. How features of linearity and mutuality are brought together in *paṭiccasamuppāda* will be shown in this thesis. This will lead us to a meaningful and rich understanding of the various nuances of conditioned co-origination.

As with many Pāli words, it is most enlightening to analyze its Samskr̥t equivalent - in this case, *pratītya*

samutpāda. The first word is the gerund of *prati* + √*i*. The word then means literally "having gone towards", "having fallen back upon," or, "having relied on." It is usually translated in this case as "dependent," or "conditioned." In the second word we find the prefix *sa*m coupled with the word *utpāda*. This word is the verbal noun of *ut* + √*pad*, and quite clearly means "arising/origination." Coupled with the prefix, however, there is a shift in meaning, for *sa*m generally indicates togetherness - some form of co-presence or conjoining. Thus this whole word may be rendered as co-origination. As we will see, this agrees with an interpretation of the general causal formula as descriptive of a process wherein cause and effect arise in a state of *mutual reciprocity*.

On the other hand, because the gerund form *paṭicca* has been used in the first word of the term *paṭiccasamuppāda*, a certain time sequence is suggested. Namely, it suggests that that which arises, does so based on something that *has already arisen in the past*.

We can see these same two features of co-presence (mutuality) and sequence (linearity) when we look at the formula which the Buddha designated to represent his idea of causality:

When this is present, that⁷ comes to be;
 from the arising of this, that arises.
 When this is not present, that does not come to be;
 on the cessation of this, that ceases.

*Imasmiṃ sati idaṃ hoti;
 imassa uppādaṃ idaṃ uppajjati
 Imasmiṃ asati idaṃ na hoti;
 imassa nirodhā idaṃ nirujjhati.* (SN ii,28)

The interpretation of the locative absolute, *imasmiṃ sati*, as the "co-arising" of cause and effect⁸ warrants the addition of the prefix *sam* to the word *uppāda*.

The rendering of the word *uppādaṃ* in the ablative in the above formula implies causal necessity in a more sequential manner - *from the arising of this, that arises.*⁹ This, then, would correspond to the use of the gerund in the term *paṭiccasamuppāda*. Thus, the use of the gerund and the ablative suggest causal sequence, and the prefix *sam* and the locative absolute imply co-presence.¹⁰

The term *paṭiccasamuppāda* will be interpreted in this thesis in such a way that both the idea of linear sequence between cause and effect and mutual co-presence will be accommodated. We will see that when an effect arises, the cause does not necessarily disappear. The "cause" and "effect" can continue their interaction.

It is important to note that in the formula, the emphasis is not on the productive power inherent in a cause,¹¹ rather what is being presented is the idea of necessary and sufficient conditionality (Gupta 24). This is especially evident in the second sentence, the negative formulation. It seems to say that when the necessary condition is not present, that is, when there are not sufficient conditions for the

arising of something, it will not arise. It is not yet clear from this description, whether a set of conditions is necessary, or whether there need only be one condition for the arising of something.

Because the Buddha was concerned primarily with the eradication of suffering and not with physical or metaphysical matters, he did not often apply the concept of *paṭiccasamuppāda* to these matters in his sermons compiled in the *Nikāyas*.¹² He did, however, apply it to the genesis of suffering itself in a formula with twelve causal links or *nidānas* known later as the wheel of life (*bhavacakka*). The twelve links in this series each represent a further condition which allows (human) suffering to come into being. This specific formulation of conditioned co-origination, *paṭiccasamuppāda*, as it is applied to the five aggregates (*khandhas*) which make up the human being is as follows:

conditioned by ignorance are the karma-formations [*saṅkhāra*]; conditioned by the karma formations is consciousness; conditioned by consciousness is name and form; conditioned by name and form are the six sensory spheres; conditioned by the six sensory spheres is contact; conditioned by contact is feeling; conditioned by feeling is craving; conditioned by craving is grasping; conditioned by grasping is becoming; conditioned by becoming is birth; conditioned by birth is old age and death, grief, lamentation, suffering, sorrow, despair. (MN i,263)

Avijjāpaccayā saṅkhāra/ saṅkhārapaccayā viññāṇam/
viññāṇapaccayā nāmarūpam/ nāmarūpapaccayā saḷāyatanam/
saḷāyatanapaccayā phasso/ phassapaccayā vedanā/
vedanāpaccayā taṇhā/ taṇhapaccayā upādānam/
upādānapaccayā bhavo/ bhavapaccayā jāti/ jātippaccayā
jarāmaraṇam soka-parideva-dukkha-domanassupāyasā

saṃbhavanti /

The eradication of these conditions leads to the eradication of suffering. This particular application of *paṭiccasamuppāda* is very useful and especially enlightening with regards to the present project to link *paṭiccasamuppāda* with *kamma*. It will therefore be explored in detail in the body of this work.

B) *Kamma*

There are two rather distinct but easily confused meanings of the term *kamma*. One sense of the word, the literal one, denotes action itself. It is a noun derived from the Samskṛt verbal root $\sqrt{kr}$ meaning to do or make, and is similar to the English words *deed* and *action*. It is considered to take one of three forms, either physical action (*kāyakamma*), verbal action (*vacīkamma*) or mental action (*manokamma*). The second sense of the word which is relevant to this thesis is a more technical one. In Indian philosophical parlance, the term *kamma* (Skt: *karman*) refers specifically to morally charged deeds which will "ripen" in the future. In ancient India, a topic which was hotly debated was whether actions do in fact have specific consequences (*kammaphala*) which ripen (*vipāka*) according to the deed that was done, and to what extent these consequences affect one's current state of being and one's future actions and experiences.

Those who upheld the doctrine of *kamma* asserted that a deed, once done, brings about certain consequences either in this life or another. In Buddhism, "the fundamental principle of the law of karma is that one will reap what one has sown by way of good or evil. Wholesome or unwholesome action is judged by its consequent fruition" (Na-Rangsi 49). A concise formulation of this type of *kamma* is found in AN v, 288:

Beings are responsible for their deeds, heirs to their deeds, they are the womb of their deeds, kinsmen of their deeds, to them their deeds come home again. Whatsoever deed they do, be it lovely or ugly, of that thing they are the heirs.

Thus the term *kamma* refers to more than just the deed itself, but to a whole process of fruition that arises dependent upon it. When it is said that a sect does not believe in *kamma*, therefore, it means that they do not believe that actions produce commensurate consequences.

As will be discussed in the body of this thesis, one of the distinctive aspects of the Buddha's particular notion of *kamma* is that the intention (*cetanā*) behind a deed is considered to be the core of the deed. This is summed up in a famous passage from the *Nikāyas*:

Intention is *kamma*. Having intended, one acts in body, speech and mind. (AN iii, 415)

cetanāhaṃ bhikkhave kammaṃ vadāmi; cetayitvā kammaṃ karotī kāyena vācāya manasā

This emphasis is an important factor in the moral system of Buddhism, for it ensures that one will suffer or be rewarded according to one's innermost tendencies (*saṅkhāra*).

It will also be seen that it is the emphasis on intention, and the way these intentions interact with our mental dispositions, that allows for a non-deterministic interpretation of *kamma*.

This is a marked divergence from earlier notions of *karma* in Vedic religion. It seems that the notion of *karma*, like so much else in Vedic religion, developed around the ritual of the sacrifice (*yajña*). What was important in Vedic times for the accumulation of merit was that a ritual sacrifice be performed correctly. There were many stipulations and the ritual had to follow the correct procedure or else risk being rendered ineffective (Pappu 26). Thus, according to the Monier-Williams Sanskrit-English Dictionary, *karma* was "any religious act or rite, as sacrifice, oblation, etc... esp. as originating in the hope of future recompense." That this view was prevalent during the time of the Buddha is attested to in the *Kūṭadantasutta*, where the King wishes to make a sacrifice which will bear beneficial fruit for himself and those involved in the ritual (DN i,136).

In the Upaniṣads, the earlier Vedic conception of *karma* began to be modified to include not only rituals but also the daily deeds performed by an individual. The law of *karma* is not systematically laid out in the Upaniṣads, but therein we do begin to see the prevalence of the idea that one's deeds, good or bad, will eventually bear fruit and these consequences will be meted out to the agent in *saṃsāra*.

There is still confusion in the Upaniṣads as to what type of deeds will be karmically operative. Must they be intentional or is it the actual performing of the deed which generates *karma* one way or the other? In the *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad*, there is an early formulation of *karma* in explicit terms.

As [the Self] does, as it acts, so it becomes: the doer of good becomes good and the doer of evil becomes evil; it becomes virtuous through a virtuous act and vicious through a vicious act. Others, however, say the self is identified with desire. What it desires, it intends, what it intends, it does, what it does, so does it become.¹³
(Br U, iv, 4.5)

Naturally, different ideas of *karma* developed throughout the ages, with some sects, like the Jains, ostensibly claiming that the deed itself was the karmically determinative element, and others, such as the Buddhists, holding intention to be decisive.

The Buddha's rejection of ritual as a way of acquiring good *kamma*¹⁴ goes hand in hand with his emphasis on the intention behind a deed. It is largely this emphasis on intention which distinguishes the Buddha's notion of *kamma* from that of other Indian religious teachers. The significance of the Buddha's emphasis on *cetanā* will be elaborated in the body of this thesis.

C) Freedom of Choice

In the context of Buddhism, the choice that is of ultimate importance is the choice to strive for liberation.

Our concern will not be with whether there is absolute Free Will. In other words, no argument will be made here that there is an autonomous, unconditioned Will which can choose any course of action with no outside influence. This, of course, would go against the basic concept of conditioned co-origination. For this reason, the term "freedom of choice" has been used instead of "Free Will."

For the purposes of this thesis, there are two main criteria that freedom of choice must satisfy. First, there must be at least two courses of action to choose from. If the possibility of only one course existed, then the use of the term "choice" would be meaningless.¹⁵ Second, it must be established that any of the choices could in fact have been made. In other words, that one acted one way and not another was not inevitable; the choice of one course over the other could have been made otherwise. As Russell says, one sense of freedom is that "we can choose which we please of a number of alternatives" (1929, 253). However, this "does not show that there is no causal connection between what we please to choose and our previous history" (1929, 253). Certainly, tendencies to act one way or another can be discerned, especially after the fact, but there is no way of predicting exactly what choices will be made, for they are not fixed. It will be seen that in Buddhism, the freedom to choose can be reconciled with conditionality, and in fact, emerges from it.

PART ONE***Paṭiccasamuppāda, Kamma and Freedom of Choice
in the Pāli Nikāyas***

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Chapter One
Direct Correlations Between Kamma and
Paṭiccasamuppāda

The first task in this study is to establish that *kamma* is indeed a function of *paṭiccasamuppāda* according to the early Buddhist texts. We will be looking for places in the *suttas* where the correlation between *paṭiccasamuppāda* and *kamma* is readily discernible. Having analyzed these passages, we will then be equipped to move on to passages whose import in this regard may not be as explicit, but which nevertheless shed light on *paṭiccasamuppāda*. The present chapter, then, will seek to isolate passages from the *Nikāyas* which can initiate our understanding of *paṭiccasamuppāda*, *kamma*, and how they are interrelated.

1.1 The Wise Perceive the Relationship

The following verse from the *Sutta Nipāta* displays an unmistakable connection between *kamma* and *paṭiccasamuppāda* :

'Tis thus in truth the wise perceive *kamma*
Seers of origin by way of cause
Men expert in result of deeds.

The world revolves by deeds, mankind revolves by deeds
As a pin holds fast the rolling chariot's wheel
So beings are in bondage held by deeds. (Sn 653)

*Evam etaṃ yathābhūtaṃ
Kammaṃ passanti paṇḍitā
Paṭiccasamuppādadassā
Kammavipākakovidā*

*Kammaṇā vaṭṭati loka
Kammaṇā vaṭṭati paṇḍā
Kammanubandhanā sattā
Rathassāṇḍiva yāyato*

Here it is evident that wise people see both *paṭiccasamuppāda* and *kamma*, and see that the two are related. Although the exact nature of this relationship is not made clear in this passage, it is plain that wise people possess knowledge of both *kamma* and *paṭiccasamuppāda*, and that the coupling of these two is no accident.

The second stanza of the *Sutta Nipāta* passage also reveals a connection between *kamma* and *paṭiccasamuppāda*. In later symbolism, the twelve-fold enumeration of *paṭiccasamuppāda* came to be viewed as a wheel.¹⁶ This wheel was held fast by the three unwholesome (*akusala*)¹⁷ roots of *kamma*, namely, greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*) and delusion (*moha*), and contained the twelve *nidānas* along its rim. There is a remarkable similarity between this image and that provided here, of the world revolving by deeds as a pin holds fast a chariot's wheel. When we look closely in chapter three at the wheel of life (*bhavacakka*), it will become clear that this wheel is the operation of *kamma*.

1.2 Correlation of the Standard Formulations

It is fruitful to look at some standard formulations of both *kamma* and *paṭiccasamuppāda* as they have come down to us through the ages in the Pāli texts. Besides providing a basic description of their respective concepts, these formulations embody an explicit correlation between *kamma* and *paṭiccasamuppāda*.

The general formulation of the principle of *paṭiccasamuppāda* (as it accounts for the coming into being of phenomena) is as follows:

When this is, that comes to be; from the arising of this, that arises...¹⁸

The Buddha gives a typical exposition of *kamma* when describing the visions he had on the night of his enlightenment :

I behold beings as they pass hence or come to be - mean excellent, fair, foul, in a good bourn, in a bad bourn, according to the consequences of their deeds. Indeed these worthy beings were possessed of wrong conduct in body, speech and thought, they were scoffers at the ariyans, holding a wrong view, incurring deeds consequent on a wrong view - these at the breaking up of the body after dying, have arisen in a sorrowful state, a bad bourn, the abyss, Niraya Hell. But these worthy beings who were possessed of good conduct in body, who were possessed of good conduct in speech...in thought, who did not scoff at the ariyans, holding a right view, incurring deeds consequent on a right view - these, at the breaking up of the body after dying, have arisen in a good bourn, a heaven world (MN i,23).

If we reduce this passage to its bare essentials, we find none other than the skeletal *when...then* formula of *paṭiccasamuppāda* coming into focus. To wit, "When this (wrong/right conduct) is, then that (bad/good rebirth) comes

to be."

The above passage suggests that the operation of *kamma* is part of the overall workings of *paṭiccasamuppāda*.¹⁹ Namely, *kamma* is a specific application of *paṭiccasamuppāda* to the realm of human action.

Unfortunately, one can only take this particular example so far, because the description of beings as they move from one bourn to another does not necessarily provide us with the full picture. It is not made clear whether the specific conditions which are mentioned as ones which lead to a good or bad bourn are, in themselves, sufficient for this process to occur. We are not told what other *kamma* and conditions may have been present which brought about the people's subsequent rebirth. As will be seen, as a causal law, *paṭiccasamuppāda* must account for the necessary and sufficient conditions for an event to ensue, without which it would not occur. This passage about *kamma*, then, while relating it to *paṭiccasamuppāda* in a basic way, does not account for this feature of sufficient conditionality adequately.

1.3 The Causal Occasion of Deeds

In MN I, 70 we see that

a Tathāgata comprehends as it really is the acquiring of deeds for oneself, past, future and present, both in their causal occasion and their result.²⁰ (My Italics)

This serves to indicate that deeds do have a causal basis. The passage is saying that deeds (*kamma*) fall within the realm of

paṭiccasamuppāda. They are not performed in a vacuum but come about due to the confluence of conditions (an occasion) and their results ensue according to the causal conditions set up by the deed itself. The above passage supports the contention that

[i]n Buddhism, all actions are understood within a causal matrix. Everything, every event, every action comes to be or takes place dependent on different causal factors. (Pappu 69)

If deeds did not fall within the same causal matrix that other elements of reality do, then *kamma* would obviously fall outside the domains of *paṭiccasamuppāda*.

Chapter Two

The Dynamics of Paṭiccasamuppāda

2.1 Introduction

The various features of *paṭiccasamuppāda* emerge through a look at some *suttas* where its qualities are explicitly stated, and especially through a detailed study of the general formula of causation which we met with in the Introduction. The first feature which will be considered is how aspects of linearity, namely the ordered succession of causes and effects, operate within the framework of *paṭiccasamuppāda*. It will then be shown that within *paṭiccasamuppāda* the cause is always a set of conditions as opposed to a single, all sufficient cause. The next stage of the argument will be an assessment of how mutual causality obtains amongst the members of these sets of conditions. Finally, the characterization of *paṭiccasamuppāda* in the *Nikāyas* as the middle way between radical determinism and indeterminism will be demonstrated and examined.

A few words about the two extremes of radical determinism and indeterminism are in order here. Determinism is the philosophical view that the course that events take is fixed by those which have gone before to such an extent that they could not occur in any other way. It is thus inevitable that things should unfold as they do because they are determined by

what has already happened.²¹ It is important to differentiate at this juncture two important aspects of determinism which are often confused. The first distinct feature is that mentioned above: everything that exists does so because, due to the sufficiency of its conditions, it could not have been otherwise. The second feature relates to the ability of sentient beings to actually determine what will inevitably occur. In other words, it holds that events are not only predetermined, but are predictable as well.

Radical indeterminism, or chance-origination, states that there is no reason for anything to happen and that there is no way of knowing what specific causes will lead to what specific results, even if one were to know all the variables involved.²²

A very important point which must be made is that an unpredictable and indeterminated system can result, even if many of its elements are determined. For a system to be completely determined in both senses of the word, all of its elements must be fully determined by previous causes.²³ This will become significant when we consider the complex network of conditions which are characteristic of *paṭiccasamuppāda*. In the delicate balance of conditions which are required for a given event, a relatively small change can initiate considerable transformations.

We will see that an understanding of *paṭiccasamuppāda* not only as a linear process, wherein one or many causes would

necessarily lead to specific effects, but also as a dynamic confluence of many conditions which are in a process of mutual interaction begins to emerge from the texts. It will become clear that predictability is denied, but yet there are specific conditions from which consequences arise. This will be the crux of the explanation of *paṭiccasamuppāda* as the middle way and will set the stage for the more detailed discussion which will ensue in the next chapter.

2.2 The Universal Scope of *Paṭiccasamuppāda*

A suitable place to commence the present study is with a look at some basic qualities of *paṭiccasamuppāda* as presented in the *suttas*. Kalupahana emphasizes the importance of the *Paccayasutta* of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* in this regard (Kalupahana 1975, 92ff). In this *sutta* the Buddha describes *paṭiccasamuppāda* in terms of four characteristics, namely, *tathatā*, *avitathatā*, *anaññathatā*, and *idappaccayatā*.²⁴ Kalupahana translates the four terms as "objectivity," "necessity," "invariability" and "conditionality."

The first term, *tathatā*, has many nuances that are beyond the scope of this thesis. The term means "that which actually is" (similar in connotations to *yathābhūtam*) and gives *paṭiccasamuppāda* objective, ontological status. At a time when some sects considered change to be a mental construct based on appearances, or questioned the notion altogether, the Buddha was adamant about asserting its actuality:

Whether, brethren, there be an arising of Tathāgatas, or whether there be no such arising, this nature of things just stands, this causal status, this causal orderliness, the relatedness of this to that. (SN ii,25)

Thus *paṭiccasamuppāda* describes the way things actually happen.

The next term, *avitathatā*, means literally, "that which is not opposed to *tathatā*," and therefore for our purposes may be understood as "that which is not untruth." It also has nuances which allow it to be rendered as "regularity" or "necessity." Buddhaghosa takes the term in this way, saying

[s]ince there is no failure, even for a moment, to produce the events that arise when the conditions come together, there is said to be necessity (*avitathatā*). (SA 2.41)²⁵

Anaññathatā means, literally, "that which is not otherwise." As Kalupahana points out, the two terms *avitathatā* and *anaññathatā* imply that *paṭiccasamuppāda* denotes "that there is a constant relationship between causes of certain kinds and effects of certain kinds" (1975, 94). Thus *paṭiccasamuppāda* precludes random sequences of cause and effects, because there is a distinct relationship between them.

Idappaccayatā is a term which means "having its foundation on this i.e. causally connected by way of cause" (PTSD 120). The term *idaṃ* in the compound points to the specific nature of the contexts in which the dynamics of *paṭiccasamuppāda* come into play. As for the term *paccaya*, meaning condition, it is well defined by Buddhaghosa:

As to condition, the word meaning here is this : It (the fruit) comes from that, depending thereon, thus that is a condition; the meaning is, a state occurs by not dispensing with that. What is meant is: When a state is indispensable to another state's presence or arising, the former is a condition of the latter. (Vsm xvii 68)

Kalupahana further adds that specific conditionality (*idappaccayata*) means that

...a thing comes into existence only if the necessary condition or group of conditions is available. Conditionality as a characteristic of causation is still more important in that it prevents causality from being considered a form of strict determinism. It places causality midway between fatalism and accidentalism. (1975 94)

Just how this is so will be explored later on.

These four terms, then, illustrate some of the essential features of the dynamics of *paṭiccasamuppāda*. It is objective and universal, and operates in a specific way through specific conditions.

2.3 Linearity and Mutuality in *Paṭiccasamuppāda*

A basic understanding of what is meant by "linearity" and "mutuality" is essential before proceeding further. As a very basic working definition, let us describe a cause as an event which has some relation to and effects some change in another thing or event. *Linear causality* describes the situation in which there is a one-way relationship between a cause and its effect. That is, the causal efficacy travels sequentially through time from the cause directly to the effect. It implies that temporal sequence is an essential feature of causal

effectiveness. It maintains that there is a uni-directional flow of causal efficacy. It is important to realize that this does not affect the number of causes or results that may be involved in such a transaction, but refers rather to the nature of the causal effectiveness itself. *Unilinear causality* refers to a one-to-one relationship between cause and effect such that one cause is sufficient to produce one effect. In this case, "inputs determine outputs in proportion to the information the inputs carry" (Macy 9-10). *Multilinear causality* implies that a single cause is insufficient to produce an effect, but must operate in conjunction with other causes.

Linear causality in general does not preclude the inclusion of more than one cause in the production of an effect, but it does limit the nature of their interaction. In this sense, if taken to its extreme, strict linear causality tends towards determinism. An example of uni-linear causality in everyday life which may serve as a model is turning on a light. The illumination of the light follows the turning on of the switch directly in time. There is a sequential aspect to the event, and there is change only in one direction. Multilinear causality can be seen when considering how an ICBM is launched. Three buttons must be pushed simultaneously in order to launch it (for security reasons). No one button is sufficient to bring forth the desired result, but the various causes do not rely on or alter each other in any way.

Mutual causation has two main features. First, it describes the state wherein the cause and the effect are co-nascent, and depend on each other for their existence. Secondly, for the relationship to be truly described as a mutual one, there must be two-way conditioning such that all the elements involved influence each other. Therefore, in actuality it is difficult to designate one as a "cause" and the other as an "effect." This type of causality is more difficult to comprehend and will be discussed in detail in what follows. Mutual causality, if taken to its extreme, tends to de-emphasize temporal sequence. At the present juncture, it will be helpful to illustrate such causality with a rough example. A thermostat is a good example of mutual conditioning. It adjusts itself according to the temperature in the room, and the temperature itself is of course affected by the thermostat. The functioning of the thermostat and the pleasant temperature in the room rely on each other for their existence. If the temperature were to get too hot, then the thermostat would switch off, and the temperature would cool down. The pleasant temperature and the thermostat, then, both support and affect each other.

