

Vedanā (Feeling)

A study of the 2nd aggregate

[A reflection on the Daṭṭhabba Sutta, S 36.5/4:207]

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1 The many facets of feeling

There is a common notion in western philosophy and popular belief that our behaviour is not fully determined by our conscious mind. Both Benedict de Spinoza¹ and Sigmund Freud,² for example, have remarked that our behavior is determined only partially by our conscious “will,” but much more by something else. For Spinoza, this something is our feeling, and for Freud it is our unconscious. Often, these forces—volition versus feeling and the unconscious—bring about conflicts. Buddhism is aware of both forces and teaches that if we are no longer attached to our feeling, we will clean up and tame our unconscious,³ that is, the latent tendencies; then, we are free. As will be evident, Buddhism gives detailed and effective teachings concerning feeling and consciousness. To begin with, it is stated in **the Kim Mūlaka Sutta** (A 10.58), that “all mental states flow along with feeling.”⁴

1.1 DEFINITION OF FEELING. Firstly, we should have a working definition of “**feeling**” (*vedanā*), and how it is different from “emotion” [1.3]. In early Buddhist psychology, feeling refers to the affective (or hedonic) tone that arises in connection with sense-perception, that is, pleasant feeling (*sukhā vedanā*), painful feeling (*dukkhā vedanā*) and neutral feeling (*adukkham-asukhā vedanā*), which is the first classification of feeling in **the Vedanā Saṃyutta**.⁵

Furthermore, a pleasant feeling, painful feeling or neutral feeling can be physical (*kāyika*) (arising through the five physical senses) or can be mental (*cetasika*) (arising through the mind), making six types of feelings in all.⁶ The Abhidhamma classification, however, has only five types of feeling, taking neutral feeling as being mental only, that is, we are only aware that a feeling is present (or not).⁷

The Majjhima Commentary says that it is not easy to be mindful of neutral feeling, and that it should be best approached by way of inference, by noting the absence of both pleasant and unpleasant feelings. It illustrates with the example of a hunter seeing tracks before and after a rock, thereby inferring the track of an animal (MA 1:277).

The suttas say that pleasant and unpleasant sights, sounds, smells, and tastes, in turn, condition the arising of corresponding feelings of pleasure, or of displeasure.⁸ **The Dhamma,saṅgaṇī**, however, says that only the sense of touch is accompanied by pain or pleasure, while feelings arising at the other four sense-doors are invariably neutral.⁹ As **Anālayo** notes,

This *Abhidhammic* presentation offers an intriguing perspective on observing feeling, since it invites an inquiry into the degree to which an experience of delight or displeasure in regard to sight, sound, smell or taste is simply the outcome of one’s own mental evaluation.

(Anālayo 2003:171)

¹ Spinoza (1632-1677), independent Rationalist philosopher and religious thinker of Portuguese Jewish descent, who formulated one of the most important metaphysical systems in Western philosophy.

² Freud (1856-1939), an Austrian (of Jewish descent) neurologist and founder of the psychoanalytic school of psychology, best known for his theories of sexual desire, repression, dreams, and the unconscious mind.

³ On consciousness, see *Viññāṇa* = SD 17.8a, and see also **The unconscious** = SD 18.8b.

⁴ *Vedanā samosaranā sabbe dhammā* (A 10.58/5:107).

⁵ **Samādhi S** (S 36.1/4:204); see also **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** (D 22.11/2:298 = SD 13.2) = **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10.32/1:59 = SD 13.3); and also D 3:275; S 2:53, 82, 4:207; A 3:400. See also SD 13.1 Introd (5B).

⁶ **Cūḷa Vedalla S** (M 44.23/1:302); **Sall’atthana S** (S 36.6/4:208) = SD 5.5. Other classifications of feelings are given below [4].

⁷ Vbh 72; Dhs 133.

⁸ S 4:115, 119, 125, 126.

⁹ Dhs 139-145; Abhds 2.

1.2 FEELING AND SENSATION. Is feeling the same as sensation? How is feeling different from emotion, or are they the same? *Vedanā* is sometimes translated as “sensation,”¹⁰ rather than “feeling.” Sue Hamilton, in her study of the five aggregates, *Identity and Experience*, notes that

it could be argued that “sensation” is a word which is more readily associated with neutrality than is “feeling,” which is more associated in our minds with pleasure or pain. The word “sensation” also implies a connection with the senses, which might be said to be more appropriate to *vedanā*, which requires the coming together of a sense organ and its corresponding sense object in order to arise.

But “feeling” can be used neutrally: it is not uncommon to say “I feel indifferent about that.” And not only is it commonly accepted that feelings require sensory activity, even if this is not obviously implicit in the word itself, but in the Buddha’s analysis of the *khandhas* this does not apply only to the *vedanākhandha* but to all four of the *arūpakkhanda*s. The main reason I prefer the use of the word “feeling” rather than “sensation” in translating *vedanā* is, however, because I suggest that *vedanā* has a cognitive dimension which is conveyed by the word “feeling” but not by “sensation.” (1996a:45)

This cognitive aspect of *vedanā* is clearly evident from its etymology. *Vedanā* is the abstract noun of *vedeti*, “he senses, knows, experiences,” and also the related forms *vediyati*, *paṭisaṃvedeti* and *paṭisaṃvediyati*,¹¹ all of which have cognitive connotations. As such, it is important to note that *vedanā* has both an intellectual sense (to know) and an experiential sense (to feel).¹² Hamilton continues her helpful analysis of *vedanā* thus:

The cognitive role of *vedanā* is unobvious: one might say that it is affective rather than intellectual cognition. It is nevertheless significant enough to be an important factor in understanding the role of the *vedanākhandha* correctly. From a psychological point of view, it is not difficult for us to understand that *vedanā* is part of the cognitive process. We know, for example, that feelings can be expressed cognitively: if we say we are feeling sad, we also mean that we *know* that we are experiencing sadness. We also commonly refer to feelings as a vague level of knowledge in expressions such as “I have the feeling that this is correct,” or “I feel there is something wrong here.” Thus *vedanā* plays a part, however nebulous, in the cognitive process of an individual.

It is perhaps significant that *vedayita*, the (irregular) past passive participle of the verb *vedeti*, from which *vedanā* comes, is often interpreted as meaning “experienced” rather than “felt.” And “experience” might be a better translation of *vedanā* when it is found in the context of the cognitive process as a whole: in English to state that cognition necessarily involves experience is more readily acceptable than stating that it necessarily involves feelings. (1996a:46)

Georges Dreyfus, in his paper, “Meditation as ethical activity,” makes a similar note on the overlapping of cognitiveness and affectiveness in Buddhist psychology:¹³

¹⁰ PED: *vedanā*: “feeling, sensation.” E Pio, *Buddhist Psychology: A modern perspective*, 1988:8, “feeling or sensation.” FJ Varela et al, *The Embodied Mind*, 1991:64 “feelings/sensations.” M Boisvert, *The Five Aggregates*, 1995:ix (elsewhere he renders it as “emotion or feeling,” 4; index: *vedanā*).

¹¹ *Vedeti* is from √VID, “to know.” Usages incl: *phuṭṭho vedeti*, *phuṭṭho ceteti*, *phuṭṭho sañjānāti*, “contacted, one feels; contacted, one intends; contacted, one perceives” (S 4:68; S:B 1408 n67); or the form *vediyati*, “he knows (as) or calls,” as in *taṃ...muninā vediyanti.*, “(the wise) know (or call) him as a sage” (Sn 211 f). More commonly, *vediyati* tr as “he feels or experiences (a feeling),” usu as *vedanaṃ vediyati* (M 1:59, 2:70; S 2:82, 3:86 f, 4:207; A 1:41, 2:198). The form *paṭisaṃvedeti*, “he feels, experiences, undergoes,” is also common (D 1:43, 45; A 1:157 (*domanassam p*), 4:406 (id); also the by-form, *paṭisaṃvediyati* (S 2:18, 75, 256; It 38).

¹² See Hamilton 1996a:45 f. See also **Viññāṇa** = SD 18.8a.8.

¹³ Dreyfus is here criticizing Keown’s use [*The Nature of Buddhist Ethics*, 1992:210] of Aristotle’s binary opposition between the cognitive and the affective to explicate Buddhist ideas.

Keown uses Aristotle's binary opposition between the cognitive and the affective to explicate Buddhist ideas.[16] Buddhists do recognize these aspects of mind, for instance, in the concept that wisdom is cognitive whereas attachment and compassion are affective. However, I would argue that applying a binary model to Buddhist psychology is inappropriate, for it forces a number of mental factors such as mindfulness, enthusiasm, and deliberation into one of the two sides of the dichotomy. The Buddhist view emphasizes that these mental factors are common to both affective and cognitive states. Any mental state in which the degree of attention is sufficient is said to contain these mental factors. I would like to argue that from a Buddhist perspective, these factors are neither strictly affective nor cognitive in and of themselves, but are best described as enabling either side. Buddhist models of the psyche do not conform to the opposition cognitive-affective, and forcing them into this mode distorts the picture. (Dreyfus 1995:36)

1.3 FEELING AND EMOTION. Then there is the question of the connection between feeling (*vedanā*) and “emotion.” Sadly, “emotion” is one of most nebulous of English words: “Historically this term has proven utterly refractory to definitional efforts; probably no other term in psychology shares its indefinability with its frequency of use.”¹⁴ The word “**emotion**” comes from the Middle French *mouvoir* (to move), which in turn comes from Latin *exmovēre, movēre* (to move out, move away).¹⁵ In other words, an emotion is a feeling usually that is *overt or expressed*, often directed to others to inform or influence them. The problem is compounded by the fact that there are the lay usages of the word and the technical senses of the term.

Here are examples of conventional usages of “emotion” taken from *Webster’s 3rd New International Dictionary*:

1a (obsolete): a physical or social agitation, disturbance, or tumultuous movement.

1b: turmoil or agitation in feeling or sensibility (the nerveless dreamer, who spends his life in a weltering sea of sensibility and ~ —William James).

1c: a physiological departure from homeostasis that is subjectively experienced in strong feeling (as of love, hate, desire or fear) and manifests itself in the neuromuscular, respiratory, cardiovascular, hormonal, and other bodily changes preparatory to overt acts which may or may not be performed—often used is plural (how can I describe my ~s at this catastrophe—Mary W Shelley).

1d: a state of strong feeling (as of fear, anger, disgust, grief, joy, or surprise) (he felt a sudden rage, but controlled the ~).

2a: the affective aspect of consciousness: FEELING (we are not men of reason, we are creatures of ~ —CC Furnas).

2b: a reaction of or effect upon this aspect of consciousness (the essential ~ of the play is the feeling of a son toward a guilty mother—TS Eliot).

3: the quality (as of a song or melody) that arouses an emotion, esp a pleasant one (the melody of the song voices the ~, the appeal—Anatole Chujoy).

4: an expression of feeling, esp strong feeling (the king moves anonymously among his men listening to their ~s about the war—Delmore Schwartz). **Syn** see FEELING.

Even the technical meanings of “emotion” is not very certain, as this selection and summary of definitions from AS Reber’s *The Penguin Dictionary of Psychology* (1985) shows:

1. An umbrella term for any of a number of subjectively experienced, affect-laden states the ontological status of each being established by a label whose meaning is arrived at by simple consensus. This is the primary use of the term in both the technical and the common language. It is what we mean when we say that *love, fear, hate, terror*, etc are emotions.

¹⁴ AS Reber, *The Penguin Dictionary of Psychology*, 1985: emotion.

¹⁵ From *ex-*, *e-* (out) + *movēre* (to move).

2. A label for a field of scientific investigation that explores the various environmental, physiological and cognitive factors that underlie these subjective experiences... [Here,] nearly all contemporary theories of emotion recognize four classes of factors:

- (a) *investigating stimuli*: these may be exogenous (events in the world) or endogenous (thoughts, images);
- (b) *physiological correlates*: included here are general biological systems (central and autonomic nervous-system activities) as well as more specific patterns of action (eg thalamic-hypothalamic interactions);
- (c) *cognitive appraisal*: the personal significance of an event dictates to a considerable extent the emotions aroused, thus snarling tigers behind clearly strong cage bars do not result in fear, panic or flight;
- (d) *motivational properties*: emotional arousal is almost always viewed as playing a role in impelling activity.

In addition to these recognized correlates of emotion, the term generally carries a number of other connotations:

- (1) Emotional states are generally regarded as *acute*. They are accompanied by relatively short-lived levels of arousal and desire to act: fear, joy, disgust, pity, love, etc...[motivate] activity and then subside. This sense helps to distinguish it from terms like *sentiment*.
- (2) Emotions are regarded as intensely experienced states; the point here is to distinguish an emotion from a *feeling*.
- (3) Emotional states are often behaviorally disorganized. This is particularly the case with extreme states of rage, terror, desperate grief...
- (4) Emotions are, to a certain extent, evolutionarily determined and reflect species-specific survival strategies of considerable genetic antiquity.
- (5) Emotional reactions tend to be non-habitual and to result from particular constraints of the environment and how it is appraised... [Compared to other biochemical behaviours such as hunger and thirst] emotional states are not cyclical or regular but are dependent on specific situations and how they are evaluated for their personal significance.

AS Reber, *The Penguin Dictionary of Psychology*, 1985: emotion.

Neuroscientists have apparently discovered a good reason why the vast Buddhist psychological vocabulary does not to include “emotion.” The Buddhist exclusion of “emotion” from the language of the mind is quite consistent with what scientists have come to learn about the brain’s anatomy. Every region in the brain that has been identified with some aspect of emotion has also been identified with aspects of cognition.¹⁶ “The circuitry that supports affect and the circuitry that supports cognition are completely intertwined—an anatomical arrangement consistent with the Buddhist view that these processes cannot be separated.” (P Ekman et al 2005:1)

1.4 PERCEPTUAL ROLE OF FEELING. *Vedanā*, often contrary to what the general overtness and expressiveness of an “emotion,” is essentially a covert quality. In fact, it is part of the mental process involving both perception (*saññā*)¹⁷ and consciousness (*viññāṇa*).¹⁸ Feeling (*vedanā*) is a key factor in the perceptual process.¹⁹ The canonical theory of the perceptual process comprises six stages, namely:²⁰

(i) The first stage is that of **sense-consciousness**, for example, **visual consciousness** (*cakkhu,viññāṇa*), which arises with the eye and visual object as its conditions. At this point, it is bare sensation before the object is fully apprehended (which is similarly understood in the Abhidhamma).

¹⁶ Eg Davidson & Irwin 1999.

¹⁷ See *Saññā* = SD 17.4.

¹⁸ See *Viññāṇa* = SD 17.8a.

¹⁹ Sue Hamilton, in *Identity and Experience*, 1996a, uses the term “cognitive process” (see index), while here I use “perceptual process.” I think it is better to reserve the former for the *viññāṇa.kicca* or *citta,vithī*.

²⁰ See *Madhu,piṇḍika S* (M 18) = SD 16.14 Introd (4). Discussed in greater detail in *Saññā* = SD 17.4. See also Analayo, *Satipaṭṭhāna: The direct path to realization*, 2003:222-226. For original ref, see 3.1 below.

(ii) The second stage is the process of **sensory impression** (*cakkhu,samphassa* or *phassa*), defined as the conjunction of the sense-organ, the sense-object and sense-consciousness (*tiṅṅam saṅgati phasso*, M 18.16/1:111).

