1 Latent tendencies

1.1 What is anusaya?

1.1.1 All our actions—mental, verbal and bodily—are not always conscious ones. In fact, the unawakened person is more likely to act so habitually that he is unconscious of his actions. In early Buddhist psychology, such actions are still said to be deliberate, that is, they are karmically potent. Such actions bear karmic fruits because they are rooted the greed, hate or delusion. This level of mental activity is said to be on a pre-conscious level. They are just below the conscious, and as they are habitual, not much thought, if any, is given to them. They are deliberately done, but without any wise attention (yoniṣo manasiṅkāra). On this level, such actions are called “formations” (saṅkhāra), karmically significant actions done through the mind, speech or the body. These in turn slavishly feed the latent tendencies.

Latent tendencies, as such, are the primordial roots of motivation in the sense that they have gained strength (thāmagata, thera, SAP: VRI 2:122). The Abhidhamma, says: “The latent dispositions (anusaya) are defilements which ‘lie along with’ (anusenti) the mental process to which they belong, rising to the surface as obsessions whenever they meet with suitable conditions” (Abhs 7.9). The term “latent dispositions” highlights the fact that the defilements are liable to arise so long as they have not been eradicated by the supramundane paths.

1.1.2 The Commentary to the Anusaya Sutta (S 45.175) says that a latent tendency (anusaya) is the defilement itself, but is a latent tendency in the sense that it has gained strength (thamma, gata, thera, SA 3:137). The Poranāṭikā adds it “has gained strength” by being firmly attached to a being’s mental continuum (satta, santāne thīra, bhāvapagamana, bhāvena, SAP: VRI 2:122).

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1.1.3 The sixth book of the Abhidhamma, the Yamaka (the Book of Pairs), treats the latent tendencies more comprehensively. It mentions the seven latent tendencies, which are also listed in the Sangiti Sutta (D 33.2.3.12/3:254). The Yamaka treats them in detail in its seventh chapter (Anusaya Yamaka). It first lists the seven latent tendencies (sattāanusaya), and then explains their arising (upatti-ṭṭhāna-vāra), as follows:

The seven latent tendencies are
(1) the latent tendency of sensual lust;
(2) the latent tendency of aversion;
(3) the latent tendency of conceit;
(4) the latent tendency of views;
(5) the latent tendency of doubt;
(6) the latent tendency of lust for existence;
(7) the latent tendency of ignorance.

1 Where does the latent tendency of sensual lust lie latent?

The latent tendency of sensual lust lies latent here in the two feelings [pleasant and neutral] of the sense-sphere.

2 Where does the latent tendency of aversion lie latent?

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1 See Unconscious Views = SD 31.9.
2 On how karma can be unconscious, see The unconscious mind = SD 17.8b.
3 On wise attention, see Unconscious Views = SD 31.9 (4.3) & Nimitta & Anuvyañjana = SD 19.14.
The latent tendency of aversion lies latent in painful (bodily and mental) feeling.

(3) Where does the latent tendency of conceit lie latent?
   The latent tendency of conceit lies latent here in the two feelings of the sense-sphere, and in those of the form sphere and the formless sphere.

(4) Where does the latent tendency of views lie latent?
   The latent tendency of views lies latent in all states related to identity (sakkāya).

(5) Where does the latent tendency of doubt lie latent?
   The latent tendency of doubt lies latent in all states related to identity (sakkāya).

(6) Where does the latent tendency of lust for existence lie latent?
   The latent tendency of lust for existence lies latent in the form sphere and the formless sphere.

(7) Where does the latent tendency of ignorance lie latent?
   The latent tendency of ignorance lies latent in all states related to identity (sakkāya).

(Yam 268; cf Nyanatiloka 1971: 104)

The Yamaka then explains how they are overcome, their penetration, etc., in detail. According to the Kathāvatthu (by Moggali, putta Tissa), several ancient Buddhist schools erroneously held that the latent tendencies were merely latent; hence, they are karmically neutral. This however contradicts the early Buddhist teachings.

1.2 Sets of Anusaya. Generally, the earlier doctrinal lists are, the shorter they are. If this is true, then one of the oldest terms relating to anusaya is probably the compound adhihīnībhīnivesañusaya, found in the Kaccāna, gottā Sutta (S 12.15) and the Channa Sutta (S 22.90). It is sometimes translated, following commentarial tradition (e.g. WA 2:33), as “the mental standpoints, adherences and latent tendencies.” However, I think a better translation would be “the latent tendencies of mental standpoint and of adherences,” or even “the latent tendency of adherence to mental standpoints.”