Linear and mutual causality, although distinguishable, are not mutually exclusive in *paṭiccasamuppāda*. They are two different perspectives on the same reality. In some respects, a relationship can be characterized as mutual, and when looked

at another way, it can display aspects of linearity. In this chapter, we will examine these in more detail. In the next chapter, we will see that this coming together of mutual and linear causality holds true for the specific application of causality to the arising of sentient existence, the *bhavacakka*. When we bring the two aspects together and keep them in mind when thinking about causality, we can get a fuller picture and a better understanding of all the nuances of the causal system defined by *paṭiccasamuppāda*.

At this point, it ought to be illustrated how mutuality can mitigate the otherwise deterministic aspects of linearity and lead to a non-determined yet causal system (the middle way). In this regard, it is helpful to use some examples out of everyday experience which, although not perfect, can give the reader some idea of the interaction between these two types of causality. If one hits a billiard ball on an empty table, one is able to predict where it will go. This can be accounted for in terms of (uni)linear causality. However, if the table is full of other balls and the ball is allowed to interact with them, there are many more possibilities as to what course it may take and it is virtually impossible to predict accurately, although the final outcome is not based on chance.²⁶

Another example comes from biology. Some asexual organisms reproduce by fission, whereby the individual organism divides itself into two in order to produce an

offspring. In this case the offspring is quite identical to the "mother." In fact, it could be said that the offspring is present in the mother in a latent form all the time, and it becomes manifest through reproduction. There is little change throughout the generations, because of the one-to-one, unilinear nature of this type of reproduction. In animals which reproduce through sexual intercourse, a very different phenomenon occurs. Because no one set of genes is sufficient for conception, and because there is exchange and mutual interaction between the genes from the mother and father, there is the possibility for a great variety of outcomes. The final outcome is not, however, purely fortuitous, as is obvious because the offspring bear certain resemblances to the parents. There is so much variety possible, however, that the outcome is impossible to predict. Under certain conditions, generations of offspring can even evolve into a new species.

In the context of Buddhism, the distinctions and the interconnection between linear and mutual causality can be illustrated by considering the Four Noble Truths.²⁷ Briefly, they are as follows:

- 1) Life is suffering.
- 2) Craving is the origin of suffering, namely the craving for sensual pleasure (*kāmataphā*), craving for existence (*bhavataphā*), and craving for non-existence (*vibhavataphā*).
- 3) The cessation of suffering comes from the cessation, the abandoning, of craving.

4) This goal can be reached through following the Noble Eightfold Path of right view, right purpose, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.

Viewed from the perspective of linear causality, there would be a one-way relationship going from the "cause" - craving (*taṇhā*) - to the "effect", which is sorrow (*dukkha*). In this case, thinking in linear terms, if one were to trace the cause of sorrow, one might notice that it was from desires, and in particular, from not satisfying these desires, that sorrow arose. Furthermore, to get rid of these desires, and hence sorrow, the Buddha has put forward a Path (*magga*) with eight aspects. One might feel, and correctly so, that by following these stages, one would progress, through time, towards the desired goal. In this regard, the Buddha has said, "I do not say that one can win the final knowledge at the very beginning; it is had from a gradual discipline, a gradual mode of action and conduct" (MN i,479).²⁸

However, it would be a grave error to presume that this is the whole story. One's desires do not arise unsupported by conditions (*adhiṅggaṃsamuppanna*) and are not unaccompanied by other factors, nor is suffering an ultimate end with no causal efficacy in itself. Both desire and ignorance are themselves part of an intricate web which is conditioned by ignorance and all the other members of the wheel of life (*nidānas*). If, for example, we look closely at the definition of suffering in the

Noble Truths, we see that it does not isolate a particular instance wherein suffering arises, but rather claims that life itself is permeated in every way by suffering - "in short, the five aggregates of grasping are suffering" (DN ii,305). These aggregates are the very things of which we are made.

Therefore, desire can be traced as the cause of sorrow, but it cannot be said to be a sufficient cause for sorrow without looking at what other factors are present. To be sure, it is a necessary condition, but its presence alone does not mean that we can then predict the definite arising of suffering. Mutual causality accounts for the reciprocity and two-way conditioning of craving, sorrow and the many other factors which are involved in this collection of conditions. Instead of craving leading directly to sorrow, mutuality allows craving itself to be affected by sorrow, as well as the manifold other factors, especially ignorance, which are co-present at that very moment, and support the presence of the sorrow. In the definitions of craving, for example, we see that it involves such basic drives as craving for existence itself. Obviously one's perception of existence as being sorrowful would have a great impact on this very craving. Without ignorance and underlying notions such as the sense of selfhood (*attabhāva*)²⁹, there would be no network in which craving could exist. Likewise, without the destruction of the factors which mutually condition craving, how could craving be eradicated?

In his assessment of the Four Noble Truths, Sangharakshita comes very close to our position. It is worth quoting the passage at length due to its clarity of insight and its implication that linear and mutual causality are both at work.

What we really have to get rid of is not suffering but the imperfection which suffering warns us is there, and in the course of getting rid of imperfection and attaining perfection we may have to accept, paradoxically enough the experience of suffering as indispensable to the achievement of final success. True it is that by the experience of pain we are compelled to enter upon the Path, and true it is that when we arrive at the goal there will be no more pain; but if we think that following the Path means nothing more than the studious avoidance of painful experiences we are making a mistake of astronomical dimension... (Sangharakshita 155)

Furthermore, the Noble Eightfold Path itself can be seen with equal validity in terms of mutual causality as well as linearity. Each aspect of the path, while requiring training and practice built up through time, can be seen to augment and uphold every other aspect. For example, right views must be present if one is to have right mindfulness, but imagine how much the insight gained from the practice of mindfulness must also condition one's views. We also find that the aspects of the Path may be classified according to the three virtues of morality (*sīla*), wisdom (*paññā*) and concentration (*saṃādhi*), all three of which are necessary if one is to achieve the goal of liberation. They act in concert to provide the necessary conditions for salvation (DN i, 207).

As will become evident in the body of this chapter, the dynamic relationship between linearity and mutuality will be

an important theme in our quest to understand the nature of the middle way. The presence of elements of both types of causality will be a key point in both aims of this thesis. The dynamics of *paṭiccasamuppāda* as well as the dynamics of *kamma* will be explained in terms of the coming together of linearity and mutuality, thus illustrating the relationship of these two Buddhist doctrines. Furthermore, it will be shown that *paṭiccasamuppāda* becomes the middle way between determinism and indeterminism by mitigating the features of linearity with features of mutuality. Whereas the regular sequence of causes and effects could lead to determinism, in the dynamics of *paṭiccasamuppāda* this is prevented because linearity is always offset by mutuality in a reciprocal web of conditions.

2.4 Aspects of Linear Causality in *Paṭiccasamuppāda*

Linearity is evident in the standard formulation of the general law of *paṭiccasamuppāda*. Cast in the form, "If this is, that comes to be; from the arising of this, that arises. If this is not, that does not come to be; from the cessation of this, that ceases,"³⁰ the formula accounts for a linear relationship. All the necessary aspects of linearity are displayed here: there is an element which, through its presence, subsequently effects a change in the state of things. The second part of this formula in particular tends more towards a linear interpretation, for it uses the ablative (*imassa uppādā idaṃ uppajjati*) to denote the relationship

between the two elements, which is what one would expect in a linear situation.

Furthermore, a close reading of the general formula of *paṭiccasamuppāda* can lead to the additional revelation that it describes a relationship wherein a cause is related to its effect in such a way that the cause always leads to the effect, and the presence of the effect indicates that that particular cause is present. This accounts for the designation of *paṭiccasamuppāda* as "specific conditionality." In the case of *paṭiccasamuppāda*, the formula says that if A is present, then B is, and if A is not, B is not. We can infer A from B's presence, that is, B cannot be present for some reason other than A, because "if A is not, then B is not." We can also infer from B's absence that A is absent, because if A were present, B would be so as well.

Regular sequences of causes and effects are everywhere accepted in the *suttas*. Since linearity is always an aspect of natural and psychological processes, both of which are governed by *paṭiccasamuppāda*, the *suttas* maintain that it is possible to make sense out of life. There are reliable trends of development in the environment and in one's own personality. For this reason, as we will see, one can take stock of one's life and enter the path of enlightenment.

2.5 Sets of Conditions

One of the important aspects of *paṭiccasamuppāda* that must be ascertained is whether each effect arises out of a multiplicity of conditions, or just one condition. This is a crucial point because it opens up the causal system to a much more dynamic interpretation. A one-to-one form of causality would indeed be difficult to reconcile with the idea of the middle way. If, however, a multiplicity of conditions must come together in order for an event to arise, then one can begin to conceive of the possibility that events might not be predictable, which is at least a step towards breaking free of determinism. A confluence of conditions by its nature allows for a less rigid system than does a one-to-one relationship. Comparing this again to chaos theory, we note that a minor alteration in any one of the conditions may lead to a significant change in the overall outcome.

As has become evident, a one-to-one relationship between cause and effect could be suggested by both the general and specific formulations of *paṭiccasamuppāda*. In the general formula of *paṭiccasamuppāda*, "*imasmim sati idaṃ hoti*" it will be recalled, all pronouns are in their singular form, which may suggest that a single cause produces a single effect. Were the formula to say, for example, "From the arising of these, that arises," it would be clear that there must be a multiplicity of conditions for an effect to come about. However, the fact that the pronouns in the causal formula are

in their singular form does not in any way rule out a multiplicity of causes. The term *idam* may well be a collective noun (as in the expression *sabbam idam*, meaning "all this"). It would then refer to a collection of conditions which lead to the uprising of something. Furthermore, if we posit that there are other conditions that are required *in conjunction* with condition "A", then the possibility of a many-to-one relationship exists. There is no reason that when A is present, C and D cannot be present as well. C and D in this case represent co-present factors which are also required for the arising of B. In such a case, the presence of A may or may not be the most important factor, but nevertheless, it is quite possible that other factors besides A may be involved. For example, the formula "When A is present, B comes to be" may be altered to "when A is present, C and D are present, and B comes to be " or even, "When C and D are present, A is present, and B comes to be." None of these contradict the general formula, but only add further possibilities, which, as will become clear, are more in the spirit of how *paṭiccasamuppāda* operates. In this case, the use of the singular term *idam* would not only be understandable, but would be desirable. It would indicate a collection of causes, which act coherently together, forming a sufficient occasion for something to come into being.

The commentator Buddhaghosa provides us with some excellent insight into the role of multiple conditions in the

causal process. He displays an understanding of conditioning in chapter XVII of his *Visuddhimagga* which is in keeping with what has been put forward above. In explaining the term *paṭiccasamuppāda*, he says that "the word 'dependent' indicates the combination of the conditions, since states in the process of occurring exist in dependence on the combining of their conditions." (Vsm XVII, 22) This agrees with our findings in the suttas. Some scriptural passages that indicate that manifold conditions must come together for a result to ensue are presented below.

With regard to the conditions required for contact (*phassa*) between a sense-organ and its object:

Visual consciousness, your reverences, arises because of eye and material shapes; the meeting of the three is sensory impingement. (MN i, 111)

With regard to the fruition of *kamma*:

In that way, Ānanda, action is the field, consciousness the seed, and craving the moisture. (AN i, 223)

With regard to the formation of the person:

Like to a certain seed sown in the field,
Which, when it lighteth on the taste of earth
And moisture likewise, by these twain doth grow,
So the five aggregates, the elements,
And the six spheres of sense - even all these -
By reason of a cause they came to be;
By rapture of a cause they die away. (SN i, 134)

With regard to the *bhavacakka*:

It is just as if, brethren, because of oil and because of wick, an oil lamp were to be burning, and in it from time to time a man were to pour oil and adjust a wick. Verily such an oil lamp so fed, so supplied with fuel would burn for a long while. (SN ii, 87)

Buddhaghosa provides us with a further discussion of the possibility of sets of conditions in the *Aṭṭhasālinī* (76-80). This is a commentary on the Abhidhamma work *Dhammasaṅgani*, but his comments here are so pertinent to the present topic that they warrant a full treatment. Much of his insight is also based largely on *sutta* texts. His point of departure is the term *samaya*, which occurs in such passages as "perhaps tomorrow we might approach, having regard to time and *samaya*" (DN i,205), and "Bhikkhus, there is but one moment, one *samaya* for the practice of the holy life" (AN iv,227). He says that in these cases, the term *samaya* refers to the harmony in antecedents, opportunity, moment, condition and the like. We can thus understand the oft used term *samaya* to denote an occasion in which a confluence of factors come together and produce a certain event.

To expand, 'Harmony in antecedents' should be understood as the concurrence of causal relations established by their bringing about a common result. (Asl 77)

Buddhaghosa goes on to say that

Of these, *samaya* in the sense of 'harmony of antecedents' shows occurrence from many causes. By showing this, the view that there is one single cause is contradicted. By 'harmony of antecedents' is meant the mutual contribution towards the production of a common result. Therefore this also shows that there is no single agent. (Asl 79)

It is clear, then, that he agrees with the thesis that there is not a one-to-one relationship between cause and effect, but that on a given occasion, many factors may come together to effect a result. He bases this to a large extent on the connotations of the term *samaya* which is used often in

the *suttas* to denote such occasions. It suggests that at a given moment, there is a dynamic interplay of forces which have come together at just that point, conditioning whatever it is that arises at that time.

Buddhaghosa makes a very acute observation based on what has been said, which is very significant for the demonstration of *paṭiccasamuppāda* as a middle way. He points out that one might object to the idea of sets of conditions coming together in a *samaya*, claiming it to be analogous to a hundred blind men who are able to see when brought together. Buddhaghosa says that the analogy is not accurate because it is observable that some would-be conditions are not conditions when separate, but when they come together, they do indeed give rise to something new. For example, when the eye, form, and consciousness come together, even though individually, none of these can "see", together they are sufficient to give rise to sight. This, then, highlights the fact that from the confluence of conditions, a wholly different and even novel result may ensue, which might not even have been imaginable based only on a review of its component parts. This is not to say, however, that all conditions can fruitfully act in concord, for then the blind men would be able to see. What it does indicate, is that a set of several causes may prove sufficient to bring about something which is quite different from what the causes may bring about individually (if anything).

2.6 Aspects of Mutual Causality in *Paṭiccasamuppāda*

Let us now look for signs that *paṭiccasamuppāda* also operates in a manner consistent with the definition of mutuality presented above in section 2.3. If we look closely at the actual phrasing of the general formula of *paṭiccasamuppāda*, we see that the language is in fact open to such an interpretation. As has already been mentioned, in the formula *imasmim sati idaṃ hoti*, the phrase *imasmim sati* is a locative absolute, which can be translated: "while this is present," or "this being present." This, then, may be interpreted as indicating a form of mutual relationship wherein the cause and effect exist simultaneously.¹¹ This contention is supported by passages such as the one at SN ii,10 where the Buddha says that he asked himself, "What now being present, does decay and death come to be?" This indicates that he was concerned with just the type of co-present conditions which would characterize mutual causality.

As mentioned in the above section, it is clear that a single condition on its own does not amount to an effective cause in the Buddhist conception of *paṭiccasamuppāda*. What must be considered with respect to mutual causality, is whether the individual causes that constitute a set of conditions not only come together to bring forth an effect, but are themselves sustained and affected by the interaction. In one of the classical expositions of the *nidāna* system, the *Mahānidāna Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*, there is concrete

evidence of just this type of mutuality:

... name-and-form conditions contact. Consciousness conditions name-and-form... If asked, "Has consciousness a condition for its existence?" you should answer, "Yes." If asked, "What conditions consciousness?" you should answer, "Name-and-form conditions consciousness." Thus, Ānanda, Name-and-form conditions consciousness and consciousness conditions name-and-form, name-and-form conditions contact... (DN ii, 56)³²

The details of this passage and others like it will be discussed in the next chapter about the *bhavacakka*, because they are more closely related to it. At this point, allow it to serve to illustrate concretely what is meant by mutual causality.

2.7 *Paṭiccasamuppāda* as the Middle Way

We will now pursue the second stage of the first aim mentioned in the Introduction, which is to establish that the Buddha did indeed proclaim a "middle way." What must be established at present, then, is that *paṭiccasamuppāda* is, according to the suttas of the *Pāli Nikāyas*, a middle way between the extremes of determinism and indeterminism, and what exactly this entails. An explanation of just how the non-determined nature of *paṭiccasamuppāda* comes about is the second aim of this thesis, and as such will be undertaken in future sections.

Let us commence with a quote from Jayatilleke which will serve to lay out the parameters of the discussion.

Buddhism steers clear of the two extremes of strict Determinism as well as of total Indeterminism... The

Buddhist theory of causality was opposed to both these extreme points of view: to Indeterminism, which denied any pattern altogether, as well as to the theistic and naturalistic forms of Strict Determinism, according to which there was a rigid pattern over which man had no control...

These ideas are important when we come to study the doctrine of the conditioned genesis of the individual (the 12-link *bhavacakka*). What happens to the individual and the changes wrought in him are not arbitrary and due to chance, nor are they due to the will of God nor, again, to the operation of rigid physical, bio-chemical and economic laws of nature over which he has no control at all. In keeping with the Buddhist theory of causality, man is *conditioned* by various factors, hereditary, psychological and environmental, but he is not *determined* by them. (Jayatilleke 1975, 197-8)

In order to prove this from the texts, it is instructive to compare the Buddha's causal theory with that of other contemporary teachers. This will, in part, enable us to establish what *paṭiccasamuppāda* is definitely *not*, and hence will help us greatly in seeking to prove what it *is*.

Niyati is a deterministic doctrine that was held by some heterodox sects in India and indeterminism, or chance-origination (*adhiṇṇavāda*) was held by others. These doctrines are presented in the suttas as ones which the Buddha clearly rejected, so it is safe to assume that what they believed was not held by the Buddha. The Ājīvikas, one of the various ascetic *samāna* sects which were present in India at the time of the Buddha, held a deterministic view of causality. Consequently, there was in their view no escape from rebirth until the whole process had been completed, entailing countless lifetimes of suffering. One of the best definitions of determinism comes from the Ājīvika leader Makkhali Gosāla

himself:

All beings, all living things, all creatures, all that lives is without control, without power or strength, they experience the fixed course of pleasure and pain through the six kinds of rebirth. There are... eight million four hundred thousand aeons during which fools and wise run on and circle round till they make an end of suffering.

Therefore there is no such thing as saying: 'By this discipline or practice or austerity or holy life I will bring my unripened *kamma* to fruition, or I will gradually make this ripened *kamma* go away.' Neither of these things is possible, because pleasure and pain have been measured out with a measure limited by the round of birth and death, and there is neither increase nor decrease, neither excellence nor inferiority. Just as a ball of string when thrown runs till it is all unravelled, so fools and wise run on and circle round till they make an end of suffering. (DN i, 55)

One can easily see that this is not a particularly uplifting or edifying doctrine, and does not lead one to live the religious life. This would be the case if unilinear causality were pushed to the extreme as the sole aspect of causality obtaining in the world.

Another view that the Buddha clearly rejected was called *adhiccavāḍa*, meaning "unsupported, uncaused, fortuitous, without cause or reason" (PTSD 28). This view was connected to the idea that "The self and the world have arisen by chance" (DN i, 31) and clearly led to the extreme of *indeterminism*. It was held by another *samāna* sect, the *Lokāyatas*. In the *suttas*, this *indeterminist* doctrine is formulated as follows:

... there is no cause or condition for the defilement of beings, they are defiled without cause or condition. There is no cause or condition for the purification of beings, they are purified without cause or condition. (DN i, 55)

These two polar doctrines of *niyati* and *adhiccavāḍa* fall

under the classification of *akiriyavāda*, or "teachings which do not admit effective action." In the case of determinism, by definition, one cannot change the course of one's transmigration through acting one way or another. Therefore there is neither the possibility of liberation before the time fixed by destiny, nor the possibility of changing what is destined through willed action. Any action which is successful in achieving one's aim must have been determined not by the agent who acted, but by fate which deemed the action possible. Complete indeterminism leads to the same conclusion of non-action but for opposite reasons. If everything and everyone behaves in a certain way for no previous cause, then the idea of choosing a goal and working towards it becomes meaningless. It is easy to see that both these doctrines make it impossible to speak in terms of a true causal bond between one event or act and another. There are neither consequences to actions, nor is there moral responsibility. In short, according to these causal theories, "there is no fruit or result of good or bad deeds" (DN i,54).

In a very lucid account of the various doctrines which the Buddha did not hold (AN i,124), we are presented with reasons for his objections to them. He objects to the idea that all one's experiences are due to previous actions. His objection stems from the fact that there would be in that case no desire, effort or necessity in doing one deed or another, for all would be predetermined by past actions. Secondly, he

objects to the belief that pleasure and pain are due to an omnipotent, creator-God, because there would then also be no point or efficacy in intentional actions. Thirdly, he says that if all is uncaused and unconditioned, then one's actions would have no meaning or value, and certainly no effect. It is very interesting to note that he objects to these three views on moral grounds, and not logical ones. He does not say that they *cannot logically* be true, he merely says that were they true, then human life would be absurd.

In distinction to the extreme theories, the Buddha says that one can act purposefully to achieve liberation. Having expounded the causal arising of the world and human suffering in the Four Noble Truths (MN i, 48-49), the Buddha goes on to say that *there is a way of ending this process*, by following the Noble Eightfold Path. Were his idea of causality either completely deterministic or indeterministic, it would not allow for the purposeful redirecting of one's life in such a way as to bring about liberation from sorrow. As mentioned in the Introduction, it is ultimately this liberation from sorrow which is the central concern in Buddhism, and not a "total" freedom which would allow one to do absolutely anything that one wishes (i.e. absolute free will).

Let us think about what has been presented above and see how it helps crystallize some doctrines that the Buddha most certainly did not hold. If one were to construct a negative

formulation of the doctrine of *paṭiccasamuppāda* based only on what it is not, one would have to consider the following:

- 1) There is not a predetermined journey that all beings make through *samsāra*;
- 2) Humans are not powerless to effect change;
- 3) Phenomena do not occur for no rhyme or reason.

These characteristics of *paṭiccasamuppāda* are indeed found in the *suttas*, thereby confirming that it is neither fully deterministic nor pure chance. We have already seen that all beings may end their journey through *samsāra* by diligently following the Noble Eightfold Path. In the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* there are some passages which can be contrasted to bring out a number of these points. In many instances, it is established that suffering comes about due to causes and conditions, In fact, virtually every *sutta* in the *Nidānavagga* affirms the causal nature of suffering. For example at SN ii,70 it says:

Because of sight and visible objects visual consciousness arises, contact is the clash of the three; feeling is conditioned by the contact, craving by the feeling. This, brethren, is the arising of ill.