(iii) The third stage is **feeling** (*vedanā*), which refers to the hedonic tone or affective value of the resultant experience.

(iv) The fourth stage is **perception** or apperception (*saññā*). The fact that *viññāṇa* (bare sensation) occurs before *saññā* [bare reaction] shows that *saññā* represents a more complex form of awareness. While *viññāṇa* refers to mere sensory awareness, *saññā* “suggests a state of awareness obtained by introducing distinctions to the earlier stage of bare awareness” (Karunadasa 2001: 211).

(v) The fifth stage is **thinking** (*vitakka*, often translated as “initial application (of thought)”), suggesting a stage where the perceived object is *interpreted*.

(vi) The sixth and last stage is called **mental proliferation** (*papañca*) that “hints at the tendency of the individual’s imagination to break loose” (Ñāṇananda 1971:4). This is a very complex level of experience that is coloured and filtered by our desires and prejudices.²¹

As we shall see below in the two chapters on perception (*saññā*) [SD 17.4] and consciousness (*viññāṇa*) [SD 17.8a], they are both part of the perceptual process. Formations (*saṅkhāra*) [SD 17.6] are not directly involved in this process, and they are what we normally understand as “emotions.”

2 Feeling, love and sex

2.1 LOVE. Feeling (*vedanā*), as we have seen [1.3], is not “emotion” as commonly understood, but refers to an important aspect of the six types of sense-experiences: seeing, hearing, feeling, tasting, touching, and thinking.²² The feelings of each of these sense-experiences are evaluated in different ways in English, and notice that they are subjective, covert qualities, for example:

	<u>Craving</u> [like]	<u>Repulsion</u> [dislike]	<u>Delusion and ignorance</u> [ignored]
Seeing:	beautiful, attractive	ugly, repulsive	plain, average
Hearing:	soothing, sonorous	jarring, dull, grating	monotonous, uninteresting
Smelling:	sweet, fragrant	offensive, rancid	odourless, arid
Tasting:	sweet, rich	sour, bitter	flat, tasteless
Feeling:	nice, comfortable	hurting, smarting	numb, neutral
Minding:	interesting, pleasant	uninteresting, boring	indifferent, apathetic

The three kinds of feelings actually colour the way we perceive the world and others, that is, as by way of *loved, unloved and unthought of*, or as *friend, foe and stranger*. In an almost simplistic predictable way, we regard those that arouse pleasure in us as the loved or as a friend; those that provoke an unpleasant feeling as the unloved or as a foe; and those that produce neutral feeling (“no feeling”) we disregard them or regard them as strangers.

Our understanding of **love** is often profoundly confusing. On a personal level, when someone falls in love and says “I love so and so,” what he really means is that he is infatuated by that person’s form, sound, smell, taste, or touch, or by his perception of that person. “Falling in love” is really about the past because our attraction to another is really simply a *reminder*, usually subconscious, even subliminal, of someone we have been familiar with, whether in this life or before that.

²¹ Karunadasa argues that in this sixfold process, the final stage of perception is not “mental proliferation” (as proposed by Sarathchandra, 1958 & Ñāṇananda 1971:5 ff) but actually “perception” (stage 4) since “what follows *saññā* could be understood not as a process of sense-perception but as a purely ideational process set up by a process of perception. In point of fact, both Sarathchandra and Ñāṇananda (1971:5 ff, 41 ff) explain the stages subsequent to *saññā* as a process of interpretation and judgement.” (2001:212).

²² “Thinking,” here referring to any mind-activity: alt: “minding, mentation.”

Falling in love is like window-shopping and then buying an item on impulse, only to regret later because we have fallen out of love with it. It is *staying in love*, or even better, *growing in love*, that promises true happiness when both (a couple) or all parties (in the case of a family or community) bond closer in the discovery of one another's more wholesome qualities, thus letting go of unwholesome ones. In short, we do not find friends, we have to make friends.²³

2.2 SEX. The danger of falling in love is that we are only attracted to a part, often isolated piece, of a person. The disillusionment begins and grows as the other less familiar parts reveal themselves. **The Saññoga Sutta** (A 7.48) describes this in a graphically psychological way:

WOMANLINESS. 2 A woman thinks about herself²⁴ in terms of her womanly faculty,²⁵ her womanly ways,²⁶ her womanly looks,²⁷ her womanly pride,²⁸ her womanly desires, her womanly joy, her womanly adornments.²⁹ She is aroused by this and delights in it.³⁰

Thus aroused, she considers another³¹ in terms of a man's faculty,³² his manly ways, his manly looks,³³ his manly pride,³⁴ his manly desires, his manly voice, his manly adornments. She is aroused by this and delights in it.

Thus aroused, she desires external union,³⁵ and she desires the [physical] pleasure and [mental] joy arising on account of such a union. Bhikshus, attached to³⁶ her womanliness, she enters into union with men.

In this way, bhikshus, a woman does not rise above her womanliness.

MANLINESS. 3 A man thinks about himself in terms of his own manly faculty, his manly ways, his manly looks, his manly pride, his manly desires, his manly voice, his manly adornments. He is aroused by this and delights in it.

Thus aroused, he contemplates another in terms of a woman's faculty, her womanly ways, her womanly looks, her womanly pride, her womanly desires, her womanly voice, her womanly adornments. He is aroused by this and delights in it.

Thus aroused, he desires external union,³⁷ and he desires the pleasure and joy arising on account of such a union. Bhikshus, attached to his manliness, he enters into union with women.

²³ An excellent book in this area is Erich Fromm, *The Art of Loving*. NY: Harper & Row. London: Allen & Unwin, 1957.

²⁴ "to herself," *ajjhataṃ*, lit "internally."

²⁵ "womanly faculty," *itth'indriya*, lit "womanly sense-organ." Here referring to the physical features that make one a woman, that is, "womanliness." The term "femininity" usually refers to the psychological aspect of a woman, related to Jung's notions of *anima* and *animus*.

²⁶ "womanly ways," *itthi,kutta*, eg seductiveness, coquetry, and wiles (AA 4:32). Many of such terms in this sentence and their cognates below are in the Pali singular, which however need to be rendered idiomatically into the English plural.

²⁷ "womanly looks," *itth'ākappa*, ie her physical looks and how she is dressed (AA 4:32).

²⁸ "womanly pride," *itthi,vidha*, ie her pride and conceit (AA 4:32).

²⁹ "womanly adornments," *itth'alaṅkāra*. "adorning the head, the neck, the hands, the feet, the hips (*kaṭi*)" (*sīsū-pago gīvūpago hatthūpago pādūpago kaṭūpago*, V 4:340)

³⁰ "She is aroused by this..." Here I have rendered *tattha* in the English singular, since such an unskillful person would attend to the features mentioned. In the cognate sentences below [4-5] *tattha* is rendered in the English plural, ie referring to the various physical features, to which the skillful person remains unattracted.

³¹ "Another," *bahiddhā*, lit "outside (of herself)."

³² "Manly faculty," *puris'indriya*, lit "manly sense-organ." Here referring to the physical features that make one a man, that is, "manliness." The term "masculinity" usually refers to the psychological aspect of a man. Note here in the sutta that the reference is "in terms of a man's faculty," and not "in another man." This is very significant as this reflects the fact that those sexually attracted to others, consciously or unconsciously, may look for such features that excite them in either sex.

³³ "Manly looks," *puris'ākappa*, ie his physical looks and how he is dressed.

³⁴ "Manly pride," *purisa,vidha*, ie his pride and conceit.

³⁵ "She desires external union," *bahiddhā saṃyogam ākaṅkhati*. Note that neither man nor woman is mentioned.

³⁶ "Attached to," *sattā* (V 1:185; D 2:246; Nc 23, 34; Dh 342; J 1:376).

In this way, bhikshus, a man does not rise above his manliness. (A 7.48/4:57 f) = SD 8.7

Of all human qualities, sexual feeling is the most creative as well as the most destructive. It is the most creative in its biological function of bringing us forth, but beyond that when misunderstood and uncontrolled, it usually becomes the most destructive of emotions that can be displaced into the many guises of lust. One of the most tragic displacements of sexual feelings is when a person with unresolved sexual issues turns to the monastic life, thinking that it is a way of to be totally free from sexuality. Sadly, such repressive feelings often rear their ugly heads through psychological transference (of the monastic or of the devotee), fuelled by the monastic's charisma or by blind devotion, usually both.

The Sall'atthana Sutta (S 36.6) makes an important observation here: when a uninstructed worldling suffers pain, he suffers *twice*: he feels it physically and also mentally, and then he reactively turns to sensual pleasure (violence, sex, quarrels, drunkenness, etc) as a means of escape, "because, bhikshus, the uninstructed ordinary person knows no other escape than through sensual pleasure."³⁸

One cannot simply cast off the clothing of sexuality simply by donning monastic robes. We cannot really hide the nakedness of our sexuality behind the cloth. We must outgrow this narcissistic level of biological want or perception of existential lack. Indeed, sexual feeling is the most selfish of feelings, seeking only to satisfy itself in an insatiable manner. While one can surfeit of food, having eaten our fill, it is not the case with sex.

An important teaching of **the Saññoga Sutta** (A 7.48), not immediately apparently, is that we must overcome self-love, at least in not the physical sense, and cultivate unconditional love (lovingkindness). We begin to cultivate lovingkindness by starting to see others as total beings and accepting them as they really are.

Another way we can rise above attachment to sensual pleasure is through regular solitary meditation leading to inner stillness.³⁹ Such stillness can lead us in due course to deeper and more joyful states of meditation, even into dhyana. In other words, we can only overcome sexual feelings by discovering a higher pleasure, that of mental calm and dhyana. Only then, we can really rise above our sexuality.⁴⁰

2.3 SEXUAL ABUSE IN RELIGIONS. One of the most shocking revelations about contemporary religion is that of the Catholic clergy abuse of the young. This summary, from an online encyclopaedia, gives a summary of the situation and is a good place to start an investigative reading:⁴¹

In the late 20th century, and early 21st, the Roman Catholic Church was confronted with a series of allegations of sexual abuse of children by Catholic priests (who are all male) and by members of the various religious orders (both male and female). Many of these allegations led to successful prosecutions. For the purposes of this article, these cases are referred to as **the Roman Catholic sex abuse cases**.

An increasing number of cases were and are being reported by the press, after the victims decided to disclose what had been concealed by the church. Many cases involved orphanages, schools and seminaries, where children were in the care of clergy. This resulted in a form of abuse similar to that experienced by children in incestuous relationships (see Incest).

In many cases the crimes, when reported to them, were covered up by high-ranking authorities of the Church, and the perpetrators simply moved to another location, often with continued access to children. This has fueled criticism of the Church and its leadership especially as there are still ongoing refusals by some high-ranking Church authorities to disclose sex abuse information to government authorities. (Wikipedia, "Roman Catholic sex abuse cases")⁴²

³⁷ "He desires external union," *bahiddhā samyogam ākaṅkhati*. Note that neither man nor woman is mentioned.

³⁸ S 36.6.8c/4:208 = SD 5.5. Comy: The escape is mental concentration, the path and the fruit, but he does not know this, knowing only sensual pleasure. (SA 3:77)

³⁹ See **Pīti S** (A 5.176/3:206-208) = SD 19.8.

⁴⁰ See **Dhyana** = SD 8.4 esp (7); **Nimitta** & **Anuvyañjana** = SD 19.14; & **Nimitta** = SD 19.7 esp (4).

⁴¹ The underscored words are linked to further information in the online version at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Catholic_sex_abuse_cases.

⁴² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Catholic_sex_abuse_cases. Incl biblio.

Such abuse has been going on for centuries, and is not limited to the Catholic clergy. One of the possible reasons for this persistent problem in the Catholic Church is said to be the mandatory celibacy of the priests.⁴³

It has been suggested that the discipline of celibacy in the Catholic priesthood offers a means by which priests with sexual urges that are aimed towards children rather than adults can hide those tendencies, their lack of sexual feelings towards adults being unnoticeable in a completely unmarried clergy. It is believed that those with a predisposition toward child molestation and/or pedophilia would be drawn to the celibate lifestyle due to a confusion about their sexual identity or orientation. There have also been suggestions that those who are already child molesters, either already acting or on the verge of acting on their disposition, deliberately enter the Catholic clergy due to the “cover” its celibacy provides, and due to the fact that clergy have frequent access to children. (Wikipedia, “Roman Catholic sex abuse cases”)⁴⁴

One possible explanation of the predominance of sexual abuse of the young amongst the Catholic clergy may be that when the early Church appropriated monasticism and celibacy, probably from Buddhism, they copied the method but without its safeguards and spirituality. That is, to say, the Catholic system of celibate priesthood (which is without clear precedent in the Bible) does not have contemplative practices such as the perception of foulness (*asubha,saññā*)⁴⁵ or the body meditation (*kāya,gata,sati*)⁴⁶—and does not have a working psychology of feeling. The Catholic church, in its effort to catholicize (adopt, adapt and absorb) and colonize the religiosity and spirituality of competing faiths, in due course, see their own shadows cast darkly in the blinding light of the unfamiliar.

3 Feeling and contact

3.1 HOW FEELING ARISES. *Vedanā* is not mere feeling but part of the perceptual process [1.4]. In other words, feeling does not arise of itself. According to **the Phassa,mūlaka Sutta** (S 36.10), feeling, whether pleasant, painful or neutral, are “rooted in contact” (*phassa,mūlaka*), rising in dependence on contact (*phassa*).⁴⁷ In fact, contact plays a major role in the perceptual process, and we shall now examine it in some detail. The perceptual process is clearly described in **the Madhu,piṇḍika Sutta** (M 18),⁴⁸ thus:

Friends, dependent on the eye and forms, eye-consciousness arises. The meeting of the three is contact.⁴⁹

With contact as condition, there is feeling (*phassa,paccayā vedanā*).

What one feels, one perceives.

What one perceives, one thinks about.⁵⁰

What one thinks about, one mentally proliferates.⁵¹

⁴³ For differing views, see eg Boston Globe website: <http://www.boston.com/globe/spotlight/abuse/extras/celibacy.htm>.

⁴⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Catholic_sex_abuse_cases.

⁴⁵ That is, the reflection on the 31 or 32 parts of the body: see **(Satta) Saññā S** (A 7.46.3-4/4:46 f) = SD 15.4; **Giri-m-ānanda S** (A 10.60.6/5:107) = SD 19.18; **Vibhaṅga S** (S 51.20/5:277 f); **Kāya,gata,sati S** (M 119) = SD 12.21 Introd (5).

⁴⁶ **Kāya,gata,sati S** (M 119) = SD 12.21.

⁴⁷ S 36.10/4:215,

⁴⁸ See **Madhu,piṇḍika S** (M 18.16/1:111 f) = SD 16.14 Introd (4). Discussed in greater detail in **Saññā** = SD 17.4. See also Analayo, *Satipaṭṭhāna: The direct path to realization*, 2003:222-226. For a paraphrase, see 1.4 above.

⁴⁹ *Tiṇṇam saṅgati phasso*. For a discussion on this passage, see Bucknell 1999:318 ff.

⁵⁰ “One thinks about,” *vitakketi*. On how when thinking stops, desires do not arise, see **Sakka,pañha S** (D 21.2.2/2:277).