The Saṁyutta Commentary says that craving and views are called “(fixed) mental standpoint [mindset]” (cetaso adhihīna) because they are the foundation for the (unwholesome) mind, and “adherence and latent tendency” (abhīnivesañusaya) or, better, “the latent tendency of adherence (to views),” because they stay to the mind and lie latent there (SA 2:33).

Elsewhere, it is said that they are “(fixed) mental standpoints” (adhihīna) because they are the foundations for the unwholesome mind, and “adherence and latent tendencies” because they adhere to the mind and lie latent there.10 In short, they are probably refer to the original two latent tendencies: craving and views, which for greater clarity and effect in teaching, are gradually expanded.

Then there is a list of three latent tendencies, found, for example, in the Pahāna Sutta (S 36.3), thus:

(1) the latent tendency to lust (rāgānusaya);
(2) the latent tendency to aversion (paṭigānusaya); and
(3) the latent tendency to ignorance (avijjānusaya).

(S 36.3/4:204-206) = SD 31.1

This list of the latent tendency (anusaya) or psychologically unconscious (but more powerful) version of the three unwholesome roots (akusala, mūla) of greed, hate and delusion, which operate on a pre-con-
scious level.¹¹ When any of the precepts is breached, it is always motivated by one or more of these three roots.

The Mahā Māluṅkya,puttaSutta (M 64) gives a list of five latent tendencies, which are there called “the five lower fetters” (orambhāgiya saṁyojana). These five latent tendencies are

1. The latent tendency of self-identity (sakkāya,diṭṭhânusaya),
2. The latent tendency of doubt (vīcikcchânusaya),
3. The latent tendency of attachment to rituals and vows (sīla-bata,parāmāsânusaya),
4. The latent tendency of sense-desire (kāma,rāgânusaya),
5. The latent tendency of ill will (vyāpādânusaya).

(M 64.3/1:432 f) = SD 21.10 [1.3]

These latent tendencies are called “lower fetters” because they bind us to the sense-world. These five lower fetters form the first half of the ten fetters (dasa saṁyojanā), which are:¹²

1. self-identity view (sakkāya,diṭṭhi),¹³
2. persistent doubt (vīcikcchā),
3. attachment to rituals and vows (sīla-bata,parāmīsa),¹⁴
4. sensual lust (kāma,rāga),
5. repulsion (paṭigha),
6. greed for form existence (rāpa,rāga),
7. greed for formless existence (arūpa,rāga),
8. conceit (mīna),
9. restlessness (uddhacca),
10. ignorance (avijjā). (S 5:61; A 5:13; Vbh 377)

The higher fetters (uddhambhāgiya saṁyojana) are 6-10, and the hold us back in the form world or formless world, so that we are still stuck in samsara. Four of the higher fetters are found in the set of seven fetters below. Fetters 6-7 become the latent tendency of lust for existence. Only restlessness seems to be left out, but this is usually included in the latent tendency of doubt. The arhat has overcome all these ten fetters.

A set of seven latent tendencies is found in the Saṅgīti Sutta,¹⁵ the Cha,chakka Sutta,¹⁶ the Anussaya Sutta,¹⁷ the Paṭisambhid,ma, magga,¹⁸ the Vibhaṅga,¹⁹ and the Yamaka [1.1.3].²⁰ The Paṭisambhid-magga and the Vibhaṅga (in the Abhidhamma tradition) define the latent tendencies in practically the same way as the suttas.²¹

And what are the latent tendencies of beings?

1. the latent tendency of sensual lust (kāma,rāgânusaya); [2]
2. the latent tendency of aversion (paṭighânusaya); [3]
3. the latent tendency of conceit (mānânusaya); [4]

¹² On the 10 fetters & sainthood, see Kīṭā,giri S (M 70) = SD 11.1 (5.1).
¹³ See Antā S (S 22.103) = SD 14.1.
¹⁴ See Kukkura,vatika S (M 57/1:387-392) = SD 23.11.
¹⁵ D 33.2.3(12)/3:254, 282.
¹⁸ Pm §587/123.
¹⁹ Vbh §816/341, §949/383.
²⁰ Y am 268; cf Nyanatiloka 1971: 104.
²¹ See Madhupiṇḍika S (M 18.8/1:110) = SD 6.14 Intro (5).
(4) the latent tendency of views (diṭṭhânusaya); [5]
(5) the latent tendency of doubt (vicikicchā’nusaya); [6]
(6) the latent tendency of lust for existence (bhava,rāgânusaya); [7]
(7) the latent tendency of ignorance (avijjā’nusaya). [8]

That which in the world is pleasant and likable, there the tendency to sensual lust of beings lies latent.