This verse may serve to establish that suffering is causally based -it does not occur for no reason. The verse suggests that when there is contact, suffering will arise. This could be misconstrued for determinism, were it not for passages such as the following:

With causal basis (*sanidāna*), brethren, arises thought of renunciation, not without causal basis. With causal basis arises thought of benevolence, not without causal basis. With causal basis arises thought of kindness, not without causal basis...Pursuing that question, brethren, the

Ariyan disciple practises rightly in three ways: in deed, word and thought. (SN ii, 151)

We are therefore instructed that *both* suffering (which in Buddhism entails rebirth and therefore implies a continual cycle) and the positive aspects of life which eventually lead to liberation are conditioned. This confirms that the Buddha's conception of causality does represent a middle way; humans are not fated to continual suffering, nor does liberation arise spontaneously. The conditions of determinism are not met, because the disciple can, through proper effort, affect his or her course. On the other hand, chance is certainly not responsible for liberation, as the positive virtues are specifically said to be due to conditions.

Gotama's own life illustrates the conditioned nature of the Path to enlightenment. Having been a prince, he was pampered and not allowed to venture beyond the palace walls or see any suffering. When he finally did go forth into the outside world, he saw an old man, a sick man, a dead man and an ascetic. These encounters conditioned his desire to abandon the world and seek enlightenment.³³ His quest was therefore not undertaken without any reason, but at the same time, it was a radical change from the course his life would otherwise have taken. In particular, it was in this case his *awareness* of suffering and sorrow which led to his enlightenment. This shows that the presence of suffering must not be taken to be *sufficient* for keeping one trapped in the realm of *samsāra*. Depending on how it is processed, it can lead to liberation as

well. We will return to this very important idea in future chapters, and it will figure prominently in our explanation of how the middle way functions.

2.8 Conclusion

We have seen that the texts support the thesis that *paṭiccasamuppāda* is an interplay of linear causality and mutual causality. We have also seen that *paṭiccasamuppāda* avoids determinism and indeterminism by affirming this very interplay of linearity and mutuality. It is clear that *paṭiccasamuppāda* points to a set of conditions which come together, creating an occasion for the arising of an effect. At a given moment, within this set of conditions a dynamic interplay between all the conditions is occurring, in keeping with mutual causality. However, as this set extends itself into the future, a linear-causal relationship is evident, and continuity is manifested. Through this process, *paṭiccasamuppāda* acts as a middle way between various extremes, notably those of determinism and chance-origination. One of the tasks of the next chapter will be to better relate the linear/mutual feature of causality to its function as a middle way. The implications of this for *kamma* are powerful, for it suggests that, as a subset of *paṭiccasamuppāda*, *kamma* must also be a middle way between these extremes and therefore leave room for human freedom.

Chapter Three

Paṭiccasamuppāda and *Kamma* in the Wheel of Life

3.1 Introduction

The twelve-*nidāna* (causal links)¹⁴ chain of causation commonly referred to as the wheel of life, or *bhavacakka*¹⁵ is a specific application of the general concept of *paṭiccasamuppāda* to the life and rebirth cycle of sentient beings. As Sangharakshita says, it is

an application of the principle of conditionality to the lives of the so-called individual as in accordance with the results of his karma he passes from birth to birth.
(126)

Recall that it has been argued that *paṭiccasamuppāda* is an all-encompassing law which operates within all specific conditions of life. It is said in the *Mahātaphāsaṅkhayasutta* (MN i,263) that the twelve links in this series are examples of the general causal formula at work. Moreover, the *bhavacakka* is introduced in the *Nidānavagga* of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* by the Buddha, saying, "What, brethren, is the causal law (*paṭiccasamuppada*)?" (SN ii,1). This leaves little doubt that the *bhavacakka* is presented in the *suttas* as a specific application of the general formula of *paṭiccasamuppāda*.

The twelve-*nidānas* which make up the *bhavacakka* are

enumerated as follows:

conditioned by ignorance are mental dispositions;
conditioned by mental dispositions is consciousness;
conditioned by consciousness is name and form;
conditioned by name and form are the six sensory spheres;
conditioned by the six sensory spheres is contact;
conditioned by contact is feeling; conditioned by feeling
is craving; conditioned by craving is grasping;
conditioned by grasping is becoming; conditioned by
becoming is birth; conditioned by birth is old age and
death. (SN ii,1) (My translation)

Thus we have:

- 1) ignorance (*avijjā*)
- 2) mental dispositions (*saṅkhāra*)
- 3) consciousness (*viññāṇa*)
- 4) name-and-Form (the mind-body complex) (*nāma-rūpa*)
- 5) the six sense-fields (*saḷāyatana*)
- 6) contact (*phassa*)
- 7) feeling (*vedanā*)
- 8) craving (*tanhā*)
- 9) attachment (*upādāna*)
- 10) becoming (*bhava*)
- 11) birth (*jāti*)
- 12) old-age and death (*jarā-marapa*)

It is of importance to note that the *bhavacakka* immediately demonstrates that there is a possibility of altering the course of one's lives so that a deterministic, unending course of continual rebirth is avoided. The usual enumeration of the arising of the *bhavacakka* is often followed by the reverse enumeration of the cessation of the *bhavacakka*.

This is so, as will become evident, because of the dictates of the general formula of *paṭiccasamuppāda*. Indeed, the Buddha declares in one of his discussions of the *bhavaṇṇakka*, "I say that liberation is causally associated, not uncausally associated" (SN ii,30).

3.2 The *Bhavaṇṇakka* as a Middle Way

It must first be established that the texts point to an association of the *bhavaṇṇakka* with the middle way. This will set up the framework for a discussion of how the *bhavaṇṇakka* functions as the middle way.

Two theories about which the Buddha is questioned in the *Nidānavagga* are the eternalist (*sassatavāda*) and the annihilationist (*ucchedavāda*) theories. He answers Kassapa the monk's queries saying,

One and the same person both acts and experiences [the results]. This, Kassapa, which you called at first "suffering self-wrought," amounts to the Eternalist theory. "One acts, another experiences [the result]": this, Kassapa, which to one smitten by the feeling occurs as "suffering caused by another," amounts to the Annihilationist theory.

To you, Kassapa, the Tathāgata, not approaching either extreme, teaches the Norm by a middle [way]... (SN ii,19)

The Buddha then proceeds to enumerate the links of the *bhavaṇṇakka* and points out that they lead to decay and death, grief, and suffering. The question to be explored now is, what does the rejection of the positions presented by Kassapa tell us about determinism and indeterminism with reference to the *bhavaṇṇakka*? Gomez, in his article "Some Aspects of the Free-

Will Question in the *Nikāyas*" helps to shed light on the problem. He claims that

The basic dilemma could be stated thus: "if there is control, then there must be a controlling power which must be 'self existing' or 'independent' (self-acting). On the other hand, if there can be no control, since no control implies total dependence on external conditions, then there is determinism. The Buddhist answer is, of course, neither of the two horns, but a middle way. (Gomez 86)

Thus the idea that an eternal, hence unconditioned self can be in control of its activities allows for freedom. However, it does so by *abrogating the causal principle*. On the other hand, if suffering is wrought by another, it is easy to see that, taken to its logical extreme, this would lead to determinism. It would also not allow the person to achieve liberation by his or her own effort.

From the answers given in the *suttas* by the Buddha to the various questions about causation, it becomes apparent that the twelve *nidānas* are intended to actually *replace* the idea of a soul which continues on through time. As McDermott asserts,

What is posited is a locus of points in a changing causal stream, rather than a permanent entity of any sort which may be said to transmigrate. (1984, 4)

Rejecting the positions that suffering is caused by the self or by forces external to the self, the Buddha posits that through a causal chain, a connection is made between the performance of the action and the experience of its consequences. According to the Buddha, the proper

understanding of causality allows one to dispense with such terms as "Soul, Self, I am this body, I experience rebirth" which the theory that all actions are caused by the self can suggest. Proper understanding of the *bhavacakka* allows one to replace these ideas of the self with the twelve-*nidāna* rendering of *paṭiccasamūppāda*. For example, in one instance, a monk asks the Buddha how deeds can affect the self in the future if they are not performed by that same self in the present. The Buddha answers that one must not look for the self, but for the conditions out of which the deed arises (MN iii,19). From this we gather that suffering is neither wrought by the self, nor is it reaped by the self, but occurs through conditions as part of the *bhavacakka*. For this same reason, suffering is also not caused by factors totally external and unrelated to the person. Instead the doer and the receiver are related to each other through a causal series. This series, however, should not be considered to form a deterministic chain. The Buddha, in taking the middle way, maintained that these conditions enter into such mutual, reciprocal relationships so as to mitigate strict linearity. Precisely because one's continuity is maintained by the sum of all the conditions at any given time, each time one experiences something, "what one is" is changed by that very experience. While maintaining continuity, the *bhavacakka* thus allows for change by including the changing nature of the organism itself amongst the set of factors which condition experience.

3.3 The Relationship Between Linear and Mutual Causality in the Bhavacakka

The twelve links of the *bhavacakka* are generally enumerated in a specific order and fulfill the requirements for linear causality. In the Pāli, the links are laid out in the following manner: *avijjapaccayā saṅkhāra; saṅkhārapaccayā viññāna; viññānapaccayā nāmarūpa...* In this case, the "cause" (*paccaya*) is denoted by the use of the ablative, which as we have discussed in the Introduction suggests a certain direction of causal efficacy. The series may thus be rendered, "from the condition of ignorance comes mental dispositions, from the condition of mental dispositions comes consciousness..." This sequence of *nidānas* stresses regularity and succession. However, as presented in the texts, there is no reason why each link of the wheel should operate as the sole cause at any moment in time to the exclusion of the others. In other words, as life progresses from birth to death, while the twelve links of the *bhavacakka* may highlight one or another feature of life, it should be understood that this does not mean that the other links are not there at the same time. As we have seen, all things arise out of sets of conditions, and the *nidānas* are no exception. The mutual interplay of the *nidānas* is always a feature of the *bhavacakka*.

As mentioned in chapter two, in one of the classical expositions of the *nidāna* system, the *Mahānidāna Sutta* of the

Dīgha Nikāya, we see an illustration of just this type of mutuality:

... name-and-form conditions contact. Consciousness conditions name-and-form... If asked, "Has consciousness a condition for its existence?" you should answer, "Yes." If asked, "What conditions consciousness?" you should answer, "Name-and-form conditions consciousness." Thus, Ānanda, Name-and-form conditions consciousness and consciousness conditions name-and-form, name-and-form conditions contact... (DN ii, 56)³⁶

This passage was explained by the disciple and teacher Sāriputta in SN ii,113 as follows:

'Name-and-shape is conditioned by consciousness; consciousness is conditioned by name-and-shape. How, friend Sāriputta, is the meaning of what you have said to be regarded ?'

'It is just as if , friend, there stood two sheaves of reeds leaning one against the other... If I, friend, were to pull towards me one of those sheaves of reeds, the other would fall; if I were to pull towards me the other, the former would fall'

This illustration became quite famous and describes very satisfactorily the mutual dynamics that are involved amongst the links of the *bhavaṇṇa*. The two sheaves of reeds are interdependent and influence each other to such an extent that they are truly mutually supportive. If one is moved, it will push the other in a like manner, and if one is withdrawn, the other will not be able to sustain itself.³⁷ This relationship between consciousness and name-and-form is further evinced in the *Mahātaphāsaṅkhasutta*. There, the belief that consciousness can survive without the mind-body complex after death is clearly presented as a wrong view (MN i,256ff).

In another case, in the *Sammādiṭṭhisutta* (MN i,54ff),

ignorance is said to arise due to the cankers, yet the cankers arise due to ignorance. These cankers (*āsava*)³⁸ are deep rooted unwholesome mental tendencies that keep one entrapped in ignorance. This formulation is exactly the same as that which characterizes the relationship between consciousness and name-and-form. It can therefore be said that ignorance and the cankers mutually condition each other, relying one on the other for its existence. The commentary confirms this view, saying "here the cankers of sense-pleasures and becoming are, through co-nascence, the causes of ignorance...ignorance is the cause, through co-nascence, of the cankers..." (MA i,223).

Even in passages where this mutual relationship between the *nidānas* is not expressed overtly in the above form, such a relationship is nevertheless implied. In order to see this, it is first necessary to provide some definitions for each of the *nidānas*. Let us, then, look at the basic definitions of the *nidānas* given in SN ii, 2 :

And what, brethren, is old-age-and-death (*jarā-marāṇa*)?

That which, of this and that being, in this and that group, is decay, decrepitude, breaking up, hoariness, wrinkling of the skin, shrinkage of a life-span, over-ripeness of faculties: this is called old-age. That which, of this and that being from this or that group, is falling or decease, separation, disappearance, mortality or dying, accomplishment of time: separation of component factors, laying down of the carcass, this is called death. Thus it is this decay and this dying that is called old-age-and-death.

And what, brethren, is birth (*jāti*)?

That which, of this and that being in this and that group, is birth, continuous birth, descent, reproduction, appearance of component factors, acquiring of sense-spheres. This is called birth.

And what, brethren, is becoming (*bhava*)?

Three are these becomings: becoming in *Kāma*-worlds, becoming in *Rūpa*-worlds, becoming in *Arūpa*-worlds...

And what, brethren, is grasping (*upādāna*)?

There are these four graspings: grasping of desires, grasping of opinion, grasping of rule and ritual, grasping of soul-theory...

And what, brethren, is craving (*taṇhā*)?

There are these six groups of craving: craving for things seen, for things heard, for odours, for tastes, for things tangible, for ideas...

And what, brethren, is feeling (*vedanā*)?

There are these six groups of feeling: feeling that is born of eye-contact, feeling that is born of ear-contact...of nose-contact...of tongue-contact...of body-contact...of mind contact...

And what, brethren, is contact (*phassa*)?

There are these six groups of contact: eye-contact, ear-contact, nose-contact, tongue-contact, body-contact, mind-contact...

And what, brethren, is sixfold-sense (*saḷāyatana*)?

The sense of eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind...

And what, brethren, is name-and-shape (*nāmarūpa*)?

Feeling, perception, will, contact, work of mind. this is called name. The four great elements and the shape derived from them. This is called shape...

And what is consciousness (*viññāṇa*)?

These are the six groups of consciousness: eye-consciousness, ear-, smell-, taste-, touch-, mind - consciousness...

And what are the activities (*saṅkhāra*)?

These are the activities: those of deed, speech and mind..

And what is ignorance (*avijjā*)?

Nescience concerning ill, its rise, its cessation and concerning the way going to the cessation of ill. This is called ignorance.

From these definitions it is evident that each *nidāna* is a complex set of conditions which are in dynamic reciprocal relationships. No *nidāna* is defined as a single, irreducible condition. This notion is further expounded by Buddhaghosa:

Here there is no single or multiple fruit of any kind from a single cause, nor a single fruit from multiple causes, but only multiple fruit from multiple causes. So from multiple causes, in other words, from temperature, earth, seed, and moisture, is seen to arise a multiple fruit...But one representative cause and fruit is given

in this way , "With ignorance as condition there are *saṅkhāras*..." (Vsm XVII, 105-106)

Let us look at the definition of consciousness provided in SN ii,2, as an example. Here it is said that consciousness is sixfold, being visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, tactile and mental. This definition of consciousness itself, then, logically demands that there must also be a body with its sense-organs present in order for consciousness to arise. Although these sense-organs are usually enumerated after consciousness in the twelve-*nidāna* list, it is implied that they are co-present with consciousness and support consciousness in a special way.

Looking at other *nidānas*, we notice for example that neither ignorance nor *saṅkhāras* (mental dispositions) can function in a vacuum. Although *saṅkhāras* are conditioned by ignorance, there certainly cannot be ignorance without a karmically generated mind-body complex to support it. Thus ignorance and the other *nidānas* are mutually conditioned. As ignorance changes, so do the rest of the *nidānas*, and as the nature of the others change ignorance may change as well. For example, if one makes contact with the teachings of the Buddha through the sense of hearing, and if one responds with positive feelings, the entire *bhavacakka* including ignorance undergoes change.

Links three to seven of the *bhavacakka* also exhibit mutual causality. Each link must arise based not just on the previous one, but with a whole set of conditions including a 1

the other links. The senses must exist along with the mind-body complex, and do not come after it as the order of the links seems to suggest. Not only does one logically have to posit a set of conditions including the senses, the body and the mind for contact to arise, but the suttas state specifically that a set of conditions is indeed required, namely the meeting of the sense organ, the sense object, and the appropriate type of consciousness (MN i,111). Feeling, too, being sixfold and related to the six sense-spheres in this definition, requires the existence of the senses and all that that entails, and is not spawned from contact alone. Furthermore, these *nidānas* are synonymous with the five aggregates which make up the human being.³⁹ These aggregates clearly all exist together and are a set of conditions which, when they come together, foster sentient human existence. Even the appearance of terms such as becoming (*bhava*) and birth (*jati*) towards the end of the series does not invalidate our interpretation. When we consider that there are many conditions which are constantly interacting at every moment, we begin to see that this process accounts for a constant state of becoming. Through the interplay of these conditions, we are re-making ourselves (and in that sense being re-born) at every moment.

Our analysis of the *bhavacakka* demonstrates the interplay of linearity and mutuality with regard to the twelve *nidānas*.

Because of this interplay it is possible to make a train of alterations in one's life, with each changed condition setting off patterns of related changes. This leads to a system which is in accordance with the *paṭiccasamuppāda* principle of "conditioned but not pre-determined."

The following statement by Lama Govinda is quoted at length because it so aptly conveys the significance of mutual causality in the *bhavaṇṇa*:

Since the entire series [may] be thought of as a circle, every link can be combined with another (as is, in fact, carried out in the *Paṭṭhāna*) and, indeed, in whichever succession one chooses (whereby only the emphasis, but not the substance, would change)....In this way we have here neither a purely temporal, nor yet a purely logical causality, but a living, organic relationship, a simultaneous correlation, juxtaposition, and succession of all the links, in which each, so to say, represents the transverse summation of all the others, and bears in itself its whole past as well as all the possibilities of its future. And precisely on this account the entire chain at every moment and from every phase of it, is removable, and is neither tied to "causes lying in an unreachable, distant past", not yet referred to a future beyond the limits of vision in which perhaps, some time, the effects of these causes will be exhausted. Only thus is the possibility of becoming free conceivable, for how could causes heaped up since beginningless time, and working on with natural necessity ever come to an end? ...The law of dependent origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) is, in fact, the Middle Way avoiding the extremes of rigid necessity - with which the free will would be incompatible - and blind chance which would make development and progress towards a higher goal impossible. (Govinda 56-57)

We would only add that, while at every moment, the dynamics of the *bhavaṇṇa* exhibit mutual causality among the *nidānas*, the whole web of conditions proceeds through time in a linear fashion. For training to take on meaningful dimensions, there must be some interaction between what has happened in the

past and what is happening in the present. What is being practiced in the present must also set up conditions which will lead to further progress in the future. While mutual causality, as we will see, accounts for the initiation of this process, it is the interaction of mutual and linear causality which allows the process to take shape and develop in a coherent manner.

3.4 The Formula of the Cessation of Suffering

The Buddha says that in his quest for enlightenment, he asked himself about the possibility of liberation from sorrow.

Alas! This world has fallen upon trouble...O when shall escape from this suffering, even from decay and death be revealed? (SN ii,10)

Through such questioning he was able to come to a full understanding of the subtleties and implications of *paṭiccasamuppāda*. In answer to his searching question, the Buddha says:

then to me, thinking according to law, came to pass comprehension of insight: let there be no birth, the decay-and-death ceases. (SN ii,11)

This realization is proclaimed in the reverse order enumeration of the twelve *nidānas*, to wit:

From the utter fading away and ceasing of ignorance is the ceasing of *saṅkhāra*; from the ceasing of *saṅkhāra* is the ceasing of consciousness...from the ceasing of birth is the ceasing of old-age and death, grief, lamentation, suffering, sorrow, and despair. Such is the ceasing of this entire mass of suffering. (SN ii,2)

This reverse enumeration explores the second part of the general formula of the *bhavacakka*, namely, the process of

conditioning by which cessation occurs: *imasmiṃ asati, idaṃ na hoti*. This reverse formulation provides us (as it did for the Buddha) with the first intimations that the wheel of life need not revolve continually, but does embody the possibility of liberation through cessation (*nirodha*) of the twelve *nidānas*. It is important to note that liberation is possible, according to this, *because of*, and not in spite of conditioned co-origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*).

3.5 The Conditions of Liberation Lie Within *Paṭiccasamuppāda*

The question as to whether there is an autonomous, controlling Will which can initiate changes in the system is still a pertinent one. Having discussed the interplay between linear and mutual causality, it must now be explained more specifically how according to the *suttas*, changes can be initiated from within the causal system itself that will lead to liberation. How does one move from the usual, generative aspect of the wheel and initiate the cessation of the various *nidānas*?

In discourse 23 of the *Nidānavagga* we are presented with a twenty-four linked causal chain which is intended to answer the question, how are the cankers (*āsavas*) to be extinguished? The extinction of the *āsavas* is the culmination of Buddhist practice and a sign that one has indeed become an *arahant*. The Buddha first affirms that this process does lie within the causal nexus, saying,

I say that liberation is causally associated, not uncausally associated. (SN ii,30)

He then proceeds to enumerate the particular conditions that lead to liberation and the cessation of suffering, as follows:

- 1) ignorance (*avijjā*) conditions
- 2) mental dispositions (*saṅkhāra*)
- 3) consciousness (*viññāṇa*)
- 4) name-and-form (*nāma-rūpa*)
- 5) six-sense spheres (*saḷāyatana*)
- 6) contact (*phassa*)
- 7) feeling (*vedanā*)
- 8) craving (*taṇhā*)
- 9) grasping (*upādāna*)
- 10) becoming (*bhava*)
- 11) birth (*jāti*)
- 12+13) sorrow (*jarā-marapa/dukkha*) conditions faith (*saddha*)
- 14) faith (*saddha*)
- 15) joy (*pāmojja*)
- 16) rapture (*pīti*)
- 17) serenity (*passaddhi*)
- 18) happiness (*sukha*)
- 19) concentration (*saṁādhi*)
- 20) knowledge into things as they really are (*yathābhūtamānānadassana*)
- 21) repulsion (*nibbidā*)
- 22) passionlessness (*virāga*)
- 23) liberation (*vimutti*)
- 24) knowledge about extinction (of the cankers) (*khaye āṇāma*)

Sangharakshita points out that in this particular enumeration, the link of old-age-and-death doubles as sorrow, which then becomes the first of a series of conditions which leads to liberation (137). Sorrow, then, has two possibilities. It may lead to further entrapment within the cycle of rebirth, or it may be a catalyst for the process leading to liberation. In this case, instead of leading to ignorance, sorrow would lead to faith.