⁵¹ This verse up to here is also found in **(Samuday’atthaṅgama) Loka S** (S 12.44/2:71-73) = SD 7.5 and **(Sabb’upādāna) Pariññā S** (S 35.60/4:32 f) = SD 6.17 in different contexts.

What a person mentally proliferates is the source through which perceptions and notions due to mental proliferation⁵² impacts one regarding past, future and present forms cognizable through the eye.⁵³ (M 18.16/1:111 f) = SD 16.14

The same process applies mutatis mutandis to all the other five remaining senses. It is from such a process that feeling arises: “with contact as condition, feeling arises” (*phassa, paccayā vedanā*). Contact is the proximate condition for the arising of feeling, and a necessary condition for the perceptual process as a whole.

3.2 FEELING AS THE ROOT OF ALL DOGMAS. Contact and feeling are crucial to the formation of views (*diṭṭhi*), especially wrong views. In the “wisdom” section of **the Brahma, jāla Sutta** (D 1), the Buddha explains how the 62 grounds for wrong views arise from the “feeling of those who know not, merely the agitation and vacillation of those overcome by craving” (§§105-117). Applying the principle of dependent arising, the Buddha goes on to explain such ignorant reactions are in turn caused by contact (*phassa*), that is, through misunderstanding sense-experience (§§118-130). Without contact, none of those views would arise; they all arise through the constant contact in the six sense-spheres (§§131-143). All these are speculative views (*diṭṭhi, gata*), arising from feeling, binding them to the rounds of speculative views and of suffering (§§144).⁵⁴

The Dvaya Sutta 2 (S 35.93) explains how consciousness arises dependent on a dyad (*dvaya*) of sense-faculty and sense-object; for example, “dependent on the eye and forms, there arises eye-consciousness” (*cakkhuñ ca paṭicca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhu, viññānam*). The meeting of these three—sense-faculty, sense-object and sense-consciousness—is called contact (*phassa*): “contacted [touched], bhikshus, one feels; contacted, one intends; contacted, one perceives” (*phuṭṭho vedeti, phuṭṭho ceteti, phuṭṭho sañjānāti*).⁵⁵ And all these processes are impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise.

From all this, it is easy to see the roots of the Creator-God idea: it is extremely difficult to understand the nature of feelings, much less how they work on our lives. Lacking this understanding, humans seek some external form of power to liberate them from the vicissitudes due to feelings: joy and sorrow, pleasure and pain, fear and courage, stress and relief, and so on.

Understandably, the Creator God idea, being deeply rooted in feeling, cannot be proven in any logical or scientific manner, and can only be sustained by “faith,” that is, surrender and obedience to its official definition. Whoever defines God, as such, commands power over their believers.⁵⁶ What one does not understand, one often grasps it by the wrong end, and suffer ignorance, craving and pain as a result.

The greatest fear of those who do not understand the true nature of feeling is change. Seeing change working through birth, life, decay and death, they think life begins only at birth and ends at death. And since death seems to take away their lives, loved ones, possessions and pleasures, they fear death. Fearing change and death, they fabricate or believe in a Creator God who is eternal and life-giving. The point is whatever exists can only exist in change: without change nothing exists; unless that state is beyond change and stasis—that is, nirvana.

4 Classifications of feelings

4.1 NUMERICAL GROUPS. “Feelings” (*vedanā*) are complex states of mind, not merely “bare awareness” or “anoetic sentience,” that is, “pure” feelings or emotions.⁵⁷ They have some specific content: pleasure, pain, neutral feeling; and that *vedanā* is a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition, for the arising of craving (the subsequent link in the dependent arising cycle).⁵⁸ They arise through contact with

⁵² *Papañca, saññā, saṅkhā*, see Introd (3).

⁵³ This important passage is the earliest statement on the Buddhist theory of perception. See Introd (4).

⁵⁴ D 1.105-144/1:40-45. See Sue Hamilton 1996a:47 f.

⁵⁵ S 25.93/4:68; S:B 1408 n67.

⁵⁶ An interesting and informative article here is Norman Council, “Christianity, capitalism, corporations, and the myth of dominion,” 2004, downloadable from <http://www.doublestandards.org/text/council1.html>.

⁵⁷ Jayatilleke 1963:436; Boisvert 1996:53.

⁵⁸ On necessary and sufficient conditions, see SD 5.15(6).

external sense-objects, namely, the seen, the heard, the sensed (smelling, tasting, touching), and the known (*ditṭha suta muta viññāta*).⁵⁹

The Aṭṭha,sata Sutta (S 36.22) categorizes feelings into various numerical groups “along the lines that became prominent in the Abhidhamma,”⁶⁰ thus.⁶¹

The 2 kinds of feeling:	bodily and mental. [4.2]
The 3 kinds of feeling:	pleasant feeling, painful feeling, and neutral feeling. [4.3]
The 5 kinds of feeling:	the physical pleasure faculty, the physical pain faculty, the joy faculty, the displeasure faculty, the equanimity faculty. [4.4]
The 6 kinds of feeling:	feeling born of eye-contact, born of ear-contact, born of nose-contact, born of tongue-contact, born of body-contact, born of mind-contact. [4.5]
The 18 kinds of feeling:	6 examinations accompanied by joy, 6 examinations accompanied by displeasure, 6 examination accompanied by equanimity. [4.6]
The 36 kinds of feeling:	6 types of joy of the household life, 6 types of joy of renunciation, 6 types of displeasure of the household life, 6 types of displeasure of renunciation, 6 types of equanimity of household life, 6 types of equanimity of renunciation. [4.7]
The 108 kinds of feeling:	The above 36 feelings in the past, in the future, in the present. [4.8] (S 36.22/4:231 f)

Let us now examine each of these groups in some detail.

4.2 THE 2 KINDS OF FEELING. The teaching of the two kinds of feeling—the bodily and the mental—is psychologically and spiritually a very important one. The locus classicus of this teaching is **the Sall’-athena Sutta** (S 36.6), where the Buddha says that *both the unawakened worldling and the arhat experience pleasant feeling, painful feeling and neutral feeling*, but each with a difference.

The worldling reacts to *pleasant feeling* with delight, reinforcing his latent tendency of lust; he reacts to *painful feeling* with displeasure, reinforcing the latent tendency of ill will; and he fails to notice *neutral feeling*, reinforcing the latent tendency of ignorance.⁶²

The arhat, however, simply notes those feelings as they arise in his body without reacting to them [7.2]. As such, although his body is affected by the vicissitudes of feelings, his mind is constantly calm and clear. A similar teaching (S 22.1), but a very short one, is given by the Buddha to the layman **Nakula,pitā**, and which is elaborated by Sāriputta to him.⁶³

4.3 THE 3 KINDS OF FEELING. In early Buddhist psychology, feeling refers to the affective (or hedonic) tone that arises in connection with sense-perception, that is, a pleasant feeling (*sukhā vedanā*), a painful feeling (*dukkhā vedanā*) and neutral feeling (*dukkham-asukhā vedanā*), which is the first classification of feeling in **the Vedanā Saṃyutta**.⁶⁴ This is the most common way in which feelings are classified in the Sutta.⁶⁵ The simplicity of this classification facilitates the perception of impermanence where one notices not only that feelings quickly change, but also that pleasure is the absence of pain, that pain is the absence of pleasure. Neutral feeling is noticed when both pleasurable and painful feelings are present (they do not occur at the same time, but are juxtaposed or occur in close succession). The three kinds of feelings are examined in **the Indriya,bhāvanā Sutta** (M 152), but there instead of *adukkham-asukha*

⁵⁹ D 3:134 = Nc276 = It 121; D 3:232; Sn 1080, 1122.

⁶⁰ S:B 1129.

⁶¹ This same list is briefly stated in **Pañcak’āṅga S** (S 36.19/4:224 f = SD 30.1) = **Bahu,vedanīya S** (M 59.5/-1:398) = SD 30.4. See (4.3) below.

⁶² S 36.6/4:207-210 = SD 5.5.

⁶³ S 22.1/3:1-5 = SD 5.4.

⁶⁴ **Samādhi S** (S 36.1/4:204).

⁶⁵ See **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** (D 22.11/2:298 = SD 13.2) = **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10.32/1:59 = SD 13.3); also D 3:275; S 2:53, 82, 4:207; A 3:400. See also SD 13.1 Introd (5B).

(neither pleasant nor painful, ie neutral), the term *manāpāmanāpa* (both agreeable and disagreeable) is used.⁶⁶

A remarkable example of the Buddha's tolerance and skillful means is found in **the Pañcak'āṅga Sutta** (S 36.19).⁶⁷ When the monk Udāyī teaches the carpenter Pañcak'āṅga that there are three kinds of feelings—the pleasant, the painful, and the neutral—Pañcak'āṅga refuses to accept that there is such a thing as neutral feeling. The matter is then brought before the Buddha who responds in a remarkable way by saying that both Udāyī and Pañcak'āṅga are right: he has himself taught the various classifications of feeling (two kind, three kinds, and so on) [4.1]. The Buddha goes on to say that *it is not wise to delve into differences*:⁶⁸

When the Dharma has been taught by me in a such a way through various methods, it might be that there will be those who will not concur, not allow, not approve of what is well said and well spoken by others, so that strife will arise, quarrels will arise, disputes will occur, so that they dwell stabbing each other with verbal daggers.

But when the Dharma has been taught by me in such a way through various methods, it might be that there will be those who will concur, will allow, will approve of what is well said and well spoken by others, so that they will live in concord, in mutual appreciation, without disputing, mixing like milk and water, looking at each other with kindly eyes.⁶⁹

(S 36.19.10/4:225 = SD 30.1) = **Bahu,vedanīya Sutta** (M 59.5/1:398)

4.4 THE 5 KINDS OF FEELING. The five kinds of feelings, according to the suttas, such as **the (Indriya) Vibhaṅga Sutta** (S 48.35), are as follows:

the physical pleasure faculty	(<i>sukh'indriya</i>),	
the physical pain faculty	(<i>dukkh'indriya</i>),	
the joy faculty	(<i>somanass'indriya</i>),	
the displeasure faculty	(<i>domanass'indriya</i>), and	
the equanimity faculty	(<i>upekkh'indriya</i>).	(S 48.35/5:208 f): see below.

According to **the Abhidhamma**, all feelings may, according to their nature, be classified into these five kinds, which they termed thus:⁷⁰

bodily pleasant feeling	<i>sukha</i>	=	<i>kāyikā sukhā vedanā</i> ;
bodily painful feeling	<i>dukkha</i>	=	<i>kāyikā dukkhā vedanā</i> ;
mentally pleasant feeling	<i>somanassa</i>	=	<i>cetasikā sukhā vedanā</i> ;
mentally unpleasant feeling	<i>domanassa</i>	=	<i>cetasikā dukkhā vedanā</i> ;
neutral feeling	<i>upekkhā</i>	=	<i>adukkham-asukhā vedanā</i> .

The details of these five kinds of feelings are given the suttas of **the Sukh'indriya Vagga** of the Saṃyutta Nikāya.⁷¹ More specifically, **the (Indriya) Vibhaṅga Sutta 1** (S 48.35) defines these five kinds of feelings, thus:

⁶⁶ See n at M 152.4/3:299 = SD 17.13.

⁶⁷ Also found as **Bahu,vedanīya S** (M 59/1:396-400) = SD 30.4.

⁶⁸ *Evam pariyāya,desito kho ānanda mayā dhammo, evam pariyāya desite kho ānanda mayā dhamme ye aññam-aññassa subhāsitaṃ sulapitaṃ na samanumaññissanti na samanujānissanti na samanumodissanti; tesam etam pāṭikaṅkhamṃ bhaṇḍana,jātā kalaha,jātā vivādāpannā aññam-aññam mukha,sattīhi vitudentā viharissanti ti. | Evam pariyāya,desito kho ānanda mayā dhammo, evam pariyāya desite kho ānanda mayā dhamme ye aññam-aññassa subhāsitaṃ sulapitaṃ samanumaññissanti samanujānissanti, samanumodissanti, tesam etam pāṭikaṅkhamṃ, samaggā sammadamānā avivadamānā khīrodakī bhūtā aññam-aññam piya,cakkhūhī sampassantā viharissanti ti.*

⁶⁹ On this last simile, “mixing like milk and water,...,” see **Dhamma,cetiya S** (M 89.11/2:120 f) = SD 8.1.6.

⁷⁰ Vbh 72; Dhs 133. See 1.1 above for the Abhidhamma explanation for there being only one kind of neutral feeling.

⁷¹ **Sukh'indriya Vagga** (S 48.31-40/5:207-216).

(Indriya) Vibhaṅga Sutta 1

The Discourse on the Analysis (of the Faculties) 1

S 48.35/5:208 f

2 Bhikshus, there are these five faculties. What are the five?

The pleasure faculty.

The pain faculty.

The joy faculty.

The displeasure faculty.

The equanimity faculty.

3 (1) And what, bhikshus, is the pleasure faculty?

Whatever bodily pleasure there is, bhikshus, whatever **bodily comfort**, the pleasant comfortable feeling born of body-contact—

This, bhikshus, is called the pleasure faculty.

4 (2) And what, bhikshus, is the pain faculty?

Whatever bodily pain there is, bhikshus, whatever **bodily discomfort**, the painful uncomfortable feeling born of body-contact—

This, bhikshus, is called the pain faculty.

5 (3) And what, bhikshus, is the joy faculty?

Whatever mental pleasure there is, bhikshus, whatever **mental comfort**, the pleasant comfortable feeling born of mind-contact—

This, bhikshus, is called the joy faculty.

6 (4) And what, bhikshus, is the displeasure faculty?

Whatever mental displeasure there is, bhikshus, whatever **mental discomfort**, the painful uncomfortable feeling born of mind-contact—

This, bhikshus, is called the displeasure faculty.

7 (5) And what, bhikshus, is the equanimity faculty?

Whatever feeling there is, bhikshus, whether bodily or mental, that is **neither comfortable nor uncomfortable**—

This, bhikshus, is called the **equanimity** faculty.

8 These, bhikshus, are the five faculties.

— evaṃ —

The Commentary explains that, in the expression, “**bodily discomfort**” (*kāyika sāta*), “bodily” means “based on bodily sensitivity” (*kāya-p,pasāda,vatthuka*); “comfort” is merely a synonym for pleasure: it means “sweet” (*madhura*). (SA 3:241)

According to the Abhidhamma, all bodily feelings, that is, feelings arising through bodily sensitivity (*kāya-p,pasāda*), are either pleasant or painful, and there is no neutral feeling based on bodily sensitivity.⁷² As such, the Sutta Commentary explains “**bodily equanimity**” as arising based on the other four senses (the eye, ear, nose and tongue) (SA 3:241). Here, *upekkhā* is translated as **equanimity**, and has two main denotations:

- (1) affective (relating to feeling), which denotes neutral feeling (*adukkham-asukha*);
- (2) cognitive (as a mental quality), which denotes mental neutrality or impartiality (*tatra,majjhataṭṭā*).

⁷² See S:B 1934 n212.