In the web of conditions of the *bhavacakka*, a specific condition itself does not have to change its nature, since a

mere change in its relation to the other conditions ought to be enough to initiate new directions. Thus patterns of change can be initiated by a re-structuring of existing conditions, which can lead out of the cycle of suffering and towards liberation. In this twenty-four *nidāna* representation of the *bhavacakka*, because of the way the conditions of sorrow (as represented by pain, decay, old-age and awareness of death) interact with the other conditions in the wheel and with the influences that come from the environment, instead of leading to further entrapment in ignorance, they can lead to the faith that drives one to enter the path of liberation. As a condition for the awareness of impermanence and the folly of the belief in a self, sorrow can begin to turn the wheel in a more positive direction. Thus the same set of conditions can lead to more sorrow and ignorance or to faith. Both these possibilities lie within the general dynamics of conditioned origination.

As we have seen that the *nidānas* are co-present and mutually interacting, we must realize that these features apply to the liberation series as well. These positive *nidānas* do not occur in a nebulous void, but rather are an integral part of life itself. It is in fact by virtue of existing within the wheel of life that humans have the possibility to access these wholesome *nidānas*. Thus the *bhavacakka* need not continually lead to suffering, but it provides us with the very opportunity to eradicate suffering through a commensurate

change in our attitudes and our state of ignorance. Thus in Buddhism, liberation does not come from some great power beyond, but is potentially right there alongside the very conditioned process of life and death itself. A poignant example of this is the story of the mother and the mustard seed.⁴⁰ This story relates how a grieving mother came to the Buddha seeking medicine for her dead son. The Buddha told her that she must find some mustard seed, but it must come from a house where no one has died. The mother went to a nearby town in search of the seeds and, after having entered a number of households, realized that her task was in vain. She realized that all things are subject to decay and death, and was finally able to lay her son, and her grief, to rest. In this way, then, it was sorrow which led to understanding.

This list of twenty-four *nidānas*, then, illustrates that the path to enlightenment is within *paṭiccasamuppāda*. The links from "faith" to "knowledge of the cessation of the cankers" just like those from "ignorance" to "sorrow" are co-present within the causal realm, and can be brought into play by sorrow..Because of the dynamics of *paṭiccasamuppāda*, these positive links need not be accessed all in one instant. They represent a definite path which can be embarked upon. It can be seen that each link builds upon the last until the culmination in the destruction of the *āsavas*. As one progresses on this path, one's wholesome virtues increase and the noose of desire and ignorance is weakened. This linear

aspect of the twenty-four *nidānas*, then, complements the mutual aspects and leads to a rich understanding of life and the path to liberation. Because both the conditions of suffering and the conditions of liberation are co-present in life, the potential is always there in every moment of suffering to initiate faith and the path to liberation. Because as a whole, life progresses sequentially, with current experience built upon the past, the opportunity exists for one to gradually cultivate the requisite conditions for liberation and be assured that as one progresses, the conditions which have come to the fore will augment each other, leading one closer and closer to the desired goal.

3.6 *Kamma* in the *Bhavacakka*

What light does the *bhavacakka* throw on our understanding of *kamma* itself? What light does the *bhavacakka* throw on the question of determinism and freedom of choice in the process of *kamma*? We have analyzed the operation of the *bhavacakka*, and its connection to *paṭiccasamuppāda* but it is now necessary to examine more closely its connection to *kamma* and these questions. The purpose of this will be to relate the ideas which we have encountered thus far in their more general manifestations, directly to the process of accumulating deeds and their fruition.

In the *Abhidhamma*, the "three lives interpretation" of the *bhavacakka* was developed to show that the *bhavacakka* is

the wheel of *kamma*. This three life interpretation is a temporal rendering that has become popular⁴¹ and is so called because it understands the *nidānas* as operating over the course of three lives. In this case, the first two *nidānas* are said to pertain to the previous life, the middle eight to the present life, and the last two to the future life.⁴²

Ignorance		Former Existence /	past
Karma-formations			causes of <i>kamma</i>
Consciousness		Present Existence/	present
Name-and-form			effects of <i>kamma</i>
Six-sense-spheres			
Contact			
Feeling			
Craving		Present Existence/	present
Grasping			causes of <i>kamma</i>
Becoming			
Birth		Future Existence/	future
Old-age-and-death			effects of <i>kamma</i>

From the perspective of *kamma*, these twelve links can also be divided into those that produce *kamma* and those that are the results of previous *kamma*.⁴³ These are also listed in the above chart. This rendering displays how one's present existence is a result of past *kamma*, and this very *kamma*-caused existence itself leads to future *kamma* and therefore continued existence. In the present, one is not only reaping past consequences, but when one acts anew motivated by desire, one creates the "field" for the ripening of yet more *kamma*.

According to this interpretation, there is a particularly

strong *kamma*-relation between the second and third *nidānas*, as well as the tenth and eleventh, because those are the points where rebirth is engendered.

The tenth link, *bhava*, was given a special status. If we look at future rebirth in the three-lives interpretation, we see that its immediate condition is *bhava*, or becoming, "in the *kāma*-, *rūpa*, or *arūpa-loka*." These are the three worlds in which consciousness must be stationed, and thereby corresponds to the idea that the circumstances in which one finds oneself are in accordance with the type of actions that one has performed. In Buddhist cosmology, these realms are cosmic levels which correspond to meditational levels.

The significance of *bhava* and the three realms is evident in the passage at AN i, 223, where Ānanda asks the Buddha

"Lord, pray, to what extent is there becoming (*bhava*)?"
 "If there were no worlds of sense-desire and no action to ripen therein, Ānanda, would any sensuous becoming be manifested?"

"Surely not, Lord."

"In this way, Ānanda, action is the field, consciousness is the seed, craving the moisture. For beings that are hindered by nescience, fettered by craving, consciousness is established in lower worlds. Thus in the future there is repeated rebirth. In this way there is becoming, Ānanda."

This same set of questions and answers is repeated for the other two realms of rebirth, the worlds of form and formlessness. It is apparent from this that becoming could not occur if it were not for action (*kamma*), and we can also understand that it is through this very becoming that the consequences of *kamma* are carried on into the future.

In addition to information pertaining to *bhava* in the *suttas*, the *Abhidhammāttasāṅgaha* was consulted, and it was found that our conception of the importance of *bhava* is confirmed. In chapter VIII, *bhava* is equated with *kammabhava*. It is said to contain both *kamma*-producing and *kamma*-resultant factors. Nārada Mahāthera explains that *bhava* is

explained as both moral and immoral action which constitute *Kamma* - active process of becoming - and the different planes of existence (*upapattibhava*) - passive process of becoming. The only difference between *Saṅkhāra* and *Kammabhava* is that the former pertains to the past and the latter to the present. It is only the (*kamma*) *bhava* that conditions the future birth. (Nārada 1975, 364)

The general idea here is that consciousness seeks a specific realm in which to be stationed. This stationing provides for rebirth, and the experiences of that life are in accordance with the nature of the station of consciousness. One's aspirations and desires which manifest as the mental attachments and dispositions (*kammabhava*) that condition future rebirth actually create (*upapattibhava*) a realm of experience in which the mind can exist. Without this dwelling, the mind, or more specifically, consciousness, would not be able to arise. As it says in the *sutta*,

That which we will, and that which we intend to do and that wherewithall we are occupied: - this becomes an object for the persistence of consciousness. The object being there, there comes to be a stationing of consciousness. Consciousness being stationed and growing, rebirth of renewed existence takes place in the future... (SN ii, 66)

The three realms in which consciousness may arise have distinct characteristics, and will be experienced in different

ways, just as one born in a wealthy area of Canada will likely have more pleasant experiences than one born into the misery of the slums of Harlem. The realm of desire (*kāma*) is the place where beings who are driven by craving for sensual pleasure will be reborn.⁴⁴ The cosmic realm of form (*rūpa*) is characterized by the wholesome features of the first four levels of *jhāna* meditation, and the cosmic realm of formlessness (*arūpa*) is characterized by the same quiescence that is experienced in the four higher levels of meditation. One enters into these realms after death according to the stage of development that one has reached during life through the practice and cultivation of meditation. We can see, then, that *kamma* itself falls within the *bhavacakka*. In fact, it is *kamma* that provides the impetus which makes the wheel turn on and on. It does so through the very operation of causality itself. No Divine power oversees the process, rather it is the conditions set up by deeds which impel the being on through *samsāra*.

3.7 The Cyclical Nature of the *Bhavacakka*

The ultimate purpose of the twelve links is to explain the continuity of life and rebirth, which is pictured as a perpetual cycle which repeats itself innumerable times. As long as one has not gotten rid of ignorance and craving, there will be *kamma* and rebirth. The Buddha emphasizes this point many times in the chapter on the "incalculable beginning"

(*anamatāgga*) in the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*, saying,

Incalculable is the beginning, brethren, of this faring on [*saṃsā*]. The earliest point is not revealed of the running on, the faring on, of beings cloaked in ignorance, tied to craving. (SN ii,178)

While ignorance is given as the first *nidāna*, it is not to be taken as the first cause in an ultimate sense. It is stated in MN i, 54 that ignorance itself arises from the uprising of the cankers (*āsavas*),⁴³ and is nescience with respect to suffering. The *āsavas* are defilements which are entrenched in the mind and prevent it from seeing properly into the causes and the cure of sorrow. Again, in AN v, 113, it says,

The first beginning of ignorance is not known (such that we may say) that before this there was no ignorance and at this point ignorance arose...but that ignorance is causally conditioned can be known.

This implies that ignorance arises when one experiences sorrow (which is integral to the twelfth *nidāna* of old-age and death) and misunderstands its nature. In this way the last *nidāna* is connected to the first to form a cycle. In this sense, then, we can see that both the linear and mutual aspects of the *bhavacakka* are displayed. In terms of linearity, when considering the *bhavacakka* as representative of the wheel of time, the first link comes right upon the heels of the last. The dynamic set of conditions, taken as a whole, impels one on through time as another set takes shape. In terms of mutual causality, all the links are co-present at every moment within the set, with sorrow and ignorance in

constant dynamic tension.

3.8 Conclusion

If ignorance is defined as a set of interdependent conditions which arise through a process of mutual conditioning, rather than as an independent "first cause", the piece by piece dismantling, transforming and recycling of those conditions is not impossible. By the same token, if each "fruition" of past *kamma* is approached not as an unalterable event but as a set of mutually interacting conditions that are subject to modifying influences, then it is possible to see how the course of one's life can be gradually moved in the direction of enlightenment by understanding *kamma* and its relation to *paṭiccasamuppāda*.

In this chapter, we saw that the *bhavacakka* represents both linear and mutual aspects causality. Each *nidāna* represents a set of conditions. While each set, taken as a whole, can give rise to the next set in a linear way, we can look at the dynamics of each set in terms of mutual causality. In this sense, at any moment, the whole system becomes a teeming network of interconnecting conditions. In this network, causal efficacy does not go in one direction only, that is, from ignorance onward, but rather ignorance itself can be influenced by the other conditions just as they are influenced by it. In this way, the experiences of sorrow sustained during existence can influence ignorance and

motivate one to break through its dark veil.

Chapter Four

The Dynamics of Kamma

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter our understanding of *kamma* as a function of *paṭiccasamuppāda* will be further developed by looking at the operation of *kamma* itself as presented in the suttas. Both aims of the thesis will be addressed here. Stage one of the first aim, to show that *kamma* is a function of *paṭiccasamuppāda*, will be approached through a study of the features which characterize what the Buddha considered to be the process of *kamma*. To this end, passages which display the workings of *kamma* in concrete terms will be analyzed. It will be seen that the salient characteristics of *kamma* lie within the Buddhist conception of conditioned co-origination.

The next stage will be to show clearly the implications that arise when *kamma* is understood as a function of *paṭiccasamuppāda*. In particular, we will evaluate the argument that like *paṭiccasamuppāda*, *kamma* is a middle way between determinism and chance-origination. As a system of action and results, one of the important questions that must be asked is whether *kamma* is a closed system. That is to say, what effect

do things other than *kamma* have on one's state of being? If we allow non-karmic influences to affect one's life, then that would be a step on the way to denying at least predictability, and perhaps determinism (depending on the nature of the foreign influences). Another question which must be asked is whether the results of one deed have the power to create new *kamma*. This would imply infinite regress and a deterministic system, because in tracing deeds back, one would find that each deed was caused by the results of a former deed, and therefore no real input came from the "agent" save, perhaps, the initial deed which started it all. It is easy to see that not only would this be deterministic, but it would be morally indefensible, because one would not be in control of the deeds which are presently being performed.⁴⁶ Most importantly, it must be asked whether a deed and its results have a one-to-one, predictable correspondence. If there is a specific, unavoidable result for each distinct deed, the course of one's existence would be quite determined. This question may be supplemented with the further query as to how one can consciously alter the would-be results of deeds through proper training. In the context of Indian religious philosophy, this final question is of the utmost importance, because it gives meaning to the whole edifice of religions such as Buddhism where the goal of liberation is said to be attained through a course of training.

The final sections of this chapter will deal with the

relationship between intention (*cetanā*) and *kamma*. The emphasis in Buddhism on intention (*cetanā*) as the fundamental factor in the creation of *kamma*, will serve as a key to reaching the second aim of this thesis, which is to understand how human freedom of choice does in fact come about in the Buddha's middle way. The argument will hinge on the understanding that intention is not equivalent to an unconditioned Will but rather operates within the realm of conditionality itself. It is in the ability to change our intentions, however, that factors which might otherwise not have been involved in a particular conditioned system of action-and-results emerge and may influence the course of events. By shifting from the deed itself to the intentions behind it, the Buddha wanted to develop a more elastic and alterable understanding of *kamma* and show that it was open to change and novelty. We will see how a focus on intention can affect the dynamics of *kamma* by comparing the Buddha's views to those of the Jains,⁴⁷ who focused on the deed itself as the operative element of *kamma*, and therefore subscribed to a more deterministic interpretation of the human journey.

4.2 The Classification of Kamma and its Roots in the Nikāyas

In the *suttas* it is said that all intentional actions have some consequences, however trifling they may appear. This is stated implicitly in many *suttas*, but appears most clearly in AN v, 292:

I declare, monks, that of intentional (*sañcetanika*) deeds done and accumulated there can be no wiping out without experiencing the result thereof, and that too whenever arising, either in this same visible state or in some other state hereafter. I declare, monks, that there is no ending of Ill as regards intentional deeds done and accumulated without experiencing the results thereof."⁴⁹

Having established this, let us look at some basic types of deeds and results. The fourfold classification of deeds⁵⁰ lists the various possibilities of deeds and results entertained by the Buddha.

A deed may be:

- 1) dark with dark result;
- 2) bright with bright result;
- 3) both bright and dark with bright and dark result;
- 4) neither bright nor dark with neither result.

The terms "bright" and "dark" signify deeds which are wholesome (*kusala*) or unwholesome (*akusala*), and this in turn means that they are rooted in non-greed (*alobha*), non-hatred (*adosa*), and non-delusion (*amoha*), or greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*) and delusion (*moha*) respectively. Some examples of what is meant by dark result is rebirth in one of the lower worlds, such as Purgatory (*niraya*)⁵⁰ or painful experiences. By bright result is meant rebirth in a favourable realm, such as that of the Devas, and pleasant experiences. The realm which is both bright and dark is the human realm, where, as we all know, both goodness and wickedness, joy and pain, love and hate can be found.

When one is influenced by greed (*lobha*), for example, one

will plan deeds of demerit (*apuññābhisāṅkhāra*) and under the influence of non-greed (*alobha*) one would plan deeds of merit (*puññābhisāṅkhāra*). Both these types of planning, however, are characterized by the desire either to encounter pleasure or avoid pain in the future. In this sense, they lead to further rebirth and entrapment within the round of rebirth - ultimately leading to further suffering.

The fourth type of deed requires special mention, because it does not lead to either result. The *sutta* goes on to explain the fourth type as being a deed which is performed without the intention of accumulating either bright or dark *kamma*, and is therefore conducive to the waning of *kamma* (*kammakkhayāya samvattatī*). This fourth type of deeds, done without selfish intentions, is an important stage along the Path to liberation. "As regards this neither black-nor-white karma the Buddha pointed to the Noble Eightfold Path, the Buddhist principles of practice leading to the cessation of suffering..." (Na-Rangsi 73). As Walshe says, it refers to "kamma that leads to enlightenment, when no more kamma will be created" (619). These deeds are performed when the defiling conditions of ignorance and the sense of self are no longer paramount.

The fourth type of deed shows that there is hope for beings trapped in *samsāra*. Although it is said that all deeds intentionally done cannot be wiped out, this saying is qualified by the fourth type of deeds, which neutralizes the

potency of the mental dispositions which would have led to the fruition of *kamma*. Furthermore, there is no mention of this type of deed being performed only by an *arahant*. In other words, one does not already have to be liberated in order to perform them. All practices of mindfulness as well as the "imperturbable" (*ānañja*) meditative *jhāna* states which are aspects of right concentration (*sammā samādhi*) could be classified under the fourth type of deeds.

The fourfold classification of deeds discussed above is based on the notion of wholesome and unwholesome "roots" of *kamma*. Much significance is given in the Buddhist tradition to the three roots of unwholesome *kamma*. These are regarded as factors that are in close conditional relationships with ignorance and perpetuate rebirth. In fact in the later *maṇḍalas* of the *bhavaṇṇa*, *lobha*, *moha* and *dosa* may be found at its centre, acting as the hub around which the wheel turns. The three unwholesome roots are emphasized in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, where it is said:

Monks, there are these three causes of the origin of actions. What three?

Greed, hatred, and delusion are the causes of the origin of actions. An action done with greed, born of greed, caused by greed, originated by greed is not profitable: it is blameworthy, it has sorrow for its result, it conduces to the arising of action, not to the ceasing of action.

So also with regard to actions done under the influence of hatred and delusion. (AN i,262)⁵¹

It is clear, then, that these roots (*mūla*) may be considered to be the causes of bad, unskilled *kamma*.

The text then goes on to say that

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An act not performed in lust (*lobha*), not born of lust, not originating in lust, not arising from lust - since lust has vanished, that act is abandoned, cut off at the root, made like a palm-tree stump, made unable to come again, of a nature not to arise again in future time. (AN i,135)

Thus when the unwholesome roots are abandoned, unwholesome *kamma* is not produced - in other words, as the general formulation of *paṭiccasamuppāda* states, "When this is absent, that is not; from the cessation of this, that ceases."

In some discussions of the *bhavacakka*, however, the Buddha speaks of ignorance as the root of unwholesome *kamma*:

It is due to ignorance that...one plans planned bodily [verbal or mental] action, following on which arises to the self of him that pleasure or pain. (AN ii,157)

But from the utter fading away and cessation of ignorance, Ānanda, those deeds are not, whence so conditioned arises personal weal and woe. Neither is that speech, nor that thought. As field they are not; as base they are not; as wherewithall they are not; as occasion they are not. (SN ii, 41)

By juxtaposing these two passages with the one above at AN i,135, it can be seen that the three "roots" of unwholesome *kamma* do not operate alone, but are in a close relationship with ignorance. They cannot be simply eliminated without considering the other factors, such as ignorance, which condition and are conditioned by them. The Buddha says,

Wise monks should eschew lust, malice and delusion for this cause, get knowledge and forsake all ways of woe. (AN i, 136)

The abandoning of the defiling roots in this passage is clearly said to go hand in hand with the attainment of knowledge.

How does knowledge and the removal of the roots affect *kamma*? Freedom from *kamma* is to be achieved through a gradual removal of the notion of a separate "Self" which planned deeds are intended to promote. By ridding oneself of the notion of "I" and "mine", one loses one's preoccupation with plans to procure things which inflate the self and avoid things which demote the self. The suttas here emphasize that what is most conducive to this aim is the cessation of intentions to perform one or the other morally charged deeds⁵² for the benefit of the self. What must be abstracted from these sutta passages, in accordance with the fourfold classification of deeds discussed above, is that intentional deeds done in a spirit of self-seeking invariably lead to commensurate pleasant or unpleasant consequences, while actions that break free from ignorant notions of selfhood (*attabhāva*) lead to the dissolution of *kamma*. These latter type of deeds gradually neutralize the tendency to hatch plans to promote the self. This must be accompanied by a change in one's general state of ignorance, as well as a shift from the unwholesome to the wholesome roots. In sum, we can see that deeds arise from a complexity of many conditions, all of which interact with each other. A change in any one of these conditions can initiate important changes in the whole process of an individual's *kamma*. However, this specific change must be considered as representative of a more general change in all the manifold wholesome and unwholesome factors involved in the process.

This accords with what we have said about mutual causality and sets of conditions with regard to *paṭiccasamuppāda*.

4.3 The General Consequences of Deeds as Presented in the Nikayas

Let us move on to look more closely at suttas which discuss the consequences of deeds. These consequences may occur either in this life or in a future life. There are four basic ways mentioned in the suttas that the results may be manifested.⁵³ In this life, a person who has done wrong may be disrespected by other people; a wrongdoer may suffer physical consequences of the deed; a wrongdoer may suffer psychological distress caused by guilt and by worry about going to a bad bourn. In the next life, one may suffer in an undesirable rebirth. *There is no specific time allocation for the fruition of deeds, except in unusual circumstances.* This shows that the suttas stress the dynamic nature of *kamma*, wherein so many changing factors are to be taken into consideration that it is not possible to predict the specific way in which an act will come to fruition. An important idea that is stressed in the suttas is that deeds not only give rise to "external consequences" that become evident in the outward circumstances of one's life, but also to "internal" psychological consequences. The very moment a deed is done, while it does set off a linear series of events which evolve through time into "external" consequences, there is also an immediate process of mutual causation which affects the mind.

Every time an unwholesome deed is done, ignorance, the unwholesome roots, bad intentions and existence in *samsāra* is strengthened. For a particularly poignant example of this, let us look at the *āsavas*. The *āsavas* are regarded as being deep rooted unwholesome mental factors which colour all of experience. They are ever-present whenever there is ignorance, which is, by definition, whenever the *bhavacakka* can be seen to be turning. While these *āsavas* are considered to be amongst the necessary conditions for accumulating *kamma* and for turning the *bhavacakka*, in MN i,360 it says that the *āsavas* themselves arise due to immoral acts. Thus giving in to evil tendencies only serves to strengthen them. This is an important psychological consequence of deeds which must not be overlooked. Let us examine some examples of it in the suttas.

First, we refer to a passage in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* which points to the psychological operation of *kamma*. Here (AN v, 289) it is stated that if one is given to harming or killing creatures, that is, if one "creeps along" in body, speech and mind, one will be reborn (either in *niraya*) or as a creature which creeps along such as a snake, scorpion, or a similar crooked, creepy creature. Passages such as these, which explain *kamma* in terms of retributive justice, are problematic for those who seek to interpret them. Here they are brought up solely to refer to the idea that a deed has psychological consequences. Each act in this life strengthens mental tendencies through constant reinforcing of a certain

way of life. An illustrative analogy is the Oscar Wilde story "The Picture of Dorian Gray." Each time that Gray performs an evil act, the picture becomes more and more bent and evil, just as one's mind becomes lowlier with each subsequent performing of an unwholesome deed. Finally one is reborn in a form which suits one's deep psychological makeup.

We can see from the Buddha's account of the fate of Punṇa the "bovine-ascetic"⁵⁴ in the *Kukkuravatikasutta* how one's actions lead not only to a certain type of rebirth, but also how they condition and are conditioned by one's mental state in the present. Here, Punṇa is told that he will be reborn either in Purgatory (*niraya*) or in companionship with cows. He will be reborn as a cow because he has so completely practiced bovine ways and bovine virtues and has cultivated a bovine mentality. This *sutta* emphasizes that by constantly performing certain practices, corresponding mental tendencies become more and more engrained in the mind - more habitual. They thus become stronger and more karmically effective formations. The story of Punṇa illustrates how the form in which a person is reborn is viewed as corresponding in some measure to the psychological tendencies at work in the person's life. Of course, it is difficult in this respect to explain why Punṇa might go to Purgatory merely from behaving like a cow. The most that can be said is that many factors operate in the process of *kamma* that cannot be observed. Perhaps there were sufficient conditions for such a painful rebirth, but this

cannot be demonstrated.

4.4. *Saṅkhāra* and its Connection to *Kamma*

In the suttas the psychological factors that condition rebirth are represented by the term *saṅkhāra*. By looking at the etymology of this technical term *saṅkhāra*, one may gain insight into its meaning. The term is formed from the verb root *√kar*, "to do" and the prefix *saṃ* which signifies "coming together". The word, then, has to do with things which are "put together," or conglomerated. Its connotations can range, however, from this basic meaning to more technical ones, such as "mental dispositions" or "karmically effective activities." Jayatilleke (1975, 84) finds that there are three main meanings for the word in psychological terminology. It may be used in the sense of volitions, of purposive activities, including habits, or of ideation associated with ideas and feelings.

The term appears, for example, both as the second *nidāna* and as the fourth *khaṇḍha*. While in the latter sense it seems to represent those mental habits, impulses and qualities which constitute the various states of mind which come and go, in the former sense, it is more restricted to those impulses and intentions which lead to some sort of purposive action, with consequences in the rebirth process. Therefore, we can ascertain that *saṅkhāra* is one of the necessary "ingredients" of *kamma*. This is confirmed in AN i, 122:

Monks, a certain person here performs aggressive bodily actions, aggressive verbal actions and aggressive mental actions (*kāya-vaci-manosaṅkhāram*). Having performed...aggressive...actions, he is reborn in an aggressive world.

In a sense, *saṅkhāras* are unfulfilled longings and rebirth may be seen as a chance to fulfill some of these. Note this idea in the following:

It occurs to him, "Would that I might be reborn in companionship with the noblemen after the disintegration of my body after death." He fixes his mind on this, concentrates his mind on this, develops his mind on this. These *saṅkhāras* and state of his, so developed and practiced, will lead to rebirth there. Monks, in this way this method will lead to rebirth there. (MN iii, 99)

The main idea in this passage is that rebirth, which may be understood as the re-establishment of consciousness in another realm of experience after the break-up of the current body, is based upon the inner yearnings of the person. The wishes and desires mentioned in this passage are then called *saṅkhāras*. According to this passage, rebirth must be effected in order to provide an outlet for one's accumulated *saṅkhāras*.

Saṅkhāra, then, is the link between past *kamma* which has built up a storehouse of emotionally charged mental dispositions, and future *kamma* which provides an opportunity for the actualization of these mental dispositions. *Saṅkhāra* represents a mental tendency which looks back to past experience and conditions future experience. *Saṅkhāra* may be considered as "residue" from past actions, and "potential energy" for future ones. *Saṅkhāra* constructs the future by

anticipating it in the form of aspirations, wishes and "plans," for future action. The term *abhisankaroti* is translated as "planning" in order to convey the dynamic energy in the mental dispositions that takes the form of an aspiration for a future goal. From the point of view of *kamma*, these mental dispositions must be seen as vast potential energies in dynamic mutual relationships.

Aspects of linear causality and aspects of mutual causality are apparent in the way mental dispositions (*sankhāra*) function in the process of *kamma*. Mental dispositions are "residues" from past experiences. At the same time, they give rise to the wishes and aspirations and plans (*abhisankhāra*) that condition future experience. Their operation is set in a temporal framework and they are the powerful emotionally charged links between past and future. This is the linear aspect of their operation. At the same time, a mental disposition never functions as a sole, all-sufficient cause. It is part of a teeming network of psychological processes and is constantly conditioned by them. This is the aspect of mutual causality in the operation of mental dispositions.

It must be emphasized that the basis out of which *kamma* does arise - *sankhāras* - are certainly influenced by the results of deeds. These results constitute in large measure one's experience, and it is from experience that one learns things which affect one's dispositions. The process is

actually succinctly described by Russell:

If, for example, I read a certain poem many times, my experience on each occasion is modified by the previous readings, and my emotions are never repeated exactly. (1929, 249)

The dynamic interplay between (verbal, mental and physical) actions and mental dispositions is what makes learning possible, and is an essential feature of the Buddha's psychological outlook.

The Buddha recognized the role of mental dispositions (*saṅkhāra*) both in the rebirth process as well as in the processes of training through which liberation from rebirth is made possible. In the Eightfold Path, right effort is defined as the training through which unwholesome tendencies connected with the roots of greed, hatred and delusion are gradually recognized and removed. In order to do so, wholesome mental tendencies are cultivated. Wholesome mental tendencies counter these unwholesome roots and fill the personality with serene joy.

We are now armed with a sufficient understanding of the role of *saṅkhāras* and conditioned co-origination in the coming into being of *kamma* to begin to look more specifically at the operation of *kamma*.

4.5 One-to-One Correspondence Between Deeds and Results in the *Nikāyas*

An examination of the *Nikāyas* reveals the telling point that it is very rare indeed that the Buddha will settle for a

direct one-to-one relationship between deed and consequence when relating the possible outcomes of a deed. He attempts not to pigeon-hole any act into a specific set of future consequences, but always leaves one with at least two possible future courses. In these cases, the degree of precision ranges from saying that one will go to Purgatory to saying that one will be reborn as a wealthy householder with much gold, silver and grains, good looking, with a clear complexion, charming, and pleasant smelling.

In fact, only in the case of the five heinous crimes is one guaranteed a rebirth in Purgatory in the next life. In *Vinaya v,128*, it is said that one who commits matricide, parricide, kills an arahant, wounds a Buddha or causes a schism in the order (*saṅgha*) will be reborn in *Niraya* in their very next birth regardless of what other good or evil deeds they may have done. Other than this, about all we can say about a set one-to-one correspondence between deed and consequence is what occurs in some general formulations of the law of *kamma*,⁵⁵ to the effect that beings who have acted wrongly and held wrong views eventually come to woe, and those who have acted rightly eventually experience joy.

In the *Cūlakammavibhaṅgasutta*, we are presented with many examples of what can be called "limited one-to-many relationships" between deeds and consequences.⁵⁶ There are, in the cases to be found here, two possibilities for each deed. Either one will be reborn in a heavenly world if the

deed was good, (or a hellish world if the deed was bad) or as a human. If reborn as a human, however, we see some very specific consequences laid out, to wit:

Here some woman or man is one that makes onslaught on creatures... Because of that deed, accomplished thus, firmly held thus, he, at the breaking up of the body after dying...comes to human status... [and is] of a short life span. This course is conducive to shortness of life-span.

Here some woman or man is by nature harmful to creatures: with his hand or with a clod of earth or with a stick or with a sword... then wherever he is born he has many illnesses.

Here some woman or man is wrathful, turbulent... he [if born as a human] is ugly... (MN iii, 203-4)

This enumeration carries on similarly, and the following further relationships emerge :

<u>Deed</u>	<u>Result</u>
jealous, revengeful	> of little account
stingy, not a giver	> poor
callous and proud	> of a lowly family
does not ask proper questions	> weak in wisdom

The opposite deeds and results are also to be found in this sutta, ie., if one is generous and provides plenty of alms, one will be reborn as a wealthy person.

As we can see, these consequences are quite specific and are obviously related to the motivations behind the original deed itself. However, there is no indication given that the causal conditions are sufficient for a certain type of rebirth to occur. We are not told how many times one must slaughter, or how many acts of jealousy might drive one to the appointed state. Nor are we told whether the conditions are sufficient

either to go to Purgatory or to be reborn as a human in these cases. What we do see, however, is that according to the suttas one who acts badly will eventually undergo some undesirable circumstances, and that one who is good will come to good.

So far, then, it can be said that the relationship between a deed and its results, as presented in the suttas, is not a strict one-to-one relationship. It is rare that only one possible result is cited for a specific deed. This, however, in no way indicates that *kamma* is not a causal system, for there are, however, certain possible results mentioned by the Buddha in the suttas. What it does indicate is that *kamma* is not conceived as a deterministic system. What has been said here strengthens our position that in the suttas *kamma* is conceived as a function of *paṭiccasamuppāda*.

4.6 Many-to-One Correspondence Between Deed and Result in the Nikayas

There are certainly examples in the suttas wherein various different deeds may lead to the same consequences. Rebirth in heaven may be effected through various means, including giving (*dāna*), and virtue (*sīla*) (AN v,286), and cultivating meditation (*bhavanā*). Likewise, rebirth in Purgatory may ensue from killing, stealing, and committing adultery, amongst other things (AN v,283).

A many-to-one relationship may also be understood as one in which many different deeds all come together to effect one

result. We find an example of this in the *Dīgha Nikāya*, where King Mahāsudassana wonders,

Of what *kamma* is it the fruit, of what *kamma* is it the result, that I am now so mighty and powerful? " He then realizes, " It is the fruit, the result of three kinds of *kamma*: of giving, self-control, and abstinence. " (DN ii, 185)

This shows that *kamma* can interact with itself, and combine in various ways. This further makes it impossible to predict exactly what results will be consequent upon a single action. In this respect, *kamma* operates as a function of *paṭiccasamuppāda*. There is a multiplicity of conditions for each event, and when they all come together, the result arises. Practically, it is impossible to isolate a single cause for a particular *kamma*-result. This begins to explain why the attempt to isolate specific deeds and their results that was discussed in the previous section was inconclusive.

4.7 One-to-Many Correspondence Between Deed and Result in the *Nikāyas*

We can learn much about the nature and operation of *kamma* through a detailed analysis of passages where the Buddha explains why one deed may often lead to various results when done by different people.

In AN i, 249, it says that the same small evil deed performed by different people may lead to different results, ranging from rebirth in Purgatory, serious retribution in this life, or barely noticeable consequences in this life.

According to our understanding of the psychological factors in *kamma* outlined above, the same type of deed may lead to different consequences in the lives of different people because of the dissimilarity in their mental dispositions and motivations. In the passage mentioned immediately above, it is said that if one whose mind is defiled by many evil, unskilled states performs an evil deed, this will lead to Purgatory, but if one whose mind is pure and unstained performs an evil deed, it is like adding a grain of salt to the Ganges; the act will not even be noticed (although it will have some effect, albeit an infinitesimal one).

In the *Mahākammavibhaṅgasutta*, we are presented with four scenarios which indicate that the outcome of any deed is affected not only by the mental dispositions of the person who acts but also by the interaction among deeds:

- 1) an individual is evil, not following the moral precepts and is reborn in a bad bourn;
- 2) an individual is evil, not leading a moral way of life, and is reborn in a good bourn;
- 3) an individual is good, leading a moral life and is reborn in a good bourn;
- 4) an individual is good, leading a moral life, and is reborn in a bad bourn.

According to the *sutta*, those who have cultivated the requisite supernormal yogic powers and can see people passing from one life to the next, may see any one of these specific cases and presume that what they witnessed necessarily happens in all cases. They would therefore believe, having seen the first case, that there is fruition of deeds, and that all those who have acted wrongly are reborn in Purgatory. Having

seen the second case, they would feel that there is no fruition of deeds, and therefore one who acted rightly or wrongly could be reborn anywhere.

The Buddha does not deny that these specific cases occur, but he maintains that it would be a mistake to draw general conclusions from what happens in these specific cases. His explanation is that

[W]hatever individual there is who makes onslaught on creatures, takes what has not been given ... is of false view and who, at the breaking up of the body after dying, arises in a good bourn, a Heavenly world - either a lovely deed to be experienced as happiness was done by him earlier, or a lovely deed to be experienced as happiness was done by him later, or at the time of dying a right view was adopted and firmly held by him; because of this, at the breaking up of the body after dying he arises in a good bourn, a heaven world. If he made onslaught on creatures here..was of false view, he undergoes its fruition which arises here and now or in another mode... [and so on for the other situations] (MN iii, 215)

Those who extend the particular case wherein one acts badly and goes to Purgatory to all such cases may be considered to represent the determinist doctrine, and those who believe that in all cases, there is no correlation whatsoever between the deed and its results are representative of the doctrine of chance-origination.

In this passage, the Buddha not only takes a middle way between these two doctrines, but also provides us with an explanation of why the extremes are incorrect. The Buddha understands *kamma* as a dynamic operation wherein deeds interact with other deeds to produce unpredictable results. The point brought into relief here is that although all deeds

have results, the events that follow immediately after a deed is performed may not be the direct results of that specific deed. They may be results from another deed done some time in the past. A similar sentiment is expressed poetically in the *Dhammapāda* :

As long as the evil deed does not bear fruit,
The fool thinks it is like honey.
But when it ripens, then the fool suffers grief

An evil deed, like newly-drawn milk,
Does not turn suddenly,
Smoldering, like fire covered by ashes,
It follows the fool. (Dhp 69,71)

The above discussion shows that according to the *suttas*, each act does not operate alone in the process of *kamma* but is part of a complicated web of verbal, physical and mental deeds that proceed from an individual. The mutual interaction of these deeds, including the cancelling out of bad by exceedingly good deeds and vice-versa, and the pre-empting or postponing of certain consequences by more pressing or serious ones leads to a dynamic system of mutually interacting conditions whose next state is unpredictable. This picture of *kamma* which emerges from the *suttas* supports our thesis that in Buddhism, *kamma* is regarded as a function of *paṭiccasamuppāda*.

As a summary of the middle way which has been shown to be the case when considering *kamma*, we refer to a passage in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*. Here, the Buddha says that it is false that a man must reap exactly according to his deeds, but true that

the reward a man reaps accords with his deeds (AN i,249-53). Reflecting on this, the Buddha adds that were this not so, then there would be no opportunity for leading the holy life. The difference between the two clauses is subtle but significant. The first statement implies strict determinism, by which a deed sets up unalterable conditions which invariably lead to a specific result. Were this the case, then one would be able to predict the specific outcomes of deeds, and would be fated to undergo them regardless of what other mitigating factors might be co-present. The second statement alters the first in such a way as to avoid strict determinism, saying that the reward is not exactly according to the deed. Nevertheless, it still affirms that causality does obtain in the realm of human action, because the reward is, in some unpredictable way, connected to the nature of the deed. This degree of continuity is important because it allows one to look back and discover certain trends and learn from them, but it is not sufficient to allow one to determine exactly what the future will be.

4.8 The Practice of Meditation and the Process of Kamma

There are passages in the *suttas* which appear to suggest that the practice of meditation would of itself ensure a better rebirth. There are narratives which relate how a person practiced meditation and as a result was born in one or other of the shining Deva worlds. There are other sections in the

suttas, however, which balance these narratives by explaining how different forms of mental training lead to the purification and calming of the mind and to the development of wholesome mental dispositions (*saṅkhāra*). It has been shown in the previous sections that the attitudes, mental habits and aspirations that a person cultivates are primary factors in the rebirth process. According to the theory of *kamma* developed in the suttas, one attains a realm of rebirth that corresponds to one's mental habits and dispositions, so it is to be expected that mental training through meditation would have a profound impact on the whole process of *kamma*-fruition.

Three types of mental training are described in the suttas: 1) The cultivation of the "immeasurable" virtues, namely lovingkindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), sympathetic joy (*muditā*) and equanimity (*upekkhā*).⁵⁷

The "immeasurables" are qualities which are predicated of the *Brahmā* world. This type of meditation is called *brahmāvihārabhāvanā*, which can mean, literally, reflecting on the mansions of *Brahmā*. 2) Cultivation of levels of calm concentration. Each level of concentration in this case is called a level of *jhāna*. 3) The practice of mindfulness, called *sati*. Of these types of meditation, mindfulness alone is said to be a direct path to enlightenment.

According to one narrative, a certain person named *Dhānañjāni* who was too focused on making money to support his household was told by *Sāriputta* that he was destined for

Purgatory. When the householder became very ill, he asked for instruction in meditation, at which point Sāriputta instructed him in *Brahmavihārabhāvanā*. As a result, after death he was reborn instead in the heavenly Brahmā world (MN ii,188). If we look at what this meditation entails, we can account for the beneficial results it brings. This type of meditation involves cultivating the above mentioned wholesome attitudes in oneself and extending them to the ends of the world. It is easy to see how this cultivation would change the mindframe and alter certain *saṅkhāras* of the aspirant. When one performs the mental deed of *brahmavihārabhāvanā*, one is in a sense already abiding in the realm of Brahmā because one's mind is suffused with its qualities. One is therefore likely to be reborn in such a world, if the other co-present factors are sufficient.

The *jhāna* states are not only states of consciousness which one can attain through meditation, but correspond to cosmic realms into which one may be born. According to Buddhist cosmology, there are three cosmic realms: the Realm of Desire (*kāmvacara*), the Realm of Form (*rūpāvacara*) and the Formless Realm (*arūpāvacara*). The Realm of Form corresponds to the first four levels of meditation. The Formless Realm corresponds to the four higher levels of meditation (*jhāna*). The scriptures tell us in one example that

there are beings different in body and alike in perception, such as the devas of Brahmā's retinue, born there on account of having attained the first *jhāna*. (DN ii,69)

This suggests that one may be born into a realm corresponding to a *jhāna* state which one had achieved in the previous life. In comprehending this, we start by recalling that mental deeds (*manokamma*) are one of the three types of deeds. It must not be overlooked that meditation is, in fact, a mental deed. Therefore, to say that one is reborn according to one's level of meditational attainment is to say nothing other than that one is reborn according to one's *kamma*.

4.9 Do Things Other than Kamma Affect One's Life?

The first question mentioned in the introduction to this chapter still needs to be answered. We asked whether things other than past *kamma* can affect one's state of being. An unequivocal statement which occurs numerous times, to the effect that there are many factors which may be the cause of experience is as follows:

There are some sufferings originating from phlegm, from wind, from the union of bodily humours, from changes of the seasons, from stress of untoward happenings, from sudden attacks from without, and also from ripeness of one's karma⁵⁸ ... now Sivaka, the recluses and brahmins who hold this view ' whatsoever pleasure or pain or mental state a human being experiences, all that is due to a previous act'. Herein they go beyond personal experience and what is generally acknowledged by the world. Wherefore do I declare those recluses and brahmins to be in the wrong. (SN iv, 230-1)

It is here denied that everything is caused by *kamma*. There are certain events that occur as a natural part of existence that may or may not affect someone, regardless of

their *kamma*. This accounts, for example, for the sickness of the Buddha in his old age. Whether one is enlightened or not, the body still withers and becomes frail. The point here is that there are things that can happen to a person which are not due to any *specific* past *kamma*. These things nevertheless become part of the person's experience and are therefore assimilated into the mental life of the individual. In this way some non-karmic elements can introduce new variables into the situation and can effect the resulting habits in significant ways. This passage is problematic though, because it does not explain where these other non-karmic factors come from. In what way are they causally related to the rest of the universe?

4.10 Two Narratives Related to *Kamma* in the *Nikāyas*

A famous specific example of the workings of *kamma* in the life of one particular individual is the case of Aṅgulimāla. Aṅgulimāla was an unsavoury fellow who lived as a particularly violent bandit (his name refers to the garland of fingers he wore around his neck). One day the Buddha crossed his path but was not afraid of him like everyone else. This impressed Aṅgulimāla so much that he decided to become a disciple of the Buddha. Living as a solitary ascetic, he practiced the Buddha's way and eventually attained arahantship.

Normally, one would expect that he would be reborn in the lowest planes of *Niraya* based on his *curriculum vitae*, but as

an arahant, he had broken the cycle of rebirth and would be reborn no more. One day he was injured very badly by people throwing rocks. The Buddha comforted him, saying:

"Do endure it, brahman, you are experiencing here and now the ripening of that *kamma* through the ripening of which you would (otherwise) boil in Niraya Hell for many years." (MN ii, 104)

Aṅgulimāla then says,

Me who had wrought such *kamma* as leads to many a woeful bourn,
When touched by the ripening of *kamma*, debtless I enjoy
an owner's state. (MN ii, 105)

Thus, in the case of Aṅgulimāla, we encounter a person whose course of *kamma* fruition is not merely altered or mitigated but entirely wiped out and "made like a palm-tree stump." By following the path of liberation and specifically through the practice of mindfulness leading to insight, Aṅgulimāla had attained the status of an Arahant. This signifies that he had cleansed the very roots of *kamma*. Aṅgulimāla rejoices because whereas previously he was headed, by the ripening of his *kamma*, towards "many a woeful bourn," by following the Path of Enlightenment he had wiped out the very roots of *kamma*, namely, ignorance and desire. By attaining the status of an Arahant, he had entirely wiped out his "debts" of *kamma*. No longer a bondslave paying back "kammic debts" acquired from the past, he enjoyed the "debtless" state.

There are two additional points deserving mention in relation to this account. First, we see that if one such as

Aṅgulimāla was able to reach liberation, then it is possible for anyone to do so. It is difficult to think of a worse candidate for arahantship than Aṅgulimāla, yet, through proper training, he was able to achieve this state. Therefore, it is clear that all people are faced with the choice of becoming an arahant. By virtue of being conditioned by the *nidānas*, as we saw in the previous chapter with reference to the wheel of twenty-four conditions, the possibility exists for everyone to direct one's life towards the eradication of the defiling conditions, hence liberation is possible for all.

Since every individual has lived through countless rebirths and has gathered an infinite "store" of wholesome and unwholesome kammic "seeds," no one can work off every aspect of kammic fruition (*kammavipāka*). To change the analogy, every individual has an infinite kammic debt to repay. What is possible is to destroy ignorance, desire and attachment to the idea of a self. In accordance with *paṭiccasamuppāda*, when these fertilizing conditions are removed, the entire store of kammic seeds loses its potential for fruition. The seeds are "burnt up" as it were. Therefore, in Aṅgulimāla, we are not presented with a story of a poor soul whose bad *kamma* was so great that he had no hope of ever being released from the cycle of birth and death. In truth all people are in this situation. In the *Nikāyas* there are no cases where someone is released from suffering because, after having lived countless times, they actually worked out all their kammic debts. If the

conditions which cause *kamma*, such as ignorance and mental dispositions, are still operative, then, according to the very law of *paṭiccasamuppāda*, they will lead to further *kamma* and rebirth. Happily, the flipside of this is that one can move one's life in positive directions through wearing down the conditions which provide the "field" for the *kamma* to thrive in.