The Abhidhamma calls (2) *tatra,majjhataṭṭā*, and classes it as part of the formations aggregate (*saṅkhāra-k.khandha*). This is the equanimity (*upekkhā*) that is the fourth divine abode (impartiality towards all beings), the seventh awakening factor (mental equipoise) and as a mental quality mentioned in the third and fourth dhyanas.⁷³

4.5 THE 6 KINDS OF FEELING. The six kinds of feelings are those arising through the six senses, that is, born of eye-contact, born of ear-contact, born of nose-contact, born of tongue-contact, born of body-contact, born of mind-contact. This is listed in **the Saḷāyatana Sutta** (M 137.7).⁷⁴

4.5.1 The (Anicca) Vedanā Sutta (S 25.5). This is a short, simple but very important text in the Okkanti Saṃyutta, where the reflection on impermanence is prescribed as a sure way of descending (*okkanti*) into the stream to awakening. Due to its importance, the sutta is given in full here:⁷⁵

(Anicca) Vedanā Sutta

The (Impermanent) Feeling Discourse

(S 25.5/3:226)

- 1 At Sāvatti.
- 2 There the Blessed One said:

Feelings are impermanent

- 3 “Bhikkhus, feeling born of eye-contact is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise.
Feeling born of ear-contact is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise.
Feeling born of nose-contact is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise.
Feeling born of tongue-contact is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise.
Feeling born of body-contact is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise.
Feeling born of mind-contact is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise.

The faith-follower

4 ⁷⁶Bhikkhus, one who has faith thus, who firmly believes these truths [is convinced of these truths], is called a **faith-follower**. He has entered the fixed course of rightness, entered the plane of superior persons,⁷⁷ gone beyond the plane of the worldlings.⁷⁸

He is incapable of doing any intentional deed by which he might be reborn in hell, or in the animal birth, or in the ghost realm. He is incapable of dying without having attained the fruit of stream-winning.⁷⁹

⁷³ For a discussion on the 10 kinds of *upekkhā*, see Vism 4.156-170/160-162.

⁷⁴ M 137.7/3:216.

⁷⁵ The first sutta in this important chapter is **(Anicca) Cakkhu S** (S 25.1) = SD 16.7.

⁷⁶ *Yo bhikkhave ime dhamme evaṃ saddahati adhimuccati, ayaṃ vuccati saddhā'nusārī okkanto sammatta,-niyāmaṃ sappurisa,bhūmiṃ okkanto vītivatto puthujjana,bhūmiṃ.* The operative verbs here are *saddahati* (“he has faith (in)”) and *adhimuccati* (“he resolves, adheres to, is sure of”). I have rendered *adhimuccati* here as “(he) firmly believes....” On the stream-winner’s faith, see **Entering the Stream** = SD 3.3(5).

⁷⁷ “True persons,” *sappurisa*, also “superior persons,” also “virtuous person,” “ideal person”; often syn with “noble disciple,” *ariya,sāvaka*, but here clearly includes those, although not yet on the path, but is assured of it, viz the faith-follower and the truth-follower. The qualities of the *sappurisa* are given at D 33.2.2(6)/3:252, 34.1.8(7)/3:283; M 113; A 7.64/4:113, 8:38/4:144 f & at M 110.14-24/3:23 f.

⁷⁸ “Worldling,” *puthujjano*, ie “born of the crowd”; more fully called “uninstructed worldling,” one unskilled (*akovida*), ie, lacks theoretical knowledge of the Dharma, and is undisciplined (*avinīta*), and also lacks practical training in the Dharma. He is not a “seer of the noble ones” (*ariya,dassavī*), ie, of the Buddha and the noble disciples (the saints), because he lacks the wisdom-eye that discerns the truth they have seen. “Noble ones” (*ariya*) and “true persons” (*sappurisa*) are usually synonymous. Cf “instructed noble disciple” at §11. MA 1:20-25; SA 2:98-101, 2:251 f; AA 1:61-63; Nc 75-78; Pm 2:445-449; DhsA 348-354.

Compendium of Feeling

(*Vedanā,saṅgaha*)

Analysis of Feeling

Tattha vedanā,saṅgāhe tāva tividhā vedanā: sukhā dukkhā, adukkham-asukhā cā ti. Sukham dukkham somanassam domanassam upekkhā ti va bhedenā pana pañcadhā hoti.

In the compendium of feeling there are first three kinds of feeling, namely, pleasant, painful, and that which is neither painful nor pleasant. Again, feeling is analyzed as fivefold: pleasure, pain, joy, displeasure, and equanimity.

Guide

Analysis of feeling. As we have seen, feeling (*vedanā*) is a universal mental factor, the *cetasika* [mental factor] with the function of experiencing the “flavour” of the object. Since some sort of feeling accompanies every *citta* [mind-moment], feeling serves as an important variable in terms of which consciousness can be classified. In this section the author’s main concern is to classify the totality of *cittas* by way of their concomitant feeling.

Three kinds of feeling. Feeling may be analyzed as either threefold or fivefold. When it is analyzed simply in terms of its affective quality, it is threefold: pleasant, painful, and neither-painful-nor-pleasant. In this threefold classification, pleasant feeling includes both bodily pleasure and mental pleasure or joy, and painful feeling includes both bodily pain and mental pain or displeasure.

Feeling is analyzed as fivefold. When feeling is analyzed by way of the governing faculty (*indriya*), it becomes fivefold. These five types of feelings are called faculties because they exercise lordship or control (*indra*) over their associated states with respect to the affective mode of experiencing the object.

When the fivefold analysis of feeling is considered, the pleasant feeling of the threefold scheme becomes divided into pleasure and joy, the former bodily and the latter mental; the painful feeling of the threefold scheme becomes divided into pain and displeasure, again the former bodily and the latter mental; and neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling becomes identified with equanimity or neutral feeling.

In the Suttas the Buddha sometimes also speaks of feeling as twofold, pleasure (*sukha*) and pain (*dukkha*). This is a loose or metaphorical method of analysis, arrived at by merging the blameless neutral feeling in pleasure and the blameworthy neutral feeling in pain. The Buddha further declares that whatever is felt is included in suffering (*yaṃ kiñci vedāyitaṃ taṃ dukkhasmim*, S 36.11/4:216). In this statement the word *dukkha* does not bear the narrow meaning of painful feeling, but the broader meaning of the suffering inherent of all conditioned things by reason of their impermanence.

Pleasure (*sukha*) has the characteristic of experiencing a desirable tangible object, the function of intensifying associated states, manifestation as bodily enjoyment, and its proximate cause is the bodily faculty.

Pain (*dukkha*) has the characteristic of experiencing an undesirable tangible object, the function of withering associated states, manifestation as bodily affliction, and its proximate cause is also the bodily faculty.

Joy (*somanassa*) has the characteristic of experiencing a desirable object, the function of partaking of the desirable aspect of the object, manifestation as mental enjoyment, and its proximate cause is tranquillity.⁸⁰

Displeasure (*domanassa*) has the characteristic of experiencing an undesirable object, the function of partaking of the undesirable aspect of the object, manifestation as mental affliction, and its proximate cause is the heart-base.⁸¹

Equanimity (*upekkhā*) has the characteristic of being felt as neutral, the function of neither intensifying nor withering associated states, manifestation as peacefulness, and its proximate cause is consciousness without zest.⁸²

Source: *A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma* (Abhs:BRS), ed Bodhi et al, 2nd ed 1999:115 f.

⁷⁹ *Abhabbo taṃ kammaṃ kātuṃ yaṃ kammaṃ katvā nirayaṃ vā tiracchāna,yonim vā petti,visayaṃ vā uppaj-jeyya. Abhabbo ca tāva kālaṃ kātuṃ yāva na sotāpatti,phalaṃ sacchikaroti.* This is the sutta’s key statement and clearly refers to what, after the Buddha’s time, is referred to as a “lesser stream-winner” (*culla,sotāpanna, cullaka,-sotāpanna*). See **Entering the Stream** = SD 3.3(6).

⁸⁰ Tranquillity (*passaddhi*), it seems, is the proximate cause only for the joyful feeling that arises in meditative development.

⁸¹ According to the Pali commentators, the heart serves as the physical support for all *cittas* other than the two sets of fivefold sense consciousness, which take their respective sensitivities as their bases. In the canonical Abhidhamma the heart-base is not expressly mentioned. The *Paṭṭhāna*, the book of the Abhidhamma Piṭaka, simply speaks of “that matter in dependence on which the mind element and mind-consciousness element occur” (1.4). The Commentaries, however, subsequently specify “that matter” to be the heart-base, a cavity situated within the physical heart (*Vism* 8.111).

⁸² These definitions of the five feelings are found at *Vism* 14.128.

The truth-follower

5 Bhikkhus, one who accepts these truths after pondering over them with some wisdom thus,⁸³ is called a **truth-follower**. He has entered the fixed course of rightness, entered the plane of superior persons, gone beyond the plane of the worldlings.

He is incapable of doing any intentional deed by which he might be reborn in hell, or in the animal birth, or in the ghost realm. He is incapable of dying without having attained the fruit of stream-winning.

The stream-winner

6 One who knows and sees these truths thus is called a **stream-winner**, no longer bound for the lower world,⁸⁴ sure of liberation, destined for awakening.⁸⁵

— evaṃ —

4.5.2 The Cūla,vedalla Sutta (M 44). There is another set of six kinds of feeling, that is, according to *whether they are physical or mental*. A pleasant feeling, painful feeling or neutral feeling can be physical (*kāyika*) (arising through the five physical senses) or can be mental (*cetasika*) (arising through the mind), making six types of feelings in all.⁸⁶ The Abhidhamma classification, as noted above [1.1], has only five types of feeling, taking neutral feeling as being mental only, that is, one is only aware that a feeling is present (or not).

The six kinds of feeling are defined by the nun Dhamma,dinnā in the Cūla,vedalla Sutta (M 44). After defining the six kinds of feeling in the manner mentioned above, instructive catechism follows:

“Ayye,⁸⁷ what is pleasant, what is painful, regarding pleasant feeling?

What is painful, what is pleasant, regarding painful feeling?

What is pleasant, what is painful, regarding neutral feeling?”

“Avuso Visākha, pleasant feeling is pleasant when it persists, painful when it changes.

Painful feeling is painful when it persists, pleasant when it changes.

Neutral feeling is pleasant when there is knowledge of it, painful when there is no knowledge of it.”

(M 44.24/1:303) = SD 21.7

4.6 THE 18 KINDS OF FEELING. The 18 kinds of feeling are the following 18 examinations:

6 examinations accompanied by joy (*somanass 'upavicāra*),

6 examinations accompanied by displeasure (*domanass 'upavicāra*),

6 examinations accompanied by equanimity (*upekkh 'upavicāra*).

⁸³ *Yassa kho bhikkhave ime dhammā evaṃ paññāya mattaso nijjhānaṃ khamanti.*

⁸⁴ *Avinīpāta*, alt tr “not fated for birth in a suffering state”; opp of *vinīpāta*, “the world of suffering,” another name for the 4 woeful courses (*duggati*) or the 4 lower worlds (*apāya*) (Vism 13.92 f). Sometimes 5 woeful courses (*pañca,gati*) (D 3:234 = 33.2.1, A 11.68) are mentioned: the hells (*niraya*), the animal birth (*tirachāna,yoni*), the ghost realm (*pitti,visaya*), the human world (*manussa*) and the heavenly world (*deva*). Of these, the first three are woeful, with the asura-demons (*asura,kāya*) as the fourth woeful course. The remaining two are “happy courses” (*sugati*). For a discussion, see Nyanaponika & Bodhi (tr), *Numerical Discourses of the Buddha*, 1999:14-19.

⁸⁵ *Yo bhikkhave ime dhamme evaṃ jānāti evaṃ passati ayaṃ vuccati sotāpanno avinīpāta,dhammo niyato sambodhi,parāyano ti.* “This statement makes it clear how the stream-enterer [stream-winner] differs from those on the way to stream-entry. The faith-follower accepts the teachings on trust (with a limited degree of understanding), the Dhamma-follower through investigation; but the stream-enterer has *known and seen* the teachings directly. I read Se: *evaṃ jānāti evaṃ passati.*” (S:B 1099 n270)

⁸⁶ **Cūla Vedalla S** (M 44.23/1:302); **Sall'atthena S** (S 36.6/4:208) = SD 5.5. See below, for other classifications of feelings.

⁸⁷ *Ayye* (“venerable lady”) is the feminine equivalent of *bhante* (“venerable sir”). In the Buddha’s time, both forms were common ways of addressing seniors, but in due course came to be more used of monastics.

Each type becomes sixfold by arising in relation to the 6 sense-objects. **The Saḷāyatana Vibhaṅga Sutta** (M 137) describes the 18 kinds of feelings as “mental examination” (*upavicāra*), thus:

On seeing a form with the eye, one examines [explores] (*upavicarati*) a form productive of joy, one examines a form productive of displeasure, one examines a form productive of equanimity.

On hearing a sound with the ear, one examines a sound productive of joy, one examines a sound productive of displeasure, one examines a sound productive of equanimity.

On smelling a smell with the nose, one examines a smell productive of joy, one examines a smell productive of displeasure, one examines a smell productive of equanimity.

On tasting a taste with the tongue, one examines a taste productive of joy, one examines a taste productive of displeasure, one examines a taste productive of equanimity.

On touching a touch with the body, one examines a touch productive of joy, one examines a touch productive of displeasure, one examines a touch productive of equanimity.

On cognizing a mind-object with the mind, one examines a mind-object productive of joy, one examines a mind-object productive of displeasure, one examines a mind-object productive of equanimity. (M 137.8/3:216 f) = SD 29.5

The Majjhima Commentary says that “**mental examination**” (*manôpavicāra*) is a common term for initial application (*vitakka*) and sustained application (*vicāra*). One examines or investigates (*upavicarati*) the object by the occurrence of sustained application, and initial application is associated with sustained application (MA 5:22). **The Tittḥ’āyatana Sutta** (A 3.61) defines the third satipatthana—the contemplation of the mind (*cittānupassanā*)—as being these 18 mental examinations or investigations.⁸⁸

4.7 THE 36 KINDS OF FEELING. The 36 kinds of feelings are explained in detail in **the Saḷāyatana Sutta** (M 137). They are of two broad categories: those of the household life and those of renunciation; and they relate to the three kinds of feeling: pleasant, painful and neutral. Each in turn becomes sixfold in terms of the six sense-objects.⁸⁹

The Kiṭṭāgiri Sutta (M 70) summarizes into six categories, the detailed teaching given in the Saḷāyatana Sutta. The Kiṭṭāgiri Sutta speaks of two kinds of feelings (without their technical terms): those of the householder (that conduce to unwholesome states), and those of the renunciant (that conduce to wholesome states), thus:⁹⁰

JOY OF THE HOUSEHOLD LIFE. Here, when one feels a certain pleasant feeling, unwholesome states grow in him, and wholesome states lessen.

JOY OF THE RENUNCIANT’S LIFE. But here when one feels a certain pleasant feeling, unwholesome states lessen in him, and wholesome states grow.

PAIN OF THE HOUSEHOLD LIFE. Here, when one feels a certain painful feeling, unwholesome states grow in him, and wholesome states lessen.

PAIN OF THE RENUNCIANT’S LIFE. But here when one feels a certain painful feeling, unwholesome states lessen in him, and wholesome states grow.

EQUANIMITY OF THE HOUSEHOLD LIFE. Here, when one feels a certain neutral feeling, unwholesome states grow in him, and wholesome states lessen.

EQUANIMITY OF THE RENUNCIANT’S LIFE. But here when one feels a certain neutral feeling, unwholesome states lessen in him, and wholesome states grow. (M 70.7/1:475) = SD 11.1

The Commentary to the Saḷāyatana Sutta explains that the expression “of the household life” (*gehasita*) means “connected with the cords of sense-pleasure,” and “of renunciation” (*nekkhammasita*) means

⁸⁸ A 3.61.8/1:176 = SD 6.8.

⁸⁹ M 137.9-15/3:217-219.

⁹⁰ M 70.6-7/1:475 = SD 11.1. See Boisvert 1995:74-76 for the Sutta passage with Comy.

connected with insight.” This joy arises when one has set up insight and is watching the break-up of formations with the flow of sharp and bright insight knowledge focussed on formations. (MA 5:22)

The same Commentary adds that the householder’s equanimity (*gehasitā upekkhā*)⁹¹ is the equanimity of unknowing [ignorance] that arises in one who has not broken the barriers created by defilements or the future karmic fruits. It “does not go beyond form” (*rūpaṃ sā ativattati*) because it is stuck, glued to the object like flies to a ball of sugar. And the renunciant’s equanimity (*nekkhamma,sitā upekkhā*)⁹² is the equanimity of insight knowledge. It does not lust after desirable objects that fall within the range of the senses, nor does it feel ill will toward undesirable objects. (MA 5:24)

4.8 THE 108 KINDS OF FEELING. The listing of 36 feelings over the past, the future and the present is not only comprehensive, but more importantly, it points to the eternal truth that these feelings arise and pass away. They exist in time and space, both of which entail change and flux. Feeling is a feature of this constant universal change. According to **the Aṭṭha,sata Sutta** (S 36.22), the 108 kinds of feeling are these very 36 feelings in the past, in the future, and in the present. **The Bahu,vedaniya Sutta** (the Discourse on the Many Kinds of Feelings. M 59), **the Pañcak’aṅga Sutta** (S 36.19), and **the Bhikkhū Sutta** (S 36.20), and their commentaries, also mention the 108 kinds of feelings.⁹³

In fact, Dhammapāla says, feeling (*vedanā*) is sixfold, by way of the six types of contacts, that is, feeling born of eye-contact, of ear-contact, of nose-contact, of tongue-contact, of body-contact, and of mind-contact. They form a total of 108 kinds, thus:

Pre-occupation (<i>upavicāra</i>)	Support (<i>nissita</i>)	Time (<i>kāla</i>)
Desirable	<u>6 internal sense-faculties (self)</u> Eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind	Past
Undesirable	<u>6 external sense-objects (other)</u>	Present
Neutral	Form, sound, smell, taste, touch, mind-objects	Future
3 × 12		36 × 3 = 108

Table 4.7 The 108 feelings (DAaṬ:VRI 1:463)

4.9 CARNAL FEELINGS AND SPIRITUAL FEELINGS. A number of texts mention another classification of feeling, namely, that of the sensual or carnal (*s’āmisā*) and the non-sensual or spiritual (*nirāmisā*). The well known satipatthana passage on the contemplation of feelings (*vedanā’nupassanā*) of **the Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas** (D 22; M 10) mentions them:

And how, bhikshus, does a monk dwell observing feelings in the feelings?

Here, bhikshus, a monk,

- (1) feeling a pleasant feeling,⁹⁴ is aware, “I feel a pleasant feeling”;
- feeling a painful feeling,⁹⁵ is aware, “I feel a painful feeling”;
- feeling a neutral feeling, is aware, “I feel a neutral feeling.”⁹⁶

⁹¹ Technically, this should tr as “the equanimity of the householder.”

⁹² Technically, this should tr as “the equanimity of the renunciant.”

⁹³ M 59.5/1:399; S 36.19/4:224 f = SD 30.1; S 36.20/4:229; S 36.22/4:231 f; MA 3:114; SA 3:82-84.

⁹⁴ *Sukhaṃ vedanaṃ*, either bodily or mental.

⁹⁵ *Dukkhaṃ vedanaṃ*, either bodily or mental.

⁹⁶ *Adukkham-asukhaṃ vedanaṃ*, which is mental only: one is only aware that a feeling is present. Comy says that it is not easy to be mindful of neutral feeling, and that it should be best approached by way of inference, by noting the absence of both pleasant and unpleasant feelings. Comy illustrates with the example of a hunter seeing tracks before and after a rock, thereby inferring the track of an animal (MA 1:277). **Dhamma,saṅgaṇī** says that only the sense of touch is accompanied by pain or pleasure, while feelings arising at the other four sense-doors are invariably neutral (Dhs 139-145; Abhd 2). The suttas however speak of pleasant and unpleasant sights, sounds, smells,

- (2) Feeling a pleasant sensual [carnal] feeling, he is aware, “I feel a pleasant sensual feeling.”
feeling a pleasant non-sensual [spiritual] feeling, he is aware, “I feel a pleasant non-sensual feeling”;
- (3) Feeling a painful sensual feeling, he is aware, “I feel a painful sensual feeling.”
feeling a painful non-sensual feeling, he is aware, “I feel a painful non-sensual feeling”;
- (4) Feeling a neutral sensual feeling, he is aware, “I feel a neutral sensual feeling.”
feeling a neutral non-sensual feeling, he is aware, “I feel a neutral non-sensual feeling.”
(D 22.11/2:298 = M 10.32/1:59 = SD 13.2-3)

In the phrase “**pleasant sensual [carnal] feeling**” (*s’āmisam sukhaṃ vedanaṃ*). “sensual” (*s’āmisā = sa-āmisā*), literally means “with flesh,” thus connoting some sense of the carnal, that is, it is connected to the pleasures of the five senses (*kāma, guṇā*) (S 4:235, 236). In the phrase “pleasant non-sensual [spiritual] feeling” (*nirāmisam sukhaṃ vedanaṃ*), *nirāmisā* means “non-sensual, non-carnal, spiritual,” which, according to the Commentary, refers to the six joyful feelings connected with the sense-doors, but not dependent on sense-desire (MA 1:279).

In the **Sal’āyatana, vibhaṅga Sutta** (M 137), “sensual” (*s’āmisā*) refers to the household life and “non-sensual” (*nirāmisā*) to the renounced life. Elsewhere, as in the **Suddhika Nirāmisā Sutta** (S 36.29), non-sensual zest (*nirāmisā pīti*), non-sensual happiness (*nirāmisā sukha*) and non-sensual equanimity (*nirāmisā upekkhā*) are experienced in the dhyanas.⁹⁷ **Sujato** comments helpfully here:

In addition to the usual threefold analysis of feelings, the satipatthana material introduces the distinction between “carnal” and “spiritual” feelings. This distinction is not explained in the context of satipatthana as such; the detailed discussion is in the **Vedanā-saṃyutta**.⁹⁸ Since “carnal” and “spiritual” are unusual terms in this context, it seems likely that the Vedanā-saṃyutta passage was specifically intended to explain the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta material.

This impression is reinforced by another unusual feature, the inclusion of “rapture” [*pīti*, “zest”] as a kind of feeling. Rapture is not mentioned in the feeling section of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, but it does fall under feelings in ānāpānasati. Again, this is an unusual if not unique usage, and suggests that the Vedanā-saṃyutta passage was intended to synthesize and explain the feeling sections in both satipatthana and ānāpānasati.

The explanations that concern us here are as follows. Carnal feelings are those connected with the senses. Spiritual rapture is in the first two jhanas, spiritual pleasant feeling is in the first three jhanas, while spiritual neutral feeling is in the fourth jhana. Spiritual painful feeling is described as depression arising as one longs for the peaceful liberations one has not yet realized—a feeling I’m sure many are familiar with! (Sujato 2004b:149; emphases added)⁹⁹

5 Feeling as suffering

It is a universal fact that feeling is impermanent, and what is impermanent is *dukkha* (unsatisfactory, suffering).¹⁰⁰ **The Dukkha Sutta** (S 38.14) categorizes suffering into three kinds:

- (1) affective suffering (due to physical and mental pain) (*dukkha, dukkhatā*, literally, “the suffering of suffering”),

and tastes, that in turn condition the arising of corresponding feelings of pleasure or displeasure (S 4:115, 119, 125, 126). “This *Abhidhammic* presentation offers an intriguing perspective on observing feeling, since it invites an inquiry into the degree to which an experience of delight or displeasure in regard to sight, sound, smell or taste is simply the outcome of one’s own mental evaluation” (Anālayo, *Satipaṭṭhāna*, 2003:171).

⁹⁷ S 36.29.8-15/4:236). See D 2:298; M 1:59; S 4:235, 236 (x2); A 1:81, 3:412l Pm 2:233. See also Sue Hamilton 1996a:43 f.

⁹⁸ S 36.31/SĀ 483

⁹⁹ On the further implications of Sujato’s remarks here, see **The Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas** = SD 13.1(5B.1).

¹⁰⁰ Eg **Anatta, Jakkhaṇa S** (S 22.59.13/3:68) = SD 1.2. For a contemporary discussion on pain, see Susan Blackmore 2003:236-241.

- (2) temporal suffering or “suffering due to change” (that is, due to the ending of pleasant feeling”) (*vipariṇāma,dukkhatā*), and
- (3) existential suffering or “suffering due to formations,” in the inherent inadequacy in conditioned existence (*saṅkhāra,dukkhatā*). (S 38.14/4:259; also S 45.165/5:56; D 3:216)

Here, (1) refers to bodily pain and mental displeasure; (2) is pleasant feeling, which brings suffering when it ends, and (3) is all conditioned phenomena of the three worlds because they are oppressed by the rise and fall of events. **The Dhamma,cakka-p,pavattana Sutta** (S 56.11), in defining the first noble truth gives some details, as follows:

Now this, bhikshus, is **the noble truth that is suffering**:

birth is suffering,
 decay¹⁰¹ is suffering,
 disease is suffering,¹⁰²
 death is suffering;
 grief, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain and despair are suffering;¹⁰³
 to be with the unpleasant¹⁰⁴ is suffering;
 to be without the pleasant¹⁰⁵ is suffering;
 not to get what one desires is suffering,
 —in short, the five aggregates of clinging¹⁰⁶ are suffering. (S 56.11/5:421 = SD 1.1)

In this list, the categories of suffering are as follows:

- (1) affective suffering: birth, decay, disease, death, grief etc;
- (2) temporal suffering: not to be with the pleasant, to be without the pleasant;
- (3) existential suffering: the 5 aggregates.

The three kinds of suffering are elaborated in **the Visuddhi,magga** (Vism 16.34 f/499).

Ñāṇābhivamsa, in his New Subcommentary (Abhinava,ṭīkā) to the Dīgha,¹⁰⁷ gives **two methods of interpretation** as regards suffering and feeling. According to the first method of interpretation, the term “impermanent” (*anicca*) refers to equanimous feeling (*upekkhā,vedanā*) or to all feelings, by way of existential suffering (*saṅkhāra,dukkha*); the term “suffering” (*dukkha*) refers to painful feelings, by way of affective change (*dukkha,dukkha*); and the term “subject to change” (*vipariṇāma,dhamma*) refers to pleasant feelings, by way of temporal change (*vipariṇāma,dukkha*). The second method applies all three terms to all three types of feeling (pleasant, painful and equanimous). Of this, **Bodhi** notes:

This interpretation gives a clear example of the intricate interconnections of the diverse categorical schemes underlying the Buddha’s teaching, and the exactness in the Master’s selection of words to bring home the significance of his discourse. (Bodhi 1978:153 n2)

The Daṭṭhabba Sutta summarizes our discussion thus far to serve as a reflection:

¹⁰¹ *Jarā*, old age, aging.

¹⁰² Only in the Vinaya & Saṃyutta versions; not mentioned in Comys.

¹⁰³ Found in most MSS but not in Be and Ce.

¹⁰⁴ “The unpleasant,” *appiya*, also tr “what one loves not.”

¹⁰⁵ “The loved,” *piya*, also tr “what one loves.”

¹⁰⁶ *Pañc’upadāna-k,khandha*, namely, form, feeling, perception, formations and consciousness (S 3:47 Vbh 1).

What is briefly mentioned here is elaborated in the second discourse, **Anatta,lakkhaṇa S** (S 22.59) = SD 1.2 (2003).

¹⁰⁷ DAAT:Be (CSCD) 1:408 f. See also DAT:CSCD 1:196 f & *The All-embracing Net of Views*, tr Bhikkhu Bodhi, 1978:153 n2.

Daṭṭhabba Sutta

The Discourse on What Should be Seen

(S 36.5/4:207)

3 Bhikshus, there are these three feelings. What are the three?

Pleasant feeling.

Painful feeling.

Neither pleasant nor painful [Neutral] feeling.

A pleasant feeling, bhikshus, should be seen as painful.¹⁰⁸

A painful feeling should be seen as a dart.

A neutral feeling should be seen as impermanent.

4 Bhikshus, insofar as a monk has seen a pleasant feeling as painful,

a painful feeling as a dart, and

a neutral feeling as impermanent,

he is called a monk who sees rightly, who has cut off craving, who by fully breaking through conceit, destroying it, has made an end of suffering.¹⁰⁹

One who has seen the pleasant as painful;

Who has seen the painful as a dart;

The neither painful nor pleasant, as peaceful,¹¹⁰

Who sees it as impermanent:

He is a monk who rightly sees,

Who thoroughly knows feeling.

He has fully understood feeling.

He is without cankers in this very life.

Standing in the Dharma, when the body breaks up,

The master of knowledge cannot be reckoned.

— evaṃ —

6 Feeling and feeling-content

6.1 THE NATURE OF FEELING. Sue Hamilton, in *Identity and Experience*, makes an important note on the nature of feeling:

There are many different descriptions of the types of *vedanā*. By far the most commonly referred to are the three types covered by the term *tisso vedanā*: agreeable, disagreeable and neutral.¹¹¹ It is this analysis which stands in the *Vedanā Saṃyutta* [S 4:204]. It is also stated that *vedanā* which is agreeable, disagreeable and neutral is experienced (*vedayitaṃ*) either bodily or mental [*kāyikaṃ va cetasikaṃ vā*], making six types in all.¹¹² And in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* it

¹⁰⁸ On account of change (*viparināmana, vasena*). (SA 3:76)

¹⁰⁹ *Ayaṃ vuccati bhikkhave bhikkhu sammaddaso acchejji taṇhaṃ vivattayi saṃyojanaṃ sammamānābhisamayā antam akāsi dukkhassā ti.*

¹¹⁰ *Adukkham-asukhaṃ santaṃ*, where *santaṃ* is glossed by Comy as *santa, sabhāvaṃ*, “a state of peace” (SA 3:76). PED gives 2 forms of *santa*: (1) “calmed, tranquil, peaceful, pure,” as pp of *sammati* (√SAM; Dh 436 = *upasama*) (V 1:4; D 1:12; S 1:5; A 2:18; Sn 746), or (2) “tired, wearied, exhausted, fatigued” pp of *sammati* (√SRAM, Vedic *śramyati*; Dh 220 = *parissama*, 437 = *kheda*) (Dh 60; J 1:498; Pv 2.9.36); and possibly (3) “working, satisfactory,” pp of *sammati* (√SAM, to labour; present *śamyati*; pp Vedic *śamita* (V 2:119, 278)). None of these senses is reflected in the comy gloss.

¹¹¹ Eg D 3:275; S 2:53, 82, 4:204, 207, etc; A 3:400.