Another very interesting case is that related in the *Sakkapañhasutta*. In this case, we hear the story of

a Sakyan girl called Gopika who had faith in the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Saṅgha, and who observed the precepts scrupulously. She rejected the status of a woman and developed the thought of becoming a man. Then, after her death, at the breaking up of the body, she went to a happy destination... as one of our sons, being known as Gopaka the devas' son. Also, there were three monks who, having observed the holy life under the blessed Lord, had been reborn in the inferior condition of *gandhabbas*... Gopaka rebuked them, saying, "What were you about, sirs, that you did not listen to the Blessed Lord's teaching? I was a woman who had faith in the Buddha..." (DN ii, 271-2)

In this narrative we see how *kamma* works in specific instances. It seems that both Gopika and the three monks lived a life of *brahmacariya*, according to the strict discipline taught by the Buddha. However, at death, they reached different levels of rebirth. The reasons for this are spelled out clearly in the verses which follow the above passage. It is apparent that, although outwardly the monks lived a matchless, exemplary life, they still did not grasp the meaning of what the Buddha taught. They had not come to the realization that "each must understand for himself the Dhamma"

(DN ii, 273). In the *suttas* the *gandhabbas* (Skt: *gandharvas*) are portrayed as beings who live in a cosmic realm lower than the gods and indulge themselves in many forms of sensual delight. Thus we can understand that since the inward desires of the monks tended towards sensual pleasures even while they lived outwardly exemplary lives, they ended up in a realm of rebirth that matched their secret longings. When these monks eventually did leave the realm of the *gandhabbas*, it was only because they had "purified their hearts of lust, perceiving peril in desires" (DN ii,274). In this narrative it is one's inner beliefs, convictions, and underlying psychological roots which are here presented as the truly important factors in spiritual attainment, rather than the correct performing of rules and rituals.

For Gopika's part, since her mind centred around notions of self-identity (*attabhāva*) and since she had not seen the bond between desire and sorrow, her progress towards ultimate liberation was limited. However, she got what she wanted in the immediate future because she had built up a store of meritorious *kamma* by keeping the precepts of morality (*sīla*).

4.11 A Problematical Passage

Having said all this, it is hard to understand what to make of MN iii,169, wherein *kamma* appears to be characterized as a deterministic cycle with little hope of escape from the bonds of *kamma* fruition. This passage is so contrary to the

spirit of Buddhism and what has been said so far with regards to the possibility of changing one's situation through proper intentions that it warrants being quoted in full here:

Monks, if some time or other once in a very long while that fool came to human status, he would be born into those families that are low: a family of low caste or a family of hunters or a family of bamboo-plaiters... or a family as is needy without enough to drink or eat, where a covering for the back is with difficulty obtained. Moreover, he would be ill-favoured, ugly, dwarfish, sickly, blind or deformed or lame or paralysed; he would be unable to get food, drink, clothes... he would fare wrongly in body, wrongly in speech, wrongly in thought. Because he had fared wrongly... at the breaking up of the body after dying he would arise in sorrowful ways, a bad bourn, the Downfall, Niraya.

It is immediately obvious that there are some striking differences between the way *kamma* is characterized here and the way it is in so many other passages that have been presented thus far. The text argues that one's behaviour in life is so affected by the conditions of one's birth and surroundings, that one is bound to act wrongly if one's bad *kamma* causes one to be born into a bad situation. The results of this birth in a bad situation is that one is caught in an endless determined cycle from which there is no escape. The desperate situation suggested here is further emphasized by the comparison between an entrapped person's lot and a gambler's throw of the dice, which occurs in the text immediately after the above excerpt. How, can we reconcile this with the majority of passages that deal with *kamma* in the *suttas*, where the main thrust of the message is that *kamma* is not a closed, predetermined system? We can't. However, what we

can do is try to understand why the above passage is present in the canon. For one thing, it does emphasize that *kamma* operates with a regular succession of causes and conditions.

Perhaps it is intended to be used for pedagogic purposes. This may be an attempt to teach people that they cannot escape the consequences of their deeds. Another explanation is that the Buddha is here describing a "syndrome" of unwholesome *kamma*. Perhaps he wanted to warn people that there can be a downward spiral initiated by a series of bad deeds. Just as bad can be altered by good, so bad deeds can make other bad ones even worse. This passage certainly gets this point across.

4.12 *Kamma* and Intention

In the following sections, we will see what evidence there is in the texts for the role of intention (*manosañcetanā*) in *kamma*, and we will then consider how intention accounts for the ability to make choices. This is a pivotal point in the argument of this thesis because we will demonstrate that it is this emphasis on intention (*manosañcetanā*) over and above the actual doing of a deed that allows for the flexible interpretation of the operation of *kamma* in the texts. It will be shown that in the texts, intention is presented as the factor that allows for the possibility of redirecting one's life even within the network

of *kamma* and *kamma*-fruition.

It is important to clarify the Pāli term which we have translated as "intention" for a proper understanding of this topic to ensue. *Manosañcetanā* is a compound of *manas* and *sañcetanā*. *Manas* means "mind" and in the compound *manosañcetanā*, *mano* signifies "mental" or "pertaining to the mind." *Cetanā* comes from the verb *cinteti* meaning "to think," "to reflect," "to be of opinion." *Cetanā* may be thus understood as an emergent coordinating function of the mind leading to purposeful intention.

It should be noted that there does not seem to be an appreciable difference in meaning in the literature between the words *manosañcetanā* and *cetanā*. For the purposes of this thesis, they will be treated as synonyms. The terms have been translated throughout as "intention" because it is felt that this most accurately defines them. Guenther provides a definition of the term based on the *Abhidhamma* commentary by Buddhaghosa, the *Atthasālini*:

Cetanā, to state it plainly, is something that corresponds to our idea of stimulus, motive, or drive. Especially this latter concept of drive, as a stimulus arousing persistent mass activity assists in explaining the origin of activity as well as that which is excited and is forthwith active. That which is aroused to activity is the sum total of all potentialities. (Guenther 44)

In the *suttas* and the *Abhidhamma*, a mental deed (*manokamma*) is any action of the mind, such as feeling and ideation, whereas intention (*manosañcetanā*) is the motivation behind an act.

Cetanā is a specific type of *manokamma* which issues from mental dispositions (*saṅkhāra*) and provides the motivation for further action (*kamma*).

4.13 The Role of Intention in Kamma as Presented in the Nikāyas

One class of deeds which some ascetics in the Buddha's day believed was effective in reducing or altering *kamma* is the practice of austerities. They maintained that by virtue of these austerities alone, liberation from *samsāra* would be attained. The Buddha, however, was quick to point out that in themselves, these practices have no intrinsic virtue or *kamma*-reducing potential. In DN i, 167, the Buddha presents various different austerities that may be practiced, such as having a strict, meagre diet, wearing coarse clothing, and refraining from bathing. He then says,

A practitioner of self-mortification may do all these things, but if his morality (*sīla*), his heart (*citta*) and his wisdom (*paññā*) are not developed and brought to realization, then indeed he is still far from being an ascetic (*samāṇa*) or a brahmin.

In DN iii, 43, it is again pointed out that one who practices austerities may be faulted. This is because the internal motivations accompanying the practice are not necessarily pure. The text makes the point that a self-mortifier, while practicing, may become addicted to this very practice and intoxicated with his or her success. One may even begin to scorn others who do not or cannot follow such

practice. Conversely, breaking ascetic practice does not automatically result in demerit. Eating fine food or sleeping on a comfortable bed, for example, will do no harm to a monk whose mind is pure (MN i,38).

A further source of evidence in the texts pointing to the Buddha's emphasis on intentional action as the source of *kamma* is his arguments with the Jains.⁵⁹ Here, he formulates his arguments clearly in order to demonstrate the futility of the views of his opponents in the debate. The Jains had a much less dynamic view of *kamma* than did the Buddha. They believed that *kamma* is a very subtle substance which clings to the soul and must be worn off by severe austerities in order to achieve liberation (Law 1952, 127-128; O'Flaherty 230-231). According to the suttas, they believed that "whatever this individual experiences, whether pleasant or painful or neither painful nor pleasant, all is due to what was previously done." (MN ii, 214) That is, one's current situation is determined solely by one's past actions, whether those actions were performed intentionally or not. For this reason, they even regarded walking as producing bad *kamma* because it invariably involves (unintentional) treading on small bugs. In MN i, 93,⁶⁰ the Jain teacher Nātaputta is quoted as saying,

If there is, Jains, an evil deed that was formerly done by you, wear it away by this severe austerity. That which is the non-doing of an evil deed in the future is from control of the body, from control of speech, from control of thought here, now. Thus by burning up, by making an end of former deeds, by the non-doing of new deeds, there

is no flowing into the future. From there being no flowing into the future is the destruction of deeds; from the destruction of deeds is the destruction of ill; from the destruction of ill is the destruction of feeling; from the destruction of feeling all ill will become worn away.

Understanding this, the Jain follower says,

Happiness is not to be achieved through happiness,
happiness is to be achieved through pain.

Compare this to MN i, 30, where the Buddha says that the destruction of the blemishes from the mind is more important than practicing austerities. At MN ii, 215, the Buddha gets the Jains to admit that they do not know the specific nature of the deeds that they had done in the past, and they therefore may not rightfully proclaim that one's current state is wholly determined by past deeds. He also points out that they do not know how to get rid of unskilled states of mind here and now, or how skilled states of mind may arise.

The Jain conception of the unalterable nature of *kamma* fruition is analyzed in detail in MN ii, 221. The Jains seek to demonstrate that no amount of human effort can alter the way in which *karma* will ripen. The Buddha then points out to the Jains that according to their own argument, their ascetic practices are of no avail in altering or reducing the effects of *kamma*. According to the Jains, the ripening of *karma* will follow a course which is determined by the initial nature of the deed and cannot be lessened, altered, or experienced in any way other than that which was initially set.

At the end of the *sutta*, having pointed out the futility

of the Jain ascetic practices, Gotama tells the monks what type of striving is, in fact, fruitful. He says, essentially, that it is fruitful to strive to rid oneself of attachment and desire, because in doing so, one will not be subject to ignorant suffering. He then proceeds to give a standard account of the striving by which one cleanses oneself of the mental impurities and follows the path that leads to freedom from rebirth and sorrow.

In sutta 56 of the *Majjhima Nikāya*, there is another account of a debate between the Buddha and a Jain. Here the Buddha presents some hypothetical situations. He asks what blame might accrue to one who practices all the proper Jain restraints, but who, nevertheless, inadvertently kills small creatures while going about his business.⁶¹ At this, the Jain says, " Being unintentional, there is no great blame. " (MN ii, 377).⁶² Finally the Jain agrees with the Buddha that if one did intend to kill these small creatures, there would be blame. What becomes strikingly obvious throughout this sutta is the Buddha's emphasis on intention as a decisive factor in determining *kamma*. He even succeeds in getting the Jain to see that a strict interpretation of *kamma* that does not take intention and the action of the mind into consideration simply does not work in reality. It contradicts common sense and makes leading the renunciant's life of non-violence quite impossible.

The above examples agree with the seminal statement which we have already encountered at AN iii, 415:

Intention is *kamma*. Having intended, one acts in body, speech, and mind.

cetanāhaṃ bhikkhave kammaṃ vadāmi; cetayitvā kammaṃ karoti kāyena vācāya manasā

In the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* there are some more passages that strikingly illustrate the significance of intention. In SN ii, 36, there is a discussion about the arising of pleasure and pain. Sāriputta says that pleasure and pain (*sukhadukkha*) arise through a cause, namely contact between sense organs and their objects. The Buddha then adds this to Sāriputta's statement:

Where there have been bodily deeds, Ānanda, personal pleasure and pain arise in consequence of the intention there was in the deeds. Where there has been speech - where there has been thought, personal pleasure and pain arise in consequence of the intention there was in the speech and the thought.⁶³

Here, then, we have a candid statement to the effect that intention (*manosañcetanā*) is the most important factor in the determination of the nature of one's *kamma*. Intention based on the idea of the self, therefore, is one of the necessary conditions without which no *kamma* could be produced. Such intention arises due to ignorance (AN ii, 157) and therefore if ignorance is gotten rid of, then intention based on ignorant notions of "one's own self" (*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*) will also cease. Getting rid of intentions which are based on planning for the self, then, is one of the most important stages on the

path to release from constant rebirth and suffering. Here is a passage from the suttas which brings these many concepts together:

If, brethren, a man who is ignorant plans an act of merit, consciousness is on its way to merit; if he plans an act of demerit, consciousness is on its way to demerit; if he plans an act that is stationary, consciousness is on its way to that which is stationary. But when in a brother ignorance is banished and wisdom has arisen, because of the fading away of ignorance and the arising of wisdom, he does not plan an act of merit, he does not plan an act of demerit, he does not plan an act that is stationary. Not planning, not willing, he grasps at nothing whatever in the world; not grasping he is not perturbed; unperturbed, he is of and by himself utterly well. And he knows that "Birth is perished,. The divine life has been lived. Done is what should be done. There is no more of these conditions!" (SN ii, 82)

4.14 Intention, Planning and Mental Dispositions

In the passage directly above (SN ii,82) one can see the connection between intention, planning, mental dispositions and consciousness, and their role in the *kamma* process. First, some discussion of the Pāli term for "plans" (*abhisankaroti*) is warranted.⁶⁴ *Abhisankhāra/-karoti* implies a willed, planned action. According to the suttas, such planned action leads to further involvement in the wheel of rebirth. In the commentarial literature, the term "construction consciousness" (*abhisankhāravinnāna*) is used to refer to the state of mind which aims to maintain life through constructing *kamma*. When one is ignorant, and desires projection of the "self" into the future, one produces this construction-consciousness which duly does its job of accumulating desires, volitions and other

"sticky" things, thereby forming ignorant mental dispositions (*saṅkhāras*). These planned actions are oriented towards "setting up" the self in the future. Thus "when the Buddha explains that for a sage who is not caught in sense-pleasure, consciousness 'is not fixed in (the round of) rebirth' and 'is destroyed', the commentaries explain this consciousness as construction-consciousness" (Collins 206).

It is clear that there is an intimate connection between intention and *saṅkhāras*. They both indicate a purposive act. While this relationship can be garnered from the passage at SN ii,82, it is stated clearly in the following one:

And what, Brethren, are the activities (*saṅkhāra*)?

They are the six seats of will (*saṁcetanā*): The will for sights, the will for sounds, for smells, for tastes, for touches, and for mental images. These, brethren, are the activities". (SN iii,60)

Arising from sensory experience, wholesome and unwholesome mental dispositions (*saṅkhāra*) operate in the mind as the dynamic "infrastructure" from which specific intentions arise. Although only a very rough picture, one might picture the unenlightened mind as a sea of mental dispositions. Ignorance, then, is a storm which churns this sea, and intentions are the dispositions which consequently arise as waves.

4.15 Mutual Causality in the Functioning of Intention

Intention (*cetanā*) is derived from mental dispositions (*saṅkhāra*), but the latter is not unaffected by the former.

More precisely, they are like two reeds leaning one upon the other. We have come across this metaphor before, and have seen that it is indicative of a relationship which is characteristic of mutual causality. Intentions (*cetanā*) are conditioned by mental dispositions (*saṅkhāra*) and mental dispositions are conditioned by past acts of body, speech and mind (*kamma*) and their results. All of these are also conditioned by ignorance. If we look at the process step by step, we see that *cetanā* actualizes the latent mental dispositions and expresses them through action. This action in turn leads consciousness to station itself in a certain state commensurate with the nature of the actions which were performed. In other words, consciousness constantly seeks a standpoint or perspective from which it can relate to its environment. Consciousness being so stationed, it experiences certain things in particular ways which then affect one's mental dispositions. The mental dispositions, then, are changing constantly in response to experiences which are being initiated by intentions emanating from previous mental dispositions. Ignorance fuels the whole process because it charges all experiences with the conceit that there is an "I" to whom these experiences belong. In this way, ignorance orients the whole process of life towards the mundane goal of self-aggrandizement.

It is possible to view the process of *kamma*-fruition as presented in the *suttas* not only as retributive justice but

also as a process of education through life-experiences. We have thus outlined a deeper effect of *kamma* than the mere experiencing of pleasure or pain. The inner, psychological consequences of deeds are that certain dispositions are strengthened or weakened, depending on how experience is perceived and processed. In accordance with the aspect of mutual causality in *paṭiccasamuppāda*, these inward consequences are mutually conditioned by all the factors mentioned above: ignorance, consciousness, mental dispositions and intentions. Viewed in these terms, the notion of construction-consciousness corresponds to the idea that past experience forms the dynamic and creative conditions out of which our present state of mind emerges. Constructive consciousness means that this present state of mind engenders new intentions which lead to *kamma*, new experiences and further *saṅkhāras*.

Many of the connections between (*abhi*)*saṅkhāra*, intention and *kamma* come out clearly with an analysis of the mind and the actions of the enlightened *arahant*. By definition, *arahants* produce no new *kamma*, so it is fruitful to look at what inner states accompany their actions." It is clear from the passage cited above (SN ii,82) that "not planning, not willing, he grasps at nothing whatever in the world." When the *suttas* state that *arahants* do not have intentions, this signifies that their manner of life is fundamentally different from those of persons who are still fettered by ignorance.

Arahants do not have intentions that are based on the sense of self-identity (*attabhāva*).

All the actions of an *arahant* proceed from and express the wisdom of enlightenment. In the case of an *arahant*, since there are no new mental dispositions (*saṅkhāras*) produced, there is no new *kamma* and hence, no propagation of the person into the future. The *arahant* has gotten rid of the factors which are necessary for the process of *kamma*. As the *arahant* does have a mind-body complex, the *arahant* performs actions, but these actions are not based on ignorance and do not produce *kamma* results. Thus the cessation of suffering in *saṃsāra* hinges not on the doing or not doing of deeds, but on the cessation of planning, self-centred intentions and other concomitant defiling mental states.

If we look back at what was said about the dynamics of *kamma*, we recall that *kamma* does not lead to an inevitable, predictable result. There is no direct, one-to-one relationship between a deed and its result. We can now begin to understand why this is so. The emphasis on intention explains why *kamma* is not presented in the *Nikāyas* as a closed, deterministic system. Whereas the deed, once performed, remains fixed as a particular historical event, the intentions are part of the ever-changing processes of the mind, and may therefore modify the results of the deed in any number of ways. If one were to throw a pebble into a calm lake, one would be able to predict at what point on the lake

bottom it would end up, if one knew the force and direction of the initial throw. If one were to throw the pebble into a rapidly flowing lake, with churning waters and high waves, the pebble, upon entering the lake, would be tossed about and shifted greatly from its course, eventually hitting the bottom in a non-determinable spot. This is the effect of one's everchanging intentions and mental dispositions on a deed. If we couple this with the fact that even the initial trajectory arises not from a fixed motion of the arm, but from the dynamic world of *cetanā*, we begin to understand why the Buddhist view of *kamma* is not deterministic.

It is clear that because of the role of intention and mental processes within the Buddhist conception of *kamma* there is room for change and the redirection of one's life within the system. In the Jain system, on the other hand, such allowance for novelty was not present, and therefore everything that one currently experiences, according to them, is due to some past action. With the Buddha's shift of emphasis from the deed itself to the intentions motivating the deed, he allowed for a more "flexible" interpretation of *kamma* in which one's situation can be changed if there is an appropriate change in one's attitudes.

The most convincing argument which can be made against the position that the emphasis on intention allows for freedom of choice points out that intention is itself conditioned by

past actions and events and thus is subject to the same laws that physical action is. According to this argument, in order to be able to say that intention can inject totally new elements into an otherwise conditioned system, one would still have to posit an unconditioned Will, capable of wholly autonomous action, of which this intention is a manifestation. We will now demonstrate that this argument does not quite apply in the Buddhist conception of intention. A brief consideration of the Buddhist conception of mind will help to clarify our position.

Although the Pāli terms *manas*, *citta*, *viññāṇa* may all be translated as "mind", none of them represents a permanent entity. In the suttas the mind is conceived as a dynamic process with a vast potential of mental dispositions. The term *citta* perhaps best illustrates the dynamic nature of the mind as a carrier of the *saṅkhāras*, for it comes from the verb *cit*, and means thought, or that which thinks (of an object).⁶⁷ From the Theravāda perspective it is more useful to think of the mind as ever changing mental states or thoughts, rather than as a static entity. The mind, therefore, is understood to be nothing more than the functions it performs. According to the suttas, the mind itself is coherent because of psychological causation. The mind, like *kamma*, would not operate if *paṭiccasamuppāda* did not hold true. One mental moment is connected to the next through conditions, and not through any permanent substrate. A particular state of mind

arises from the combination of various factors, and is nothing more than just this combination. When the next mental state arises, it is actually a new mind that arises. Thus a particular overall state of mind (*citta*) lasts only for a brief period of time, after which it subsides and a new one rises in its place. As the Buddha says, "This, brethren, that we call thought, that we call mind, that we call consciousness, that arises as one thing, ceases as another, whether by night or by day" (SN ii, 94).

In the same way that the *bhavacakka* replaces the idea of a Self, so the idea of mental processes replaces the idea of a Mind, owing to *paṭiccasamuppāda*. That being the case, when we talk about the person being free to choose what path to take, it is fair to say that, although the choice is conditioned, it emanates from *within* the person's mind, and is not wholly determined by external forces.

Most importantly, in the dynamic and ever-changing sea of the mind, what types of mental dispositions will come to the fore and what types of intentions will proceed from them *cannot be predicted*. From the Buddhist perspective, this explains why people appear to act in totally unpredictable ways. Hidden mental dispositions are said to "rise to the surface" when the conditions are appropriate for their actualization. These myriad conditions are so dynamic and mutually reactive that no predictions can be made, because it is not predetermined as to what will be actualized at any

given moment. Thus, while arising out of the mind and mental dispositions, intentions cannot be reduced and related directly to any single one of them. At any time, there is the possibility for various directions to be taken, and in this sense a choice does exist. Thus in Buddhism, choice making does not require an autonomous Will, but arises out of the very conditions of the mind itself. Because the mind is defined as the very processes - of which intention is one - of which it is made, choice can be said to emerge from within and is uncompelled by outside forces. When the dynamic energies of certain mental dispositions become focussed in a certain direction, we call that "intention," which may then coordinate other mental processes in such a way so as to fulfill those desires.

4.16 Intention and the Mind's Ability to Reflect on its Contents

The most important fact with regards to intention is that one can purposefully redirect one's intentions. If this were not possible, then the idea of training and striving towards the goal of liberation would be meaningless. The Buddhist conception of mind gives the utmost importance to the capacity of the mind to reflect on its own contents.

The mind, it must be noted, is counted as the sixth sense-organ. Whereas the other senses are directed towards outer objects, the mind senses inner mental objects. The key

to understanding the mind is the knowledge that it performs accumulative, experiential and analytical functions. The capacity of the mind to recollect (*Pāli: sarati; Skt: smarati*) and reflect upon its own contents makes it into a unique factor in the process of conditioning. Through this capacity of investigating its own contents, consciousness develops the power to select from and to restructure the mental dispositions. *When the mind's ability to reflect on its contents is seen as one of the conditions in a network of mental processes, we begin to see how new trends can meaningfully arise.* Here again, *paṭiccasamuppāda* is not denied or negated. On the contrary, it is only by performing its function of reflecting on its contents *within the process of conditioning* that the mind can initiate new trends of mental development.