¹¹² M 1:302; S 4:208; cf Vbh 72; Dh 133.

states that agreeable, disagreeable and neutral feelings can be experienced with regard to material (*sāmisa*) or non-material (*nirāmisa*) things [M 1:59].

These last two sentences have been interpreted as meaning that feelings have both a physical and a mental aspect.¹¹³ In my view, however, it seems more likely that the first refers to the fact that feelings have a tactile origin are experienced bodily (*kāya* is the object corresponding to the sense of touch) and feelings that have a non-tactile origin are experienced mentally: so, for example, the agreeable feelings we experience as a result of hearing or seeing something nice are not in this sense “bodily” feelings. (1996a:43 f)

Now, it is stated in **the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** (D 22) that physical pain arises through bodily contact (*kāya,samphassa,ja*) and that displeasure (mental pain) arises through mental contact (*mano,samphassa,ja*).¹¹⁴ The key word to note here is “contact” (*samphassa*, or simply *phassa*), which refers to the impingement of the sense-object on its sense-faculty. The question here is not whether there are two kinds of feeling (bodily or mental), but that all feelings arise from contact: *phassa,paccayā vedanā*.¹¹⁵

6.2 PAIN CAN BE UNLEARNED. In this connection, in **the Nakula,pitā Sutta** (S 22.1), we find the Buddha admonishing the aging Nakula,pitā to train himself (by constantly reflecting) thus: “My body may be sick, but my mind will not be sick” (*ātura,kāyassa me sato, cittam anāturam bhavissati*).¹¹⁶ In other words, there are body-based feelings and mind-based feelings: the body-based feelings arise from the impingement of the sense-object (any of the six sense-faculties) on the physical sense-faculties. This is the area of pain that medical science is familiar with, and which it defines as follows:

Nociceptive pain	Nociceptors are the nerves that sense and respond to those areas of the body where pain, infection or trauma (damage) occur, such as sprains, fractures, burns, bumps, bruises, inflammation (eg due to infection or arthritis), obstruction, and myofascial (muscular) pain. This kind of pain is time-limited or episodic.
Visceral pain	Sub-type of nociceptive pain involving the internal organs.
Neuropathic pains	Pain resulting from an injury or malfunction in the peripheral or central nervous system. It is often triggered by an injury, but there may be no damage to the nervous system (eg the nerves could just be infiltrated or compressed by tumours, strangulated by scar tissue, or inflamed by infection). This kind of pain is normally chronic. Such pain does not really reflect an injury, but simply that the alarm system itself is not working well.

Pain, on the other hand, could also arise from any of the six sense-faculties, like one hears some bad news and has a heart attack, or one thinks of a loved one and weeps as a result: these are mind-based feelings. As such, pain is not just a feeling: *it is an experience*, one that is not only mind-based, but also psychologically, culturally and environmentally determined. It might be said to be a “learned pain,” sometimes called *psychogenic* (mind-generated) pain. Thus, the reflection, “my mind will not be sick” means that one trains oneself not to be led by unwholesome sense-objects, but to wisely consider them to be impermanent and not to “own” them.¹¹⁷ One can *unlearn* this kind of pain.

6.3 ALL FEELINGS ARE FELT MENTALLY. The next key point to note is that all feelings are experienced in the mind: the sense-faculty and the sense-object are not sufficient conditions for feeling to arise, as clearly stated by Mahā Kaccāna in **the Madhu,piṇḍika Sutta** (M 18):

¹¹³ This is suggested by NR Reat 1987:23.

¹¹⁴ D 22.18/2:306 = SD 13.2.

¹¹⁵ (*Kāya*) Na Tumha S (S 12.37/2:64) = SD 5.14; (*Paṭicca,samuppāda*) Vibhaṅga S (S 12.2/2:2) = SD 5. 15.

¹¹⁶ S 22.1/3:1 = SD 5.4.

¹¹⁷ In **Nakula,pitā S** (S 22.1), Sāriputta goes on to explain in detail to Nakula,pitā how to “disown” the five aggregates (S 22.1.6-25/3:2-5 = SD 5.4).

¹¹⁸Friends, dependent on the eye and forms, eye-consciousness arises. The meeting of the three is contact.¹¹⁹

With contact as condition, there is feeling. What one feels, one perceives. What one perceives, one thinks about.¹²⁰

What one thinks about, one mentally proliferates.¹²¹ What a person mentally proliferates is the source through which perceptions and notions due to mental proliferation¹²² impacts one regarding past, future and present forms cognizable through the eye.

Friends, dependent on the ear and sounds, ear-consciousness arises....

Friends, dependent on the nose and smells, nose-consciousness arises....

Friends, dependent on the tongue and tastes, tongue-consciousness arises....

Friends, dependent on the body and touches, body-consciousness arises....

Friends, dependent on the mind¹²³ and mind-objects, mind-consciousness¹²⁴ arises. The meeting of the three is contact. With contact as condition, there is feeling.

(M 18.16/1:111 f) = SD 6.14

This important passage clearly shows that all feelings are mentally experienced. The difference amongst the feelings—whether they are bodily or mental—depends on *where* they arise: a bodily feeling arises in the body (that is, the eye, ear, nose, tongue or body), and a mental feeling arises in the mind. Hence, there is no need, as Sue Hamilton attempts, to show “that feeling that have a tactile origin are experienced bodily...and feelings that have a non-tactile origin are experienced mentally” (1996a:44). All feelings are experienced mentally: if there is no attention (sense-consciousness), there is no feeling.

This explanation is further supported by the very first two verses of **the Dhammapada**:

*Mano,pubb’añgamā dhammā mano,seṭṭhā mano,mayā
Manasā ce paduṭṭhena bhāsati vā karoti vā
Tato naṃ dukkham anveti cakkam’va vahato padam*

Phenomena are preceded by the mind [consciousness],
for them the mind is supreme, they are mind-made,
If one speaks or acts with a defiled mind,
Suffering follows one like the wheel the ox’s hoof. (Dh 1)

*Mano,pubb’añgamā dhammā mano,seṭṭhā mano,mayā
Manasā ce pasannena bhāsati vā karoti vā
Tato naṃ sukham anveti chāyā’va anāpayinī*

Phenomena are preceded by the mind [consciousness],
for them the mind is supreme, they are mind-made,
If one speaks or acts with a clear [undefiled] mind,
Happiness follows one like an undeparting shadow. (Dh 2)

¹¹⁸ Similar passages are found in **Pariññā S** (S 35.60/4:32 f = SD 6.17) and **Mahā Hatthi,padôpama S** (M 28.27-38/1:190 f = SD 6.16).

¹¹⁹ *Tiṇṇam saṅgati phasso.*

¹²⁰ “One thinks about,” *vitakketi*. On how when thinking stops, desires do not arise, see **Sakka,pañha S** (D 21.2.2/2:277).

¹²¹ This verse up to here is also found in **(Samuday’atthaṅgama) Loka S** (S 12.44/2:71-73 = SD 7.5) and **(Sabb’upādāna) Pariññā S** (S 35.60/4:32 f = SD 6.17) in different contexts.

¹²² *Papañca,saññā,saṅkhā*, see SD 6.14 Introd (3).

¹²³ “The mind,” *mana*. Here Comy glosses as *bhavaṅga,citta* (MA 2:79), the life-continuum, sometimes called the unconscious or sub-conscious.

¹²⁴ “Mind-consciousness,” *mano,viññāṇa*. Here Comy glosses as “advertence” (*āvajjana*) and impulsion (*javana*) (MA 2:77).

The term “phenomena” (*dhammā*) here refers to whatever we experience through our senses. The Dhammapada Commentary defines *dhammā* as the non-material aggregates: feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), and formations (*saṅkhāra*) (DhA 1:22). Form (*rūpa*) is not mentioned because we do not experience “form” in itself: we only have a bare awareness of them (*viññāṇa*, consciousness), then we form images or percepts of them (*saññā*, perception), and then volitionally act on these perceptions (*saṅkhāra*, formations). In this sense, it is all in the mind: all phenomena are mind-made.

6.4 NOT EVERYTHING WE FEEL IS DUE TO PAST KARMA. One of the important modern debates on Buddhism is whether dependent arising occurs over three lives (past, present and future). Both side of the divide are famously represented: we have well known proponents (like Bodhi¹²⁵ and Brahmavamso¹²⁶) as well as prominent opponents (like Ñāṇavīra¹²⁷ and Buddhadasa¹²⁸). My own stand is that *the three-life dependent arising is true*, that is, if we are to accept both karma and rebirth.

An examination of **the Tīth’āyatana Sutta** (A 3.61)¹²⁹ will help us understand the problem better. As Brahmavamso has noted,¹³⁰ some interpret this Sutta as stating that *vedanā* is not caused by karma-formations (*saṅkhāra*) done in a past life. Therefore, the link called *saṅkhāra* in dependent arising (which does cause *vedanā*) cannot mean karma-formations of a previous life. Brahmavamso goes on to show that this is a misreading of the Sutta. The Sutta opens with the Buddha pointing out three common wrong views in his days:

Monks, there are three sectarian doctrines¹³¹ which when fully examined, investigated, discussed by the wise, even if taken in any other way,¹³² will remain **a doctrine of non-action** (*akiriya, vāda*).¹³³ What are the three?

(a) There are, monks, some recluses and brahmins who teach and hold this view: “Whatever a person experiences, whether pleasurable, painful or neutral, all that is caused by past action [done in past lives] (*pubbe kata, hetu*).”¹³⁴

(b) There are, monks, others who teach and hold this view: “Whatever a person experiences ... all that is caused by God’s creation (*issara, nimmāna, hetu*).”¹³⁵

(c) There are, monks, others who teach and hold this view: “Whatever a person experiences ... all that is uncaused and unconditioned (*ahetu appaccaya*).”¹³⁶ (A 3.61.1/1:173 = SD 6.9)

¹²⁵ “A critical examination of Ñāṇavīra Thera’s ‘A note on paṭiccasamuppāda,’” *Buddhist Studies Review*, 1998.

¹²⁶ See eg Brahmavamso 2003:66-69.

¹²⁷ See **Channovāda S** (M 144) = SD 11.12.

¹²⁸ Buddhadasa, *Paṭiccasamuppāda: Dependent origination*, 1986:49; *Paṭiccasamuppāda: Practical dependent origination*, 1992:77. He also argues that the three-life model of dependent arising was introduced by Buddhaghosa, who still had brahminical inclinations: 1992:78-104.

¹²⁹ A 3.61/1:173-177 = SD 6.8.

¹³⁰ Brahmavamso 2003:66-69.

¹³¹ “Sectarian doctrines,” *tīth’āyatanāni*. M 1:483,21,23; A 1:173, 175; Nc 154; Vbh 145, 367; AA 2:272; DhA 2:63.

¹³² “Even if taken in any other way,” *param pi gantvā*. I have taken the Pali as it is *pace* Comy which glosses it as *yañ kiñci paramparañ gantvā pi*, “even if adopted because of tradition” (A:ÑB 61).

¹³³ **Sāmañña,phala S** ascribes the doctrine of non-action to Pūraṇa Kassapa (D 2.17/1:52 f). “Although on first encounter the view seems to rest on materialistic premises..., there is canonical evidence that Pūraṇa Kassapa subscribed to a fatalistic doctrine. Thus his moral antinomianism probably follows from the view that all action is predestined in ways that abrogate the ascription of moral responsibility to its agent.” (M:ÑB 1264 n629). See AL Basham, *History and Doctrine of the Ajivikas*, 1951:84.

¹³⁴ This determinist view is ascribed by the Buddhists to the Jains; but cf **Sāmaññaphala S** (D 2.28-30/1:57 & nn), where Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta is ascribed a different set of teachings. For rebuttal, see **Devadaha S** (M 101).

¹³⁵ This theist view is common among the brahmins.

¹³⁶ This fatalist view (that denies causality) was taught by Makkhali Gosāla, a contemporary of the Buddha who held that all things are fated (D 2.20/1:53, M 30.2/1:198, 36.5/1:238, 36.48/1:250, 60.21/1:407, 76.53/1:524, 77.6/2:2 ff). This doctrine, together with the doctrine of non-action (or inaction) belongs to the “wrong views with a fixed destiny” (*niyata micchā, dīṭṭhi*), ie a wrong view leading to a bad rebirth (Tkp 168).

In modern philosophical terms, the three wrong views are respectively called

- (a) determinism (everything is due to past action),
- (b) theism (everything is due to God), and
- (c) fatalism (no causality).

They all fall under the category of “the doctrine of non-action” (*akiriya, vāda*).

The first view—that everything that one feels now is due to what one did in the past—is pertinent to our present discussion. This view is discussed in detail in **the Devadaha Sutta** (M 101), where it is said to be a view of the Jains.¹³⁷ They held that all suffering one experiences in this life is due to bad karma from a previous life. The Devadaha Sutta disproves this wrong view.

According to the Buddha, some of what one feels are caused by present karma-formations, some by past karma-formations earlier in this life, and some by karma-formations being performed right now. What the Buddha is denying is that *all* happiness, suffering, and neutral feelings are caused by karma from a previous life. **Brahmavamso** clarifies the problem:

It should be pointed out that The Buddha is here referring to the type of feeling, rather than to feeling itself. It is true that whichever one of the three types of feeling that one experiences, happiness or suffering or neutral [feeling], is not always due to *kamma* from a past life. But it is also true that the situation whereby one can experience feeling at all, the fact that *vedanā* exists, is due to *kamma* from a past life.

A simile might make this clear. The situation that you possess a TV on a public holiday is due to you having purchased it on some previous day. Its presence, as it were, is due to *kamma* from a past day. But whichever one of the three channels that appears on the screen, Channel Happiness or Channel Suffering or Channel Neutral, is not always due to what you did on some previous day. The content is not at all due to *kamma* from the past.

In the same way, The Buddha states that the existence of *vedanā* in this life is due to *kamma* formations done in the previous life. But the particular type of feeling, happiness or suffering or neutral [feeling] is not always due to *kamma* from a previous life.

Once the distinction is made between *vedanā* and the contents of *vedanā* (happiness or suffering or neutral), it is clear that [the Tith’āyatana Sutta] doesn’t state that *vedanā* is not caused by *kamma* formations from a previous life. It does not disprove the orthodox understanding of Dependent Origination as spanning three lives.

Indeed, the latter part of the [Tith’āyatana Sutta] introduces Dependent Origination from a unique starting point:

“Depending on the six elements (earth, air, fire, water, space and consciousness) [sic] there is the descent of the being to be born into the womb; when there is descent, there is name-and-form; with name-and-form as condition, in six sense-bases; with the six sense-bases as condition contact; with contact as condition, feeling.”

*Channaṃ bhikkhava dhātūnaṃ upādāya gabbhassāvakkanti hoti okkantiyā sati nāma,- rūpaṃ, nāma,rūpa,paccayā saḷāyatanaṃ, saḷāyatana,paccayā phassa, phassa,paccayā vedanā.*¹³⁸ [A 3.62.7/1:176]

Thus the Buddha has clearly shown that feeling (*vedanā*) arises due to the descent of the being-to-be-born (*gandhabba*) into the womb. Brahmavamso then goes on to compare this with the definition of *nāma,rūpa* in **the Mahā,nidāna Sutta** (D 15):

“It is said: ‘**With consciousness as condition, there is name-and-form.**’

Ānanda, how consciousness conditions name-and-form should be known in this manner:

¹³⁷ M 101/2:101-228 = SD 18.4.

¹³⁸ Text has been edited.

If there were no consciousness to descend into a mother’s womb, would name-and-form take shape in the womb?”¹³⁹

“Certainly not, venerable sir.”

(D 15.21/2:62 f) = SD 5.17

*Viññāṇa,paccayā nāma,rūpan¹⁴⁰ ti iti kho pan’etaṃ vuttaṃ.
Tad Ānanda iminā p’etaṃ pariyāyena veditabbaṃ, yathā viññāṇa.paccayā nāma,rūpaṃ.
Viññāṇaṃ va hi Ānanda mātu kucchismiṃ na okkamissattha, api nu kho nāma,rūpaṃ mātu
kucchismiṃ samucchissathā ti
No h’etaṃ bhante.*

Thus, concludes Brahmavamso, this passage clearly shows that the descent of the being-to-be-born of the Tithth’āyatana Sutta is the same as the descent of rebirth-linking consciousness into the womb of the Mahā,nidāna Sutta. Thus, the Tithth’āyatana Sutta says that *vedanā* is caused by the first consciousness arising in this life, whose cause can only be found in a previous life.

Thus [the Tithth’āyatana Sutta] which is often presented as evidence that Dependent Origination does not span more than one life, when read accurately and completely, actually clearly proves the opposite. The situation that *vedanā* exists at all is due to *avijjā* [ignorance] and *kamma* formations from the previous life, and Dependent Origination, as taught by The Buddha, does indeed span more than a single life. (Brahmavamso 2003:69)

7 Arhats are in full control of their feelings

7.1 AVIJJĀ PAHĀNA SUTTA. The suttas are full of references to the fact that saints, including arhats, experience feelings and are not bereft of them like some zombie-like automata. In **the Avijjā Pahāna Sutta 2** (S 35.80), a monk asks the Buddha a very interesting question on spiritual development and the Buddha’s answer shows how the saints know and see things differently:

“But, venerable sir, how should a monk know, how should he see, for ignorance to be abandoned by him, and for true knowledge to arise?”

“Here, the monk has learned [heard] that nothing is worth clinging to. And a monk has learned that nothing is worth clinging to, thus: he directly knows all things. Having directly understood all things, he fully understands¹⁴¹ all things.

¹³⁹ Cf **Tithth’āyatana S** (A 3.61) where the Buddha declares: “Based on the six elements, there is descent into the womb; | (On account of) such a descent, there is name-and-form; | With name-and-form as condition, there is contact; | With contact as condition, there is feeling. | Now, it is for one who feels that I make known [the 4 noble truths]” (A 3.61.9/1:176 = SD 6.7). This clearly shows that feeling arises with the descent of the gandharva (rebirth consciousness) into the womb. However, this is not a common interpretation of *viññāṇa-nāma,rūpa* dyad, where “*viññāṇa* in this context became the consciousness that descends into the mother’s womb at conception, while *nāma-rūpa* became the body complex that takes shape and, after developing sense-organs (*salāyatana*), experiences contact (*phassa*) and so on.” (Bucknell 1999:339). More commonly, *viññāṇa* is “the consummation of the six types of consciousness associated with the sense organs, which makes the version read like an account of the psychological process of sensory perception.” (Bucknell 1999: 327): see **Madhu,piṇḍika S** (M 18.16-18/1:111-113). See discussion on **nāma,rūpa** in the essay “Dependent Arising” = SD 5.11 Introd.

¹⁴⁰ Here and next line, original article reads *nāma,rūpa,paccayā viññāṇaṃ*. It has been corrected.

¹⁴¹ “He fully understands,” *parijānāti*, meaning “he comprehends, knows fully for certain.” This spiritual knowledge is called “**full understanding**” (*pariññā*), of which there are 3 kinds: (1) Full understanding of the known (*ñāta,pariññā*), ie the discernment of the specific characteristics of a phenomena (“Form as the characteristic of being oppressed’ feeling has the characteristic of being felt, etc”); (2) Full understanding by investigating (*tīraṇa,-pariññā*), ie insight wisdom (*vipassanā,paññā*) which as the 3 universal characteristics (impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, not-self) as its objects, and which arises when attributing a universal characteristic to a physical and mental state, eg “Form is impermanent; feeling is impermanent, etc”; (3) Full understanding as overcoming (or abandoning) (*pahāna,pariññā*), ie the insight-wisdom that has the universal characteristics as its objects, and arises after one has overcome the idea of permanence, etc.” (Nm 52; Vism 20.3/606 f). Comy says that “full understanding” here refers

¹⁴²Having fully understood everything, he sees all signs differently.”¹⁴³ (S 35.80/4:50)

The Buddha then goes on to say that the practitioner sees each of his sense-faculties differently; he sees the sense-objects differently; he sees the sense-consciousnesses differently, and “Whatever feeling—whether pleasant, or painful, or neutral—that arises with tongue-contact as condition, that, too, he sees differently ... when a monk knows and sees thus, ignorance is abandoned by him and true knowledge (*vijjā*) arises.” (S 35.80/4:50 = SD 16.9)

7.2 SUKHUMĀLA SUTTA. The story of the Bodhisattva’s seeing the four sights (or signs) is the hypostatization (the turning into concrete images) of his reflections on the three great evils of life, described in **the Sukhumāla Sutta** (A 3.38), thus:

(1) Bhikshus, amidst such splendour and wealth,¹⁴⁴ and because of such an exceedingly delicate life, this thought arose in me:

“An ignorant ordinary person, though by nature would decay himself and unable to escape decay, would feel pained, ashamed, disgusted,¹⁴⁵ when seeing an old or aged person, being forgetful of himself [his own situation].

Now I, too, by nature, will age and cannot escape ageing. If, bhikshus, when seeing an old or aged person, I were to feel pained, ashamed, disgusted, that would not be proper for one like myself.”

When I reflected thus, bhikshus, all my **intoxication with youth** vanished.

(2) (Again I reflected:)

“An ignorant ordinary person, though by nature will suffer disease himself and unable to escape disease, would feel pained, ashamed, disgusted, when seeing an ill person, being forgetful of himself.

Now I, too, by nature, will suffer disease and cannot escape disease. If, bhikshus, when seeing an ill person, I were to feel pained, ashamed, disgusted, that would not be proper for one like myself.”

When I reflected thus, bhikshus, all my **intoxication with health** vanished.

(3) (Again I reflected:)

“An uninstructed ordinary person, though by nature will die himself and unable to escape dying, would feel pained, ashamed, disgusted, when seeing a dead person, being forgetful of himself.

Now I, too, by nature will die and cannot escape dying. If, bhikshus, when seeing a dead person, I were to feel pained, ashamed, disgusted, that would not be proper for one like myself.”

When I reflected thus, bhikshus, all my **intoxication with life** vanished. (A 3.38/1:145 f)¹⁴⁶

Understandably an ordinary person would feel “pained, ashamed, disgusted” at the sight of decay (especially the human ageing process), disease, and death. Here, however, the Bodhisattva (as reported by

to *tīraṇa, pariññā* (AA 4:43). The contemplation of impermanence (*aniccānupassanā*), etc, are given in the final tetrad (*Dhammānupassanā*, contemplation of mind-objects) of the breath meditation of the **Ānāpāna, sati S** (M 118.21/3:83).

¹⁴² *Sabbam dhammam pariññāya sabba, nimittāni aññato passati; cakkhum aññato passati, rūpe aññato passati, cakkhu, viññānam aññato passati; ...yam p’idaṃ mano samphassa, paccayā uppajjati vedayitam sukhaṃ vā dukkhaṃ vā adukkhaṃ asukhaṃ vā. Tam pi aññato passato.*

¹⁴³ Comy: “He sees all signs differently” (*sabba, nimittāni aññato passati*) means that he sees the signs of formations (*saṅkhāra, nimittāni*) differently from those who have not fully understood the worldly inclinations (*abhinivesā*). For such people see all signs as self, but one who has fully understood the worldly inclinations, sees them as not-self, not as a self. Thus is the characteristic of not-self discussed in this sutta. (SA 2:370).

¹⁴⁴ “Splendour and wealth,” *iddhi*, or in a word “majesty.”

¹⁴⁵ “Would feel pained, ashamed, disgusted,” *aṭṭhiyeyyam harāyeyyam jeguccheyyam*. For fuller analyses of these terms, see **Kevaḍḍha S** (D 11.5/1:213) = SD 1.7 n sv.

¹⁴⁶ See SD 1.11 Intro (3.2) & esp “Dependent arising” = SD 5.16.19d.

the Buddha later) feels that he should *not* feel that way “for one like myself,” that is, for two reasons: (1) if he were to remain in the home life, he should not be pained, ashamed, or disgusted at the three great evils because they are a part and parcel of such a life; (2) if he were seeking the way out of these three evils, he should not be troubled by them but face them squarely. In short, he should not be troubled by his feelings. **The Indriya,bhāvanā Sutta** (M 152), too, says that the saint on the path (*sekha pāṭipada*, that is, a saint who is not yet an arhat), feels “pained, ashamed, disgusted” at a sense-experience, whether they are agreeable, disagreeable or neutral.¹⁴⁷

The Buddha responds in the same manner towards the “miracles” (*pāṭihāriya*) of psychic power and of mind-reading, as recorded in **the Kevalāḍḍha Sutta** (D 11), that is, he feels “pained, ashamed, disgusted” regarding them. However, the context here is more specific: the Buddha is referring to the fact that it is not wise to place our faith in miracles; for they could be performed by others by their own means, and as such fails as a way of authenticating our claims. “Seeing this danger,” the Buddha thus feels “pained, ashamed, disgusted” towards them. What is expressed here is not merely an oblique way of expressing an opinion, but that it reflect an *urgent feeling* towards situations that do not conduce to spiritual development. This is somewhat the reverse of samvega and of *pasāda* (bright faith), discussed elsewhere.¹⁴⁸

7.3 SALL’ATTHENA SUTTA. The best known passage attesting to the fact that feelings do arise in the arhat is clearly **the Sall’atthena Sutta** (S 36.6), where the Buddha explains the difference between how the worldly person and how the arhat responds to feeling. The Sutta opens with the Buddha asking this question:

“Bhikshus, the uninstructed ordinary person feels pleasant feeling, painful feeling, neutral feeling.¹⁴⁹

But, bhikshus, the instructed noble disciple, too, feels pleasant feeling, painful feeling, neutral feeling.

Bhikshus, what then is the distinction, the disparity, the difference between the instructed noble disciple and the uninstructed ordinary person?” (S 36.6.3-5/4:207 f) = SD 5.5

The uninstructed ordinary person, that is, the worldling, as a rule predictably *reacts* to the three kinds of feelings, thus:

Feeling	Reaction	Reinforces
Painful	He sorrows, grieves, laments, beats his breast, becomes confused	latent tendency of aversion
Pleasant	He <u>delights</u> in sensual pleasure	latent tendency of lust
Neutral	He does not understand [does not know] it	latent tendency of ignorance

Table 7.3a The worldling’s reaction to feelings

¹⁴⁷ M 152.10/3:300 f = SD 17.13.

¹⁴⁸ See **Mahā,parinibbāna S** (D 16) = SD 9(7f) & **Somanassa S** (It 2.1.10) = SD 16.14 Introd.

¹⁴⁹ Comy to Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S says that it is not easy to be mindful of neutral feeling, and that it should be best approached by way of inference, by noting the absence of both pleasant and unpleasant feelings. Comy illustrates with the example of a hunter seeing tracks before and after a rock, thereby inferring the track of an animal (MA 1:277). **Dhamma,saṅgaṇī** says that only the sense of touch is accompanied by pain or pleasure, while feelings arising at the other four sense-doors are invariably neutral (Dhs 139-145; Abhds 2). The suttas however speak of pleasant and unpleasant sights, sounds, smells, and tastes, that in turn condition the arising of corresponding feelings of pleasure or displeasure (S 4:115, 119, 125, 126). “This *Abhidhammic* presentation offers an intriguing perspective on contemplation of feeling, since it invites an inquiry into the degree to which an experience of delight or displeasure in regard to sight, sound, smell or taste is simply the outcome of one’s own mental evaluation” (Anālayo, *Sati-paṭṭhāna*, 2003:171). See §8e n.

In the case of the instructed noble disciple, that is, the arhat, he *responds* to the three kinds of feelings thus:

Feeling	Response	Reason
Painful	He shows no aversion towards painful feeling.	He knows an escape other than through sensual pleasure.
Pleasant	He does not delight in sensual pleasure.	He understands, according to reality, the arising, the passing away, the gratification, the danger and the escape with regards to feelings.
Neutral	He understands it according to reality.	The feeling does not lie latent in him.

Table 7.3b The arhat’s response to feelings

The Buddha concludes by saying that for the arhat, “If he feels a pleasant feeling, he does not feel that it is yoked to him. If he feels a painful feeling, he does not feel that it is yoked to him. If he feels a neutral feeling, he does not feel that it is yoked to him.” (S 36.6).¹⁵⁰ Feeling, as such, is not a sufficient condition for craving (*taṇhā*). Even in ordinary people, not all feelings produce craving.¹⁵¹

7.4 INDRIYA, BHĀVANĀ SUTTA. How “differently” the saints know and see things is comprehensively and clearly explained in **the Indriya, bhāvanā Sutta** (M 152), as summarized in this table:¹⁵²

The practitioner	Feeling	Cultivation of the faculties
(1) <u>The supreme cultivation of the faculties in the noble one’s discipline</u> (<i>ariyassa vināye anuttarā indriya, bhāvanā</i>): a good worldling	When a monk (experiences a sense-object) with (the sense-organ), (in him) the agreeable arises, the disagreeable arises, both the agreeable-and-disagreeable [the neutral] arises.	He notes the sensation, and regards it as “conditioned, gross, and dependently arisen.” And he notes its <u>momentariness</u> or impermanence. (M 152.4-9)
(2) <u>The learner on the path</u> (<i>sekha pāṭipada</i>): the stream-winner, once-returner, or non-returner		“He is pained, ashamed, <u>revulsed</u> ” by the sensation (whether they are pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral). (M 152.10)
(3) <u>The noble one developed in the cultivation of the faculties</u> (<i>ariya bhāvita indriya, bhāvanā</i>): the adept or arhat		He is a master of <u>the 5 perceptions</u> , applying them “as he wishes.” ¹⁵³ (M 152.11-16)

Table 7.4a Summary of the Indriya, bhāvanā Sutta teaching.

¹⁵⁰ S 36.6.10f/4:209 f = SD 5.5.

¹⁵¹ On formations and latent tendencies, see SD 17.6(6.2).

¹⁵² M 152/3:298-301 = SD 17.13.

¹⁵³ Here the 5 perceptions are powers accomplished in the arhat. Elsewhere, the Buddha teaches them to his unawakened disciples as a way to overcome the three unwholesome roots (greed, hate and delusion), ie, in **Metta, saḥagata S** (S 46.54.12-13/S 5:119 = SD 10.11 Intro 2) & at **Tikaṇḍaki S** (A 5.144.2/3:169 = SD 2.12), where they are explained in some detail. In both cases, however, the sequence of the perceptions are 2, 1, 4, 3, 5. For further details, see **Paṭisambhidā, magga** (Pm 22.26/2:212 f) and Vism 12.36/381 f.