Therefore, mindfulness (*sati*) practice is greatly emphasized in Buddhism. This practice trains the mind to become aware to an acute degree of its contents. It is more than just bare awareness, however, for, in becoming a condition in itself, it has transformative powers as well. Through mindfulness, one hopes to wean oneself off the unwholesome tendencies and conceits and eventually to cease planning altogether.

The term *sati* comes from the verb "remember" and thus includes an awareness of the linear aspects of causation. One can look back and see what conditions may have been present in

the past, which led to the conditions which are currently present. One can then assess what conditions are currently co-present and, because of mutual causality, this very investigation will begin to alter the conditions that it is investigating. Thus the mind is not only self-reflexive, but also self-regulating. Furthermore, one becomes more and more proficient at mindful reflection through practice. By means of this practice, the ignorant person realizes that one is shackled to suffering by nothing but one's own desires and dispositions. By reflecting on these, seeing them for what they are and cultivating detachment, all people have the capacity to strive for, and eventually achieve liberation.

PART TWO

Modern Perspectives on Paṭiccasamuppāda

Kamma and Freedom of Choice

PART TWO

In this part, some books by two contemporary authors who deal with the problems which have been presented and discussed in the first part will be considered. Both authors are firmly rooted in the Buddhist tradition and are respected scholars in their field. Their writings are interesting, innovative and current. They focus on the present goal of placing *kamma* within the wider context of *paṭiccasamuppāda*, and of providing for new directions and freedom of choice within this context. Each book is representative of a different way of approaching the problem. Kalupahana approaches it from the standpoint of logic and empiricism, and Macy from that of the biological sciences and especially general systems theory.

Chapter Five

David Kalupahana

5.1 Introduction

Kalupahana provides us with some very interesting and insightful ideas which augment what has hitherto been presented. He laments the fact that

[e]ven though the Buddha made a persistent endeavour to avoid [the] extremes and follow the middle path of 'dependent arising' (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) to explain the life-process (*samsāra*) as well as freedom (*nibbāna*), most critics of Buddhism as well as some of its followers have failed to understand the implications of his views. For them, any conception of causation or dependence, when universalized, becomes inimical to freedom of choice. (1987, 88)

He explains the non-deterministic nature of the Buddhist middle way in three ways. One way is by emphasizing the mitigating role of the processing of experience which occurs in the mind; another way is by distinguishing between determinate physical and conditional psychological causation; and the third way is by rejecting the concept of *svabhāva*. In order to fully appreciate the points that he makes, it is first necessary to establish from what perspective he is approaching the problem.

Kalupahana is well versed in philosophy East and West, and sees parallels between Buddhism and the radical empiricism of British and American philosophers like Hume, Russell and

James. In his conclusion to *Causality : The Central Philosophy of Buddhism* he states, "As a result of his empiricism, [The Buddha] recognized causality as reality and made it the essence of his teachings. Hence his statement : 'He who sees causality sees the *dhamma*'" (1975, 185). Kalupahana's general project, then, is to show that Theravāda Buddhism is based on empiricism and does not become trapped in metaphysical and philosophical speculation which cannot by its very nature ever be grounded in anything demonstrable. Because this type of thinking has come to the fore in the West since the scientific revolution of the Renaissance, there are many thinkers on whom Kalupahana can and does draw for comparison.

5.2 Universality of the Causal Principle

The main feature of *paṭiccasamuppāda* - conditionality - refers to the fact that there are many conditions that come together in a causal process. Kalupahana places great importance on this:

...a thing comes into existence only if the necessary condition or group of conditions is available. Conditionality as a characteristic of causation is still more important in that it prevents causality from being considered a form of strict determinism. It places causality midway between fatalism and accidentalism. (1975, 94)

Kalupahana also places a lot of importance on the epistemological aspects of causality. It can be claimed that causation can never be experienced and is therefore an inductive inference. This leads to a quandary because the very process of inductive reasoning is based upon certain tenets of

causality. Through extensive training and mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*), however, one can experience changes within one's mind, and compare these to the relatively slow changes that are observed in the physical world. Since change occurs at different paces, it is possible to experience one changing element from the vantage point of another. Kalupahana adds that in Buddhism causation is also given experiential validity through the cultivation of the paranormal powers (*abhiññā*) which allow one to sense things that might otherwise be obscured. Thus causal uniformity is based on an inference whose starting point is experience. This has very important ramifications for the future. Using the causal law, one can make a very educated guess about the nature of the future, and discern tendencies, based on a proper examination of what exists in the present. One cannot, however, predict it.

5.3 *Kamma* and the Process Nature of the Mind

Kalupahana points out that because of the role of intention in producing *kamma*, the main arena in which *kamma* functions is the mind. This is in agreement with what has been said thus far about *kamma* in the Pāli texts. Being influenced by psychologists such as William James, Kalupahana emphasizes that the mind is a complex process which is not reducible to easily understood reactions. That is not to say that he posits any transcendent aspects to it, but rather he feels that the elements of which it is made operate in such a highly organized and complex fashion that it functions in a way quite

different way than that of simple mechanical systems. The mind is capable of processing all the events which occur to an individual, and in doing so, may alter various aspects of the event. Therefore Kalupahana claims that psychological causation is not equivalent to physical causation. The mind also has the ability to accumulate data from various events over time and assimilate it. Theoretically, any piece of data can be used along with any other piece in order to come to some understanding or thought about something. Thus the mind is selective and synthetic. Although we may theoretically be able to know what all the individual mental conditions are, there is no way of knowing which ones will be brought to the fore and put together in the form of intentions. It is not like combining several chemicals in a test-tube where, if the chemicals are all known, the final compound will be known. Instead, the mind plays an active role in processing, combining and rearranging the data. The subsequent action is therefore a complex result of many active and latent factors. The key word that Kalupahana employs in this regard is *selection*. He says that this selection which goes on in the mind

accounts for the possibility and, therefore, the ability on the part of the human being to choose, think and act, and these represent the core of selfhood or personality in the Buddha's doctrine. Hence his statement that the self is a "lump of dispositions." (1987, 89)

5.4 Psychological Causation

A point that Kalupahana emphasizes repeatedly is that psychological causation is not equivalent to physical causation. According to Kalupahana, much of the problem that people have in understanding how a true decision can be made if the mind is subject to causal laws can be traced to the mistaken belief that psychological causation operates just as physical causation does. The mind cannot be broken down into a series of particles which follow a path based on physical laws. Ultimately, it is very difficult to conceive of the forces at work in psychological causation, because we in the modern age are so accustomed to thinking in terms of classical physical causation. We will try to illustrate the difference with an example in what follows.

Coming from the outer world, external stimuli follow the laws of physical causation. They might condition one deed and psychological stimuli might condition another (Kalupahana 1976, 46). While the external stimuli provide necessitating circumstances, the psychological factors can only be reckoned as *probabilities*. For example, Kalupahana refers to MN i, 324, where it says that "an innocent little baby lying on its back quickly draws its hand or foot if it happens to touch a live ember." This is an example of an action motivated by external causes which is both predictable and not karmically significant. One can imagine many similar events which all have the same degree of external motivation and therefore little moral significance, such as falling down due to treading on ice, or swinging the knee from being hit on the

reflexes. All of these follow simple physical laws and therefore are determinate; they also do not generate *kamma*.

Psychologically motivated actions are ones which come about from a combination of what Kalupahana calls conscious and unconscious motives. The distinction between these two is rather dubious in terms of Buddhist psychology, and comes more from a Western perspective. Buddhist psychological treatises have other categories in which they place various factors, but happily, Kalupahana clarifies what he means by providing us with some examples. Included in his idea of conscious motives are the three roots of unwholesome behaviour, greed (*lobha* or *rāga*), hatred (*dosa*) and delusion (*moha*), and the absence of these qualities, which are the roots of wholesome behaviour. As unconscious motives, he cites the desire to perpetuate life (*jīvitukāma*) and the desire to avoid death (*amaritukāma*).

An example of a psychologically motivated action is theft. The theft occurs because of a combination of many factors. The immediate external factors might be the visual contact between the eye and the object that was later stolen. This contact may initiate a whole series of processes in the mind which bring together various psychological conditions. The thief's mind is imbued with greed, so that would be one conscious motive. He may be filled with jealousy, hatred and restlessness. He also must have a basic ignorance about the nature of life and, of course, *kamma*. There may be an inconceivably large amount of further conscious and unconscious motives that result in his decision to steal the

item. What is evident is that there is a difference in kind between physical and psychological causes that must be taken into consideration. That greed causes one to steal is quite clear, but one would be hard pressed to put this causal relationship into mathematical terms or even words. We know from experience that there is a causal relationship here, but the causal efficacy itself is very subtle.

Kalupahana continues with an examination of the passage already discussed above at AN i, 249, wherein it is said that the same deed may bring different kammic results for different people. He declares that

this discourse should help to clear the misconceptions of those who tend to see strict determinism in the Buddhist theory of *karma*. The emphasis is on the very significant fact that the effect of a deed is not determined solely by the deed itself, but also by many other factors, such as the nature of the person who commits the deed and the circumstances in which it is committed. This is in conformity with the principle of causality as formulated by the Buddha. (1976, 49)

5.5 *Paṭiccasamuppāda* Replaces *Svabhāva*

The third explanation that Kalupahana offers for the indeterminism of Buddhist causality is the denial of *svabhāva*. This establishes that the indeterminism present in *paṭiccasamuppāda* is what allows *kamma* to operate in the way in which it does, and therefore what allows human action the type of freedom which it has. The main theories with which the Buddha had to contend, according to the *suttas*, were *sayam katham* (self-causation), *param katham* (external-causation), and *svabhāva* (own-nature). The idea of *paṭiccasamuppāda* is intended to replace these various ideas about causation⁶⁸ and

actually shifts the discussion onto quite a new and different level than it had been on before.

In chapter three, we explored some of the implications of the replacement of self- and external-causation by *paṭiccasamuppāda*. We will now see what points Kalupahana brings up as he explores some of the implications of the fact that *paṭiccasamuppāda* replaces the concept of *svabhāva*. The term *svabhāva* is one that was used in the discourses of many schools and carries many different connotations. Etymologically, it is composed of the suffix *sva*, meaning self, and *bhāva*, meaning being or nature. Kalupahana claims that *svabhāva* was first put forward by the Materialists in an attempt to explain evolution and change without resorting to causality which their epistemology held could never be verified (Kalupahana 1975, 28). Śaṅkara defines the term as "the unique power or property restricted to [individual or classes of] objects, like the warmth of fire" (Kalupahana 1975, 30). Thus it is the property of a thing that makes it what that thing is, without which it would not be that thing. If fire, for example, did not have warmth, it would not truly be fire. We can therefore understand *svabhāva* as essence, or inherent nature. *Svabhāva* therefore entails positing a distinct, fixed identity and becomes very restrictive when considering causality. It applies as a theory of causation because it emphasizes a relationship between one thing and another through invariable concomitance. If there is the presence of an object, then the other things that are related

to its nature (*svabhāva*) will appear as well. Hence, "when there is smoke, there is fire." *Svabhāva* was the only cause for a phenomenon's existence admitted by the materialist *Cārvāka*ṣ. They held that a thing depends only on its *svabhāva* for existence, and that certain phenomena arise according to the pre-existing laws of *svabhāva*. Since what a thing essentially is, is due to its *svabhāva*, the *svabhāva* of thing X can never change if X is still to be that particular X. Therefore, the field of change is highly limited.

In its denial of *svabhāva*, Buddhism is able to unlock endless possibilities in the realm of change. Few possibilities are ultimately closed in the Buddhist system of causality (*paṭiccasamuppāda*). *Svabhāvavāda* denies interdependence, because if an element's nature is fixed, then interaction with other elements would not affect it. It is in its very emphasis on interdependence that *paṭiccasamuppāda* allows new conditions to arise out of the old ones. When many causes (*paccaya*) come together in a moment, they interact with each other, as we have seen clearly in chapter two in our discussion of sets of conditions. Because they do not have a particular essence, they can mix together and produce something new. This new thing in turn will lack *svabhāva* and thus be able to modulate into something quite different the very next moment. It is like a bowl of alphabet soup. A *svabhāvavādin* might say that the letters have a certain nature (which is, for argument's sake, in accordance with their order in the alphabet). Therefore, if one were to dip a spoon into

the soup and withdraw it again, one would notice that the "f" is after the "e" but before the "g", just as we always find smoke with fire. They simply would not and could not appear otherwise and still be called letters. A Buddhist soup, however, would allow the letters to combine in many different ways, spelling countless words. The possibilities would be infinitely greater. Of course, this is not to say that *anything* can happen in Buddhism, but many things can happen, as long as the basic laws governing the particular system (physical, psychological, etc...) are not contradicted. *Svabhāva* would necessarily deny the efficacy of mutual causation. It would not allow for productive combinations of different elements in mutual interaction, but would allow only for specified relations to exist.

Without *svabhāva*, an agent is not confined to effecting only certain changes, but may act in many ways and cause events to go in any number of new directions. One of the major stumbling blocks to this understanding is the fact that people often misinterpret their experience of causality. When one sees a thing which is constantly accompanied by something else, it is easy to believe that they are related *in essence*. In order to appreciate the Buddha's view, Kalupahana says that we must reject our often innate tendency to think in terms of essence and open our minds to the endless possibilities of change within the kaleidoscopic nature of conditioned co-origination.

5.6 Conclusion

Kalupahana has provided us with three interrelated points which help to explain some of the outstanding questions which emerged from our scriptural study. He has accounted for the non-deterministic but causal nature of the general principle of *paṭiccasamuppāda* in terms of its denial of *svabhāva*. This accords with the way *paṭiccasamuppāda* has been characterized in part one. The key is that no one cause is sufficient in itself to bring about an effect. When, however, many conditions come together, they can effect changes which lead to dynamic new situations. In translating this concept to the specific realm of human behaviour, we have mentioned two phenomena. Just as causes in general interact *en masse* in order to effect change, so in the mind there are many factors which condition each other and lead to an unpredictable result. Behaviour and *kamma* emerges not from any *svabhāva* of the person but from the sea of shifting mental dispositions. These dispositions are the result of accumulated experiences, and those seeking actualization come to the fore in various combinations at any particular moment in the form of intentions. Furthermore, the basic psychological factors do not follow physical laws, and are thus not deterministic factors to begin with. It is therefore easy to see that anyone can act in any way.

Chapter Six

Joanna Macy

6.1 Introduction

Joanna Macy is a modern Buddhist scholar who maintains that the Buddhist notion of *paṭiccasamuppāda* can be compared favourably to the principles behind general systems theory. She holds that the most important aspect of *paṭiccasamuppāda* is that it displays mutual causality, which is similar to the causal processes at work in open systems (Macy 1). The basic question that a systems view of causality forces us to ask is not, "what causes X ?", but rather, "what is present when X is present, and how do they affect each other?"

There are many similarities between Macy's emphasis on the processes which occur within a system, and Kalupahana's idea of psychological causation. Like Kalupahana, Macy believes that Buddhism demonstrates that

[n]o effect arises without cause, yet no effect is predetermined, for its causes are multiple and mutually affecting. Hence there can be novelty as well as order. Thus, Buddhist teachings presented a middle way between the positions of determinism and indeterminacy that has polarized the discussion of causality. (Macy 19)

Macy, however, goes into more detail about the actual functioning of the mental-system, and leads us to a greater understanding of how novelty actually does enter into the scheme of things through the processes which go on in a system. In this sense, her work complements that of Kalupahana very well, and furthers our comprehension of how

paṭiccasamuppāda and *kamma* function as a middle way.

6.2 Challenge to Traditional Linear Causality

Macy begins by pointing out that when people throughout the ages have thought about causality, they have tended to think only in terms of linear causality, wherein there is a unidirectional flow of causal efficacy from the cause, or agent, to the effect, or recipient. Linear causality, she asserts, tends to lead to predictability, and, therefore, determinism. The historic emphasis on linear causality comes out of a focus on substance. By shifting the focus away from substance and towards process, systems theory is able to approach the problem of change from a new, and often more fruitful perspective. The model for this type of analysis is not billiard balls hitting one another, but rather living organisms which are capable of reorganizing themselves to maintain homeostasis, without the need for outside intervention from a fixed point.

According to Macy, the Buddha's *dharmma* incorporates many of the same perspectives as does systems theory.

Its vision of interdependence, presenting reality as a dynamic interaction of mutually conditioning events, posits no prime cause or unconditioned absolute to which occurrences can be traced in a linear fashion. In this doctrine, reality appears as a dynamically interdependent process. All factors, mental and physical, subsist in a web of mutual causal interaction, with no element or essence held to be immutable or autonomous...Our hope hinges on no external agency, but derives rather from the causal order itself where self and act, project and perception are mutually determining. Hence liberation entails a vision of the dependently co-

arising nature of all phenomena. (Macy 18)

It may be added that it is in the very misinterpretation of *paṭiccasamuppāda* that we become caught in this web of suffering, ever producing *kamma*. Not only is *kamma* a function of the principles of *paṭiccasamuppāda*, its main cause is nescience of these very principles. By experiencing the world properly, one can reorganize oneself via feedback into a moral and wise being, thereby bringing an end to sorrow.

Macy emphasizes the use of the locative absolute in the basic causal formula "*imasmim sati idaṃ hoti*", as was done in chapter two, claiming that this indicates interrelationship of the cause and "effect", and not the active production of the latter by the former. Indeed, were the latter the case, then as a causative form of the verb "arise" exists in Pāli, she claims it would likely have been used.⁶⁹

Existence, therefore, is based on *relationships* and not on substance (either material or spiritual). According to Macy, the Buddha's idea of *anatta* leaves only the raw relationships between things as the defining attribute of their existence. This becomes central in the conception of *kamma*, because it allows for the person and *kamma* to arise together, without one having created the other, or both having been created by something transcendent.

6.3 General Systems Theory and its Relationship to *Paṭiccasamuppāda*

In the early years of the twentieth century, some scientists began to realize that the traditional linear understanding of causality was not adequate for explaining the phenomena of nature, especially life and biological processes. Besides being linear, scientific thought was predominantly reductive, and tended to understand the whole by dissecting it into its component parts. Systems theory, then, as the name suggests, is the attempt to study whole systems. This requires a focus not on the nature of the individual parts, but on the way they relate to each other and are organized in the system. A system is a dynamic flow of interactions within certain boundaries, which may or may not have a further interaction with its environment, depending on whether it is open or closed. The remarkable thing about efficient systems is that they may defy the most established law of thermodynamics, the law of entropy, and actually increase in order and complexity with time. The key feature of a system is that it will attempt to maintain an equilibrium despite the constant influx of stimuli from the environment. Whatever enters the system does not remain unchanged by it, and it affects the system as well. Processes are constantly going on by which new information is assimilated and some is released. This begins to describe in some detail the type of processing that Kalupahana claims goes on in the mind.

The processes by which the system sustains and creates order in *Fliess-Gleichgewicht* [balance of flux] are seen as twofold. One is homeostatic, whereby the continuity of structure or pattern is maintained. The other is self-

organizing, whereby the structure is modified, its organization increased. In this complexification the system moves toward greater improbability and variety. This involves a decrease in structural stability: The system, more finely tuned, is more vulnerable to physical disorganization, but this in turn is counterbalanced by a greater flexibility and capacity to adapt, process information, and cope. (Macy 74)

6.4 Feedback, Learning and Mindfulness

Systems rely heavily for their organization on what is known as feedback. Feedback enables a system to monitor its own functions and alter its performance accordingly.

In feedback, the output of a system, its behaviour, is monitored back to its receptors, thereby signalling the degree of performance or nonperformance of an operation in relation to preestablished goals. This monitoring by means of feedback loops permits it to regulate its behaviour in terms of these goals. (Macy 75)

Two types of feedback are identified as negative and positive. Negative feedback serves to let the system know that it is on the correct track for reaching its goals; positive feedback highlights any deviations. Through positive feedback, a system's goals and behaviour may change, thus making it quite impossible to predict exactly where it will go.

Macy provides us with a lucid and insightful explanation of the cognitive process which goes on in the mind, as understood by systems theorists. This further helps to clarify the nature of psychological causation and its connection to the Buddhist views of the mind in general and intention in particular. Like Buddhism, systems theory does not posit a transcendent Mind, but it also holds that mental phenomena

cannot be assessed only in terms of physical, chemical changes. Because of its high degree of organization and specialization, the mind functions on a different level from physical phenomena. Like the Buddhist notions of *phassa*, *vedanā*, and *saññā*, the systems view of experience describes the way bare sensory impingement becomes integrated into the mind through feelings, which, by combining current with previous experience, becomes perception and eventually meaning, in a process of "mental metabolism" comparable to "the conversion of raw environmental processes into energy forms consumable or processable by a particular living system" (Qtd. in Macy 83).

The cognitive system is highly dynamic because while it processes experience based on constructs from past experience (*saṅkhāra*), these constructs are themselves always changing based on current experience. Negative feedback comes into play at this point when things do seem to be making sense to us. That means that "things are going alright - keep on going in this direction."

When experience does not make sense according to the currently existing constructs, then it is time for change. Positive feedback or "learning" begins to take place. In this way, a system will re-organize its parameters in an attempt to make the new anomalies fit. A successful system will maintain itself only if it, like its environment, is in a constant state of flux, adapting and changing to meet the changes

required by its experience. Note that this accords with what was discussed in part one in relation to learning and mindfulness.

Mindfulness is a type of feedback, according to Macy's understanding of it. Unfortunately, she neglects the importance of getting a sense of direction which is imparted through the linear aspects of causality. She recognizes that what has happened in the past has great bearing on the present, but in suggesting that this is solely due to mutual causality, she may become entangled in the idea that the past, present and future all exist together.⁷⁰

Because the system itself is in a constant state of flux, the way it processes input is never the same twice. Since stimuli do not pass directly through the system but are absorbed into and processed by it, there is always the opportunity for novelty to enter. The final output resulting from an input is determined as much by the internal state of the system through which it passes as by the input itself. As Macy so eloquently puts it,

Matter, energy, or information do not flow through the system following a fixed pathway, triggering responses and producing behaviour (output) directly. Rather they are subject to the dynamics of the system's internal structure. Incoming messages or inputs are sorted, sifted, evaluated, and recombined before they are transmitted to effectors and translated into action.
(Macy 92)

The open system does not passively undergo the effect of external causes, but actively transforms them. So many factors come into play that it is literally impossible to

isolate any direct, one-one causal relationships within an open system. This adds detail to what Kalupahana has said regarding the mind and its role as a processor of experience.

Because of the feedback loop, the relations within a system are mutually causal, and thus everything can effect each other. It is through this interaction that the system develops, thus countering the idea that the effects are pre-existent in the cause. The very entity undergoing development has no way of knowing what the end result will be, because of its interrelation with many causal factors.