According to the Indriya,bhāvanā Sutta, **the good worldling** (*kalyāṇa puthujjana*), when experiencing a feeling, whether pleasant, painful, or neutral, sees it as being “conditioned, gross, and dependently arisen,” and is as such only momentary and impermanent. The saint-on-the-path “is pained, ashamed, revulsed” by the sensation whether they are pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral. **The arhat** is a master of the 5 perceptions, applying them “as he wishes.”¹⁵⁴

Let us examine the arhat’s five perceptions, summarized in **Table 7.3b**. This “training” of arhat is an interesting one. The Sutta says he may cultivate any of the five perceptions. He knows just what to do with regard to whatever state confronts him, whether it is attractive (“unrepulsive,” *appaṭikkūla*) or un-attractive (“repulsive,” *paṭikkūla*). Two significant points should be noted here. Firstly, the arhat’s actions are spontaneous, that is, not rooted in greed, hate or delusion, and he does not measure others (that is, he has no conceit, *māna*).¹⁵⁵ Secondly, feelings (pleasant, unpleasant, neutral; pain, tiredness, etc) do arise in the arhat, but he always knows them as they really are, and as such lets them come, lets them go, just as a mirror reflects an image but is in no way affected by it. Elsewhere, the Buddha teaches them to his un-awakened disciples as a way to overcome the three unwholesome roots (greed, hate and delusion).¹⁵⁶

<i>If the arhat wishes thus: ‘May I dwell</i>	He perceives it	Method
(1) Perceiving <u>the repulsive</u> in the unrepulsive’ [ie, seeing <i>what is unattractive</i> in an attractive object , eg, a sensually attractive person]	as repulsive	He sees it as <u>foul</u> or as <u>impermanent</u> .
(2) Perceiving <u>the unrepulsive</u> in the repulsive’ [ie, seeing <i>what is attractive</i> in an unattractive object , eg, a hostile person]	as unrepulsive	He shows it <u>loving-kindness</u> or sees it as <u>primary elements</u> .
(3) Perceiving <u>the repulsive</u> in the unrepulsive and in the repulsive,’ [ie, <i>letting go of both</i> the attractive and the unattractive signs]	as repulsive	He sees them as <u>foul</u> or as <u>impermanent</u> .
(4) Perceiving <u>the unrepulsive</u> in the repulsive and in the unrepulsive’ [ie, <i>regarding both</i> the unattractive and the attractive in the same way]	as unrepulsive	He shows them <u>loving-kindness</u> or see them as <u>primary elements</u> .
(5) <u>Rejecting both the unrepulsive and the repulsive</u> , he dwells in equanimity, mindful and fully aware,’ [ie, <i>disregarding either sign</i> as attractive or as unattractive]	equanimously, mindful and fully aware	He is neither glad nor sad, but is <u>equanimous</u> , mindful and fully aware.

Table 7.4b The five perceptions (Metta,sahagata Sutta, S 46.54.12c/5:119) = SD 10.11.

7.5 MAHĀ PARINIBBĀNA SUTTA. In **the Mahā,parinibbāna Sutta** (D 16), the Buddha, just before relinquishing the remainder of his natural life-span, makes this remark that clearly reflects that he has feelings for the beauty of nature:

¹⁵⁴ M 152/3:298-301 = SD 17.13.

¹⁵⁵ One sees the arhat’s natural goodness in that he does not even have the notions of “great vehicle” (*mahā-yāna*) or “low vehicle” (*hīna,yāna*), terms that clearly reflect complexes of superiority, inferiority and equality.

¹⁵⁶ In **Metta,sahagata S** (S 46.54.12-13/S 5:119 = SD 10.11 Introd 2) & **Tikaṇḍaki S** (A 5.144.2/3:169 = SD 2.12), where they are explained in some detail. In both cases, however, the sequence of the perceptions is 2, 1, 4, 3, 5. For further details, see **Paṭisambhidā,magga** (Pm 22.26/2:212 f) and Vism 12.36/381 f.

¹⁵⁷Then, when it was morning, the Blessed One dressed and, taking bowl and robe, entered Vesālī for alms. Having walked in Vesālī for alms, he had his meal, after which he addressed the venerable Ānanda:

“Bring along a mat, Ānanda. We will go to the Cāpāla Shrine for the midday rest.”¹⁵⁸

“Yes, venerable sir,” the venerable Ānanda replied in assent to the Blessed One. Holding the mat, the venerable Ānanda followed the Blessed One as he walked.

Then the Blessed One, having arrived at the Cāpāla Shrine, sat down on the prepared seat. Then the venerable Ānanda, having saluted the Buddha, sat down at one side. When the venerable Ānanda was thus seated at one side, the Blessed One said this to him:

“Ānanda, delightful¹⁵⁹ is Vesālī, delightful is the Udena Shrine, delightful is the Gotamaka Shrine, delightful is the Satt’ambaka Shrine [of the Seven Women], delightful is the Bahu,puttaka Shrine [of Many Sons], delightful is the Cāpāla Shrine. (D 16.3.1-2/2:102) = SD 9

7.6 PARIVĪMAṂSANA SUTTA. The Parivīmaṁsana Sutta (S 12.51) describes the liberation of the arhat who understands the true nature of feeling in these words:¹⁶⁰

14 When he neither creates nor forms¹⁶¹ volitional formation, he does not cling to anything in the world. Not clinging to anything in the world, he is not agitated.¹⁶² Not agitated, he attains nirvana by himself.¹⁶³ He understands,

“Destroyed is birth. The holy life has been lived. What needs to be done has been done. There is (for me) no more of arising in any state of being.”¹⁶⁴

15 If he feels a pleasant feeling, he understands, “It is impermanent”; he understands, “It is not hankered after”; he understands, “It is not delighted in.”¹⁶⁵

If he feels a painful feeling, he understands, “It is impermanent”; he understands, “It is not hankered after”; he understands, “It is not delighted in.”

If he feels a neutral feeling, he understands, “It is impermanent”; he understands, “It is not hankered after”; he understands, “It is not delighted in.”

16 If he feels a pleasant feeling, he feels it in a detached manner.¹⁶⁶ If he feels a painful feeling, he feels it a detached manner. If he feels a neutral feeling, he feels it a detached manner.

17 When he feels a feeling ending with the body, he understands, “I feel a feeling ending with the body.”¹⁶⁷

¹⁵⁷ This episode, which immediately precedes the Buddha’s relinquishment of the remainder of his lifespan at the Cāpāla shrine (D 16.3.1-10/2:102 f), is also found in **Cetiya S** (S 51.10/5:258-263)—SA 3:251-255 parallel DA 2:554-558—and **Āyu,sama S** (U 6.1/62-64), commented on at UA 322-330; also at Nett 60. See **Mahā,parinibbāna S** (D 16.3.1-2) = SD 9 for nn.

¹⁵⁸ “For the midday rest,” *diva,vihārāya*. The term *diva,vihāra*, lit “day residence” has sometimes been tr as “siesta” (D:W 246), but the word suggests that it is a time for a nap. The Buddha often speaks against monastics sleeping in the day time (D 3:185*; cf V 1:295). There are many references to monks and nuns resting in meditation during such a midday rest (S 1:128 f, 130, 131 f).

¹⁵⁹ “Delightful,” *ramaṇīyā*, alt tr “beautiful, charming.” This shows that the Buddha appreciates natural beauty, here def as any quality that conduces to mental peace, stability and clarity uninfluenced by greed, hate or delusion.

¹⁶⁰ S 12.51.14-18/2:82 f = SD 11.5.

¹⁶¹ “When he neither creates nor forms,” *anabhisankharanto anabhisañcetaṅtayo*. The word *abhisañcetaṅtati* means “he thinks out, plans.”

¹⁶² “He is not agitated,” *na paritassati*. See SD 11.5(§14) for nn.

¹⁶³ “By himself,” *paccattaṁ*, ie through his own effort, not through the power of another. (SA 2:78)

¹⁶⁴ This quote is the arhat’s reviewing knowledge (*paccavekkhaṇa,nāṇa*), for which, see S:B I n376.

¹⁶⁵ Comy: After the arhat’s reviewing knowledge has been shown, this passage then shows his constant dwelling (*satata,vihāra*). (SA 2:78). From hereon to the end, the text recurs with a different simile (that of an oil-lamp) in **Assaji S** (S 22.88.22-25/3:126) = **Gelaṅṅa S 1** (S 36.7.9-12/4:213) = **Gelaṅṅa S 2** (S 36.8.7-12/4:213) = **Dīpa S** (S 54.8.30-31/5:319 f).

¹⁶⁶ “Detached,” *visaṅṅuto*, alt tr “unyoked.”

When he feels a feeling ending with life, he understands, “I feel a feeling ending with life.”¹⁶⁸ He understands, “With the breaking up of the body following the ending of life, all that is felt, not delighted in, will be cooled right here¹⁶⁹—only physical bodies¹⁷⁰ will remain.”

18 Bhikshus, just as a person would remove a hot clay pot from the potter’s kiln¹⁷¹ and place it on level ground so that its heat would dissipate right there, leaving only earthen ware,¹⁷² even so, bhikshus,

when a monk feels a feeling ending with the body, he understands, “I feel a feeling ending with the body.”

When he feels a feeling ending with life, he understands, “I feel a feeling ending with life.”

He understands, “With the breaking up of the body following the ending of life, all that is felt, not delighted in, will be cooled right here—only physical bodies will remain.”

(S 12.51.14-18/2:82 f) = SD 11.5

7.7 KOṬṬHITA SUTTA. In the **Koṭṭhita Sutta** (S 35.232), Sāriputta explains to Mahā Koṭṭhita that the Buddha has all the sense-faculties—eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind—and he experiences all the sense-objects,

...yet there is no desire and lust in the Blessed One. The Blessed One is well liberated in mind.

In this way, friend, it can be understood how <the sense-faculty> is not the fetter of <sense-objects>, nor <sense-objects> the fetter of <the sense-faculty>, but rather the desire and lust that arises there in dependence on both is the fetter there. (S 35.232/4:163 f) = SD 28.4

While it would be wrong, as a matter of fact, to say that arhats, and even the Buddha, *have* feelings, it is correct to say that all the three kinds of feeling do *arise* in them, not due to their past or present karmic formations, but simply as a matter of course due to their lingering five aggregates (their form, feeling, perception, formations and consciousness). The saints, especially the arhats, as far as we know from the Suttas, lead profoundly happy lives, and they live on for only one purpose: for the benefit of the unawakened—a role latter attributed to, or rather appropriated by, the Mahāyāna Bodhisattva.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁷ “A feeling ending with the body,” *kāya,pariyantikam vedanam*. Comy: This means delimited by the body. As long as the body with its five sense-doors continues, the feelings arising there continue. (SA 2:78).

¹⁶⁸ “A feeling ending with life,” *jivita,pariyantikam vedanam*. Comy: This means delimited by life. As long as life continues, the feelings arising at the mind-door continue. (SA 2:79).

¹⁶⁹ “Will be cooled right here,” *idh’eva...sīti,bhavissati*. Comy: They will be cooled right here, without having gone elsewhere by way of rebirth, subject to no further occurrence, without the struggle and distress of their occurrence. (SA 2:80).

¹⁷⁰ “Physical bodies,” *sarīrāni*, sg *sarīra*. Comy glosses it as *dhātu,sarīrāni*, “bodily elements,” ie bones (*aṭṭhika,kaṅkala*, SAPṬ).

¹⁷¹ **The pot simile.** Comy: The potter’s fiery kiln represents the three realms of existence; the potter is the meditator; and his rod the knowledge of the path to arhathood. The level ground represents nirvana. The time when the potter removes the hot clay pot from the kiln and places it on the ground is like when the meditator, having attained the supreme fruit of arhathood, removes his individual form from the four realms of misery and places it on nirvana’s plain through the attainment of fruition. Just like a clay pot (is not baked at once or is broken at once), even so the arhat does not attain (final) nirvana on the same day as he attains arhathood. He lives on for 40 or 50 years striving to sustain the Buddha’s Dispensation. When he reaches his last thought-moment, with the break-up of the aggregates, he attains the nirvana-element without residue. Then, as with the potsherds, only inanimate bodily remains are left behind. (S 2:80 f). See Introd for the lamp simile.

¹⁷² “Earthenware,” *kapallāni*, also “pot, bowl, pan.” S:B (see also 766 n140) has “potsherds” which does not seem to fit here although Comy uses it in the sense of “potsherds” here (SA 2:80).

¹⁷³ It should be noted that in the Mahāyāna, the term *bodhi,sattva* is taken in two broad senses: (1) as the ideal of Buddhahood that is regarded as the best kind of spiritual awakening to aspire to, and (2) hypostates or embodiments of various noble qualities (compassion, as in Avalokiteśvara) or Buddha-events (the great awakening, as in Amitābha, ie, the light symbolism). Very often such developments were the result of external socio-religious challenges.

7.8 BEYOND FEELING. At the close of **the Pañcak’anga Sutta** (S 36.19), the Buddha, after mentioning the various classifications of feelings, speaks of the levels of dhyanic bliss up to those of the formless dhyanas up to the cessation of perception and feeling. He goes on to declare that he experiences a greater bliss even beyond that:

Now it is possible, Ānanda, that outside wanderers might say thus:

“The ascetic Gotama speaks of the cessation of perception and feeling, and he declares that it is included in happiness. What is that? How is that?”

When outside wanderers say thus, Ānanda, they should be told thus:

“The Blessed One, friends, does not describe a state as being included in happiness only with reference to pleasant feeling. But rather, friends, wherever there is happiness and in whatever way, the Tathagata describes that as being included in happiness.” (S 36.19.21/4:228) = SD 30.1

The Commentary explains that “cessation” (*nirodha*) is called happiness in the sense that it is unfelt happiness (*avedayita, sukha*, or happiness of non-feeling).¹⁷⁴ While felt happiness (*vedayita, sukha*) arises through the cords of sense-pleasures and the eight meditative attainments, cessation is unfelt happiness. Whether it is felt or not, it is exclusively happiness in that happiness consists in the absence of suffering (*niddukkha, bhāva*). (SA 3:80)

A similar sentiment, on a more mundane level, is later expressed in English poetry. After viewing the Elgin Marble in the British Museum in 1817, the English poet, John Keats (1795–1821), wrote:

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;
Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear’d,
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone. “Ode to a Grecian Urn” (1817)

The (Sāriputta) Nibbāna Sutta (A 9.34) opens with Sāriputta exulting: “This nirvana, avuso, is happiness! This nirvana, avuso, is happiness!” (*sukham idaṃ āvuso nibbānaṃ, sukham idaṃ āvuso nibbānaṃ*). Udāyi then asks him how there can be happiness when there is no feeling. Sāriputta replies:

Indeed, avuso, it is just that: where nothing is felt, that is truly happiness!
etad eva khv-ettha āvuso sukham, yad ettha n’atthi vedayitam (A 9.34/4:414 f)

Sāriputta goes on to mention the various levels of happiness beginning with sense-pleasures, through the dhyanas, up to the cessation of feeling and perception, and one seeing the last is an arhat. In short, the happiness of the arhat is beyond any feeling that the worldling knows.

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¹⁷⁴ “The happiness of non-feeling” here means that the happiness is not dependent upon feeling: it is a happiness independent of feeling. Furthermore, it is not a “joy of unfeeling.” The arhats are profoundly compassionate.

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