6.5 Co-Arising of Doer and Deed

Given the systems/Buddhist view of the process nature of a person, it is important to follow the logic of this view to see how it affects *kamma*. What needs to be elaborated is "the connection between what we do and what we are" (Macy 161). Macy argues that the systems view states that what one does moulds and defines what one is, which is, of course, the essence of the doctrine of *kamma* as well.

As we saw in part one, mental dispositions arise and develop through our positive or negative reactions to experience. Some tendencies are reinforced and some are dropped, depending on what happens to us. Macy sums up these points very well:

In the early Buddhist view, then, a person's identity resides not in any enduring substance or self (*attā*) but in his acts (*kamma*) - that is in the choices which shape these acts, which in turn through the conditioning effect of the *sāṅkhārās*, shape him. Because this causal process is reciprocal - the dispositions

formed by previous choices modified in turn by the present acts they influence - this identity as choice-maker is fluid, its experience alterable. While it is affected by the past, it can also break free of the past. (Macy 173-4)

Coming now to the question of freedom of choice, we see that the systems view gives us some interesting insight into how there may be freedom without positing an autonomous or unconditioned agent.

In the interdependence of doer and deed, neither determinacy nor choice requires an agent external to the decision making process itself. This is so, because karma is, essentially, the operation by which choices are embodied, and the individual is that embodiment or rather that operation. (Macy 177)

Hence the question of freedom of the will is not so much answered as transcended. It is, as the Buddha said about many questions, "not an appropriate question" because the assumptions that make it askable are not correct. The main assumption usually made is that there is a being that can be either free or not. In actuality, the being is nothing more than the very decisions made and actions performed. With each new decision, a new being arises with an inner state defined by its various habits and tendencies. This being has the freedom to act in any number of ways.

The being, as a processing centre, although not having absolute Free Will, can be said to make choices because "the external pressures of circumstances can only operate in interaction with internal organization" (Macy 174). The system learns through past experience, but it internalizes the lessons and may be influenced by one or another event

depending on its own internal dynamics. While external experience has led to the accumulation of various tendencies and dispositions, it is from within the depths of the mind itself that certain factors come to the fore and manifest as intentions, directing one's actions at any particular moment.

Again, we must note the importance of reflection in this process. In order to act most effectively, one must be aware of a range of possibilities, not only externally, but within oneself. While ultimately, choice is limited by the nature of dispositions that one has in one's mind, practically there is an endless variety of possibilities. This is because they arise out of the teeming web of countless dispositions. Moreover, the mind itself changes with each decision, based on what feedback it receives having made that decision. In this way, what "we" are is constantly changing based on our choices, and our choices in turn change as we do.

CONCLUSION

With the conception of *paṭiccasamuppāda*, the Buddha has presented a causal system which is rich in meaning and implications. The Buddha's theory of causation diverged sharply from many of the other theories which were current in his day. We have looked at the extreme theories of determinism and chance-origination and have seen that they did not raise humans to the level where they could be responsible for their own liberation from suffering. In taking the "middle way," the Buddha not only put forward a unique theory, but gave people the hope that they, too, could reach liberation, not by relying on help from external powers, or on luck, but by understanding "as it really is," the very way that conditioned co-origination operates. What is more, as *paṭiccasamuppāda* accounts for one's own existence and suffering (the *bhavacakka*) as well as that of the world, the causal law could be discovered through careful contemplation and inner reflection.

Paṭiccasamuppāda has been shown to be a very basic and broad principle which describes the way things happen in terms of both mutual and linear causality. Phenomena arise out of sets of conditions in a state of mutual conditioning, which act coherently to give trends of development which, because of

their internal dynamics, cannot be predicted. Because *paṭiccasamuppāda* replaces *svabhāva*, the coming together of different sets of conditions can create novel situations which are not reducable to the inert sum of their parts. It is clear that were *paṭicca-samuppāda* not to have these characteristics, the process of *kamma* would not display the mutability which it does, while still maintaining conditionality. We saw that some sects which accepted other causal theories were often led to a rigid conception of *kamma* from which there was no room for alteration or self-initiated liberation. With the insight garnered from *paṭiccasamuppāda*, we can see that *kamma* is not an inexplicable force; it fits into the whole experience of life and nature in terms of conditionality.

Although some may argue that if a causal principle is universalized, determinism must necessarily reign supreme, we have come to an understanding of how change and eventually liberation can come about without abrogating the causal system. In seeking to explain how this accounts for freedom of choice, we began by seeing that the *bhavacakka* accounts for the very existence of the person in terms of *paṭiccasamuppāda*. This then enabled us to analyze certain *kamma*-producing factors of the human personality in terms of conditioned co-origination. Namely, we saw that although one's state of existence is conditioned, the various factors which constitute the person are formed into constellations which are ever-

changing and mutually interactive. One's mind is abuzz with a host of underlying dispositions (*saṅkhāra*) seeking actualization. When the dynamics are so arranged that a particular set of dispositions focus into intentions, goal-oriented behaviour ensues. When the mind is conditioned by powerful defilements such as ignorance and desire, one's intentions will no doubt be oriented towards *kamma*-accumulating behaviour and the construction of further mental dispositions. Intentions, however, are not fixed but "rise as one thing and cease as another." At any time, the dynamics of their relationships can change and this will in turn lead to a change in one's *kamma*. If the proper conditions are highlighted in this way, one can be directed towards liberation, as illustrated by the twenty-four conditions of liberation. While annulling determinism, this changeable nature of sets of conditions still does not necessarily uphold human freedom of choice, unless it can be shown that new directions not only occur, but can be purposefully initiated from within.

The purposeful direction of intention does become possible through the practice of mindfulness (*sati*). Once one has become aware of the processes that go on in the mind through the practice of mindfulness, this awareness itself becomes integrated into the sea of factors of the mind, and can condition and influence them in positive and purposeful ways. Through noting the cohesion of mental dispositions into

intentions, the unwholesome drives can begin to be curtailed and the wholesome ones developed. Awareness is the key to self-regulation, which can alter tendencies due to the possibilities entailed in mutual causation. Although sometimes a daunting task, the Buddha was wont to point out that one is able to train and develop the ability to reflect on one's mind, becoming more adept with each attempt.

We can see that the ability to direct our lives is possible precisely because the mind is conditioned. While some people have tried to explain freedom through positing an autonomous and unconditioned Will, it is in its very rejection of these premises that Buddhism allows for purposive action. The experiential and analytical aspects of the mind are part of the very same system and thus can interact effectively. In other words, due to mutual causality, as Macy has clearly explained, the mind can affect mental processes, precisely because it is no more than those processes.

Furthermore, because of the regular sequence of causality, one can be assured that once one has begun to rid oneself of certain defiling dispositions, this will lead to the desired consequences, and not to a random medley of effects.

Because of the way *paṭiccasamuppāda* applies to human life, the Buddha was able to say:

Now inasmuch, Brethren, as the Ariyan disciple knows the causal relation thus, knows the uprising of the causal relation thus, knows the cessation of the causal relation thus, knows the way going to the cessation of the causal

relation, he is what we call the Ariyan disciple who has won the view, who has won the vision, who has arrived at this good doctrine, who sees this good doctrine, who possesses the knowledge of the trained man, who possesses the wisdom of the trained man, who has won to the stream of the Norm, who has the Ariyan insight of revulsion, who stands knocking at the door of the Deathless. (SN ii,42)

APPENDIX
THE WHEEL OF LIFE (BHAVACAKKA)

Figure 1. The Buddhist Wheel of Life.

* From Robinson & Johnson P.18

ENDNOTES

1. *Paṭiccasamuppāda* is a word that has been translated in many ways, including dependent origination, conditioned origination, dependent co-arising and causal genesis. For the purposes of this thesis, it shall be translated as conditioned co-origination, for reasons which will become clear.

2. Very little information has come down to us about the groups which held this belief. In all likelihood, they were the materialist *Cārvākas* and *Lokāyatas* (Macy 30).

3. The term *adhicca* comes from the Sanskrit root "dhr" meaning support. According to the PTSD, *dhicca* is the gerund of this root, and the addition of the prefix indicates negation. Therefore the term means "having had no support" or "uncaused".

4. The term "middle way" in the Buddhist context describes two different types of situations. In some cases, the middle way is literally just that - a path that does not go to either extreme but rather lies somewhere midway between two opposing views. In other cases, it is not a true midpoint between certain logical possibilities, but rather it transcends them in rejecting the very assumptions presupposed by the questions and offers an entirely different perspective.

5. The term "Buddhism" shall henceforth refer to the *Theravāda* school unless otherwise noted.

6. *Essays on Time in Buddhism*, Ed. by H.S. Prasad, includes many essays which deal with causality, but largely from points of view other than that of *Theravāda* Buddhism. Similarly, *Essays on Dependent Origination and Momentariness*, by Rita Gupta discusses *paṭiccasamuppāda* in parts of the opening chapters from the *Theravāda* point of view, but then rapidly moves on to *Sarvāstivāda* and *Mahāyāna* notions, focusing especially on how their understanding of causality led to the doctrine of momentariness.

7. A curious feature of the Pāli, as pointed out by Kalupahana (1975, 90) is that the same pronoun *idaṃ* is used throughout. Although the English is given as this...that, the Pāli seems to say this...this. He quotes C.A.F. Rhys Davids who said, this should not lead the reader to see in the formula a set of merely identical propositions. Pāli diction does not distinguish between the two terms in our way; but the context invariably shows that there are two terms and not one. (Qtd. in 1975, 90)

8. The sense of the locative absolute is the same in Pali as in Sanskrit, and as to the latter, Coulson writes,

The force of the [locative absolute] construction may usually be translated into English by a temporal clause introduced by 'when' or, where a present participle marks contemporaneous action, by 'as' or 'while.' (Coulson 170)

In this case *sati* is in fact a present participle, so this rendering is appropriate. This feature is emphasized by Macy (53) and she gives it great importance in her study, as will become clear in future chapters.

9. Warder confirms that "the ablative... expresses the cause or origin from which something arises" (1974, 89). Johansson agrees that "[t]he ablative can also express what has happened before something" (1981, 126).

10. In the case of co-presence, it is perhaps misleading to term one element a cause and the other an effect, because that implies that one produces the other. It is most appropriate to refer to them both as "conditions" (*paccaya*).

11. Macy points out that

this language does not present a causation wherein B issues from a potency of A or represents a self-evolution of A. It points to the function, not of that which genetically produces out of inherent power, but of that which in relationship, by its presence, occasions and supports. (Macy 52)

12. The commentaries mention that the causal process operates in the five aspects of the universe:

- 1) The physical world (*utuniyāma*)
- 2) The organic world (*bijaniyāma*)
- 3) The mental world (*cittaniyāma*)
- 4) The moral sphere (*kammaniyāma*)
- 5) The spiritual life (*dharmaniyāma*) (DA ii, 42)

13. *Yathākārī yathācārī tathābhavati - sādhu-kārī sādhubhavadati, pāpakārī pāpo bhavati; puṇyaḥ puṇyena karmaṇā bhavati, pāpaḥ pāpena/ atho khalvāhuḥ kāmānaya evāyaṃ puruṣa iti; sa yathākāmo bhavati tatkraturbhavati, yatkraturbhavati tatkarma kurute, yatkarma kurute tadabhisampadyate //*

14. Sacrifice does not improve the *kamma* of those who have acted wrongly (DN i, 140). Performing ascetic practices according to strict rules does not alter *kamma* (DN i, 167). Bathing in sacred rivers does not cleanse one of bad *kamma* (MN i, 39).

15. Although it uses the term "free will," the Encyclopedia of Religion agrees with this point, saying in part that

belief in free will amounts to the conviction that, as individuals, human beings are endowed with the capacity for choice of action, for decision among alternatives...

16. According to Thomas (68), the Wheel of life can be traced back to the *Divyāvadāna* (300) where the Buddha instructs Ānanda on how to inscribe the Wheel over the gateway of the Veluvana monastery.

17. The word *akusala* connotes that which is bad, or undesirable, and in some PTS texts is translated as unskilled. The word *kusala* likewise is often rendered as skilled and connotes that which is good. The translation used throughout this work for *kusala* is wholesome and for *akusala* is unwholesome.

18. *imasmim sati idaṃ hoti; imassa uppāda idaṃ uppajjati.* (MN i, 263)

19. This conclusion has, in fact, been made by Mitchell (Pappu 69), Jayatilleke (1975 146), Nārada Thera (1946 158), McDermott (O'Flaherty 167) and Na-Rangsi (iv) amongst others.

20. *puna ca param Sāriputta Tathāgato atitānāgatapaccuppannānaṃ kammaśamādānānaṃ ṭhānaśo hetuso vipakkaṃ yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti.*

Here, according to the PTSD, the occurrence of *ṭhānaśo hetuso* together indicates the reason and cause for something. Although the term *paṭiccasamuppāda* is not used here, the intention is clearly to point out that deeds are acquired through cause and condition.

21. See Encyclopedia of Religion, "Free Will and Determinism."

22. For an excellent, clear, concise discussion of determinism and indeterminism, and their ramifications on human behaviour, see Moser 267-281.

23. Chaos theory places great importance on this fact. Given time, even the flapping of a butterfly's wings in a novel direction can affect the whole weather system of a continent. For some relevant points about chaos, see Gutzwiller 78.

24. *Iti kho bhikkhave yaṃ tatra tathatā avitathatā anaññathatā idappaccayatā// ayaṃ vuccati bhikkhave paṭiccasamuppādo//* (SN ii, 26).

25. The translation is Kalupahana's.

26. Interestingly, a chaotic system such as that with many billiard balls can never be predicted, no matter how accurate the initial measurements are. This is not due to chance, but chaos, which, although similar to chance in appearance, is actually quite different. Here a quote will serve to demonstrate some of the relevant insights that may be garnered from chaos theory.

Chaos demonstrates that a system can have complicated behaviour that emerges as a consequence of simple, nonlinear interaction of only a few components...The interaction of components on one scale can lead to complex global behaviour on a larger scale that in general cannot be deduced from knowledge of the individual components...Through amplification of small fluctuations it can provide natural systems with access to novelty. (Crutchfield et al. 56)

27. The Four Noble Truths can be found at DN ii, 305.

28. The translation is Jeyatilleke's (1963, 466).

29. Collins says that

[a]ttabhava, then, refers to the fact, condition or status of being a "self" - a "self", that is, in the sense in which the unenlightened man feels himself to be a separate individual, confronting real others. (157)

30. MN i, 263 / MN iii, 63 / SN ii, 27

31. Buddhaghosa emphasizes the mutual aspect of *paṭiccasamuppāda* in the *Visuddhimagga* chapter XVII, sections 14-24. In these sections, he undertakes an in depth etymological analysis of the term *paṭiccasamuppāda* and concludes that "the word 'dependent' (*paṭicca*) indicates the combination of the conditions, since states in the process of occurring exist in dependence on the combining of their conditions" (XVII 22). "And it is called a 'co-arising' (*samvopādo*) since it causes the states that occur in unresolved mutual interdependence to arise associatedly" (XVII 18).

32. This idea is also found in DN ii, 35. A similar formulation pertaining to the mutual conditioning of the *āsavas* and ignorance can be found at MN i, 54.

33. This tale is related in the *Mahāpadānasutta* (The Great Discourse on the Lineage) found in the *Dīgha Nikāya*.

34. According to the PTSD, the term *nidāna* comes from *ni + √da*, meaning "to bind." Thus it refers to something which binds, or links. It also has connotations such as "occasion."

35. This word means literally "the wheel of life" and was used in the *abhidhamma* and commentarial literature to refer to the twelve-link enumeration of causality (see *Vsm* chap. XVII). In the Pali texts, it is not portrayed as a wheel and, in fact, calling it such already signifies a certain interpretation of the chain itself. Nevertheless, for convenience sake, the twelve-link series will be referred to alternately as the *bhavacakka*.

36. This idea is also found in *DN* ii, 35. A similar formulation pertaining to the mutual conditioning of the *asavas* and ignorance can be found at *MN* i, 54.

37. The question may arise as to why these two elements in particular are said to be in this mutual relationship. This is so perhaps because the relationship between the physical organism and consciousness is, in Buddhism, and many other systems of thought, notoriously difficult to understand. It could also be because of the concern to avoid the "pernicious view" that consciousness can support itself without a mind-body complex, and can act as a sufficient cause for the arising of the aggregates.

38. The *asavas*, or cankers, are "sensual desire" (*kāma*), "becoming" (*bhava*) and "ignorance" (*avijjā*) (*DN* i, 84) to which is sometimes added "holding onto viewpoints" (*diṭṭhi*).

39. The five aggregates or *khandhas* are physical form (*rūpa*), feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), mental formations (*sankhāra*) and consciousness (*viññāṇa*).

40. This story can be found in *Burtt* 43-46.

41. This interpretation can be found in the *Vissuddhimagga* XVII 287.

See also Thomas, 65.

42. There is evidence in the *Suttas* that the three lives interpretation is indeed a valid interpretation. In *DN* ii, 63, the Buddha asks,

were consciousness not to descend into the mother's womb,
would there arise name-and-form ?

This clearly indicates that one life may be said to commence when consciousness enters the womb. This dictates that the first two *nidānas* must then be part of a previous life. Therefore, we see that the idea that the first two *nidānas* represent a previous life does seem to be supported in the *Suttas*. It is more obvious from the *nidānas* themselves that rebirth in a future life is described in the last stages. Becoming (*bhava*) in the sense of "coming into existence, birth and old-age and death are the final *nidānas* and must be referring to future existence.

43. One must realize that the conditions designated as "causes of kamma" and "effects of kamma" are actually both when looked at in the greater scheme of things. For example, ignorance and the mental dispositions are not merely generative of kamma, but are surely the results of previous kamma themselves. The same holds true for all the *nidānas*.

44. The realm of *kāma* includes the six distinct worlds that make up the material universe: the world of the lower gods, the *asuras*, the *petas*, the human world, the animal world, and *niraya*.

45. The cankers as specified in the *Sammādiṭṭhisutta* are specifically the desire for sensual pleasure (*kāma*), the desire for continued existence (*bhava*) and ignorance (*avijjā*). In later times, a fourth canker was added, that of attachment to viewpoints (*diṭṭhi*).

46. Interestingly, this seems to be just the case in Shinran's concept of karma. He believed that

both the "good" and "evil" committed in the present are prompted by past evil acts. The karmic evil of the self is fathomless and forms the core of the self itself... Since good and evil thoughts in the present all arise determined by past karma, our decision and efforts in the present - and, indeed, the subject of free will seeking to suppress evil and nurture good thoughts - are completely bereft of meaning... The ego-self in the present, as the result of past karma, is dominated completely by the working out of past acts and possesses no freedom. (Ueda 84-85)

47. We will not be concerned with what the Jains actually believed, but rather with the way their beliefs are represented in the Buddhist Suttas. Our aim is not to explore Jain doctrine, but rather to use it as a foil to bring out certain points of Buddhist doctrine.

48. *Nāhaṃ, bhikkhave, sañcetanikānaṃ kammaṇaṃ katānaṃ upacitānaṃ appaṭisaṃveditvā vyantibhāvaṃ vadāmi, taṃ ca kho diṭṭheva dhamme uppajjaṃ vā apare vā pariyāye/ na tvevāhaṃ, bhikkhave, sañcetanikānaṃ kammaṇaṃ katānaṃ upacitānaṃ appaṭisaṃveditvā dukkhassantakiriyaṃ vadāmi/*

49. MN i, 389 ; AN ii, 231 ; DN iii 230

50. This term is translated often as Hell or Purgatory. Because it is not a permanent state, it cannot truly be called Hell, and because through existing in it, some bad kamma may be worked out the term Purgatory is best suited as a

translation.

51. See also AN i, 134; AN i, 189-190; MN i, 91; DN iii, 215

52. See AN ii, 157 and SN ii, 37

53. See MN iii, 163 ; AN i, 49

54. Puppha belonged to a class of ascetics who rigorously followed the life-style of animals with the belief that these practices would somehow lead them to a happy rebirth. The story of Puppha can be found at MN i, 387.

55. This formulation occurs as the second of the three knowledges that the Buddha attained on the night of his enlightenment. See DN i, 82. For a concise enumeration of the general rule, see also MN iii, 66.

56. See also DhP 121-145

57. A description of this type of meditation can be found at MN iii, 146.

58. Up to this point, the passage is also found at AN ii, 87 and AN v, 110

59. The Jains are known in the Suttas as *nigaṇṭhas*.

60. This quote is also found at MN ii, 214

61. The Buddhist monk Aṅgulimāla also implies that inadvertent killing is not to be considered morally bad in saying, "I, sister, am not aware of having intentionally deprived any living thing of life since I was born of the ariyan birth." (MN ii, 103)

62. *Asaṅcetanikaṃ bhante Nigaṇṭho Nātaputto no mahāsāvajjaṃ pañāpeti*

63. *Kāye vā hānanda sati kāyasaṅcetanā-hetu uppañjati ajjhatam sukhadukkham // vācāya vā hānanda sati vacisaṅcetanā-hetu uppañjati ajjhattam sukhadukkham // mane vā hānanda sati manosaṅcetanā-hetu uppañjati ajjhatam sukhadukkham //* (Also at AN ii, 157)

64. As Collins points out, the term *abhisankhāra* is in fact taken from Brahmanical religion and relates essentially to the idea of "constructing future existence by action." The term is used in non-karmic contexts to refer to acts which must be consciously performed and previously determined. For example, it is used in describing how a monk sets the length of his

higher meditative raptures. For further discussion, see Collins 199-208.

65. *katama ca bhikkhave saṅkhārā?*

cha-y-ime bhikkhave cetanākāyā: rūpasañcetanā saddasañcetanā gandhasañcetanā rasasañcetanā poṭṭhabbasañcetanā dhammasañcetanā. ime vuccanti bhikkhave saṅkhārā.

66. In the Abhidhamma literature, the wholesome actions of an arahant are distinguished from those of ordinary folk and are termed "kiriya" and not "kamma."

Kiriya is causally ineffective. Good deeds of Buddhas and Arahants are called Kiriya because Kamma is not accumulated by them as they have gone beyond both good and evil. (Nārada 1975 22)

67. *ārammaṇaṃ cintetīti cittaṃ*

68. See SN ii, 23. After being questioned about whether experience is wrought by oneself, by another, neither or both, the Buddha answers in the negative to all of these and says, "The Tathāgata, not approaching either extreme, teaches the dhamma by the middle [way]: Conditioned by ignorance are activities, conditioned by activities..."

69. The formula would then read , "*idaṃ uppannaṃ idaṃ uppādeti*", meaning "this arising, causes that to arise." This has quite different connotations than the actual formula, "*imassuppadā idaṃ uppajjati*."

70. The conception of time and whether there truly is differentiation between past and present became a source of much controversy in later Buddhism. Unfortunately, this subject is beyond the scope of this paper. For an interesting study of the problem, see Prasad, ed. *Essays on Time in Buddhism*.

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