That which in the world is unpleasant and unlikable, there the tendency to aversion of beings lies latent.

Thus in these two states, ignorance continuously occurs, and so too conceit, wrong view and doubt.

This is the latent tendency of beings. 22 (Pm §587/123; Vbh §816/341) 23

1.3 THE LATENCY OF ANUSAYA. William S Waldron, in his book, The Buddhist Unconscious, asks an interesting and pertinent question regarding the latent tendencies:

The persistence of the latent tendencies until far along the path of liberation, however, immediately raises a number of questions that will challenge later Buddhist analyses of mind. If they are so persistent that one continuously harbors such tendencies until reaching liberation—which is implicit in the foregoing and explicit to differing in succeeding schools—then why would they not affect all of one’s activities, making them all of them affective, karmic activities (and, in the process, making liberation impossible)? But if they do not, then how do they exist when they are not actively affecting one’s activities? Although such questions were not raised, and hence went unanswered, until Abhidharma analyses forced the issue, the outlines of the problem are evident enough in the early texts. (Waldron 2003:39)

Waldron goes on to say that although many of the early texts are ambiguous on these points, at least one such text is suggestive, that is, the Mahā Māluṅkya,putta Sutta (M 64), where the Buddha states that the five lower mental fetters (saṁyojana) 24 are latently present even in an infant:

(1) For, Māluṅkya,putta, even a young tender infant, lying on its back, does not have the notion of ‘self-identity’ (sakkāya); 25 for, how could the self-identity view arise for him? Yet, there lies the latent tendency of self-identity view in him.

(2) For, Māluṅkya,putta, even a young tender infant, lying on its back, does not have the notion of ‘dharma’ [‘thing’] (dhamma); for, how could doubt regarding dharmas [things] arise for him? Yet, there lies the latent tendency of doubt in him.

(3) For, Māluṅkya,putta, even a young tender infant, lying on its back, does not have the notion of ‘virtue’ (sīla); for, how could attachment to rituals and vows with regards to moral virtue arise for him? Yet, there lies the latent tendency of attachment to rituals and vows in him.

(4) For, Māluṅkya,putta, even a young tender infant, lying on its back, does not have the notion of ‘sense-desire’ (kāma); for, how could sense-desire in sense-pleasure arise for him? Yet, there lies the latent tendency of sense-desire in him.


23 See also D 33.2.3(12)/3:254; M 18.8/1:109 f; S 45.175/5:60; A 7.11-12/4:9.

24 On the 10 fetters, see (1.2).

25 Cf Samaṇa,maṇḍika (M 78.8/2:24), “body” (kāya) is used, and where Comy says that the baby does not know the difference between its own body and those of others (MA 3:267).
Anusaya, Latent tendencies

(5) For, Māluṅkya, putta, even a young tender infant, lying on its back, does not have the notion of ‘being’ (satta); for, how could ill will towards beings arise for him? Yet, there lies the latent tendency of ill will in him. (M 64.3(1:432 f) = SD 21.10)

From this passage, we can safely surmise that “fetter” (sanyojana) and “latent tendency” (anusaya) are synonymous. While the fetters are used in reference to the stages of sainthood, the latent tendencies stress on the latency and persistence of these defilements.

The Sutta’s commentary says that those outside the Teaching believed that a person is affected by the latent tendencies only when they are operating, but not otherwise (MA 3:144 f). Apparently, they believed that the infant was free from defilements.

1.4 Latent tendencies are unconscious processes.

1.4.1 Latent tendencies can function in themselves: We began this essay by saying that we are not always conscious [1.1]. When our conscious minds intend (ceteti) and plan (pakappeti), this feeds our karmic or existential consciousness,26 which means we will be reborn in due course. However, even when we neither intend nor plan, we are still reborn—this is on account of the momentum of our latent tendencies. The Cetanā Sutta 1 (S 12.38) clearly states this:

2. The conscious arising of suffering. (1) Bхikshus, what one intends,28 and what one plans,29 and one has latent tendency (what lies latent)30—this is a mental basis31 for the support (establishing) for consciousness.32

When there is a mental basis [condition], consciousness is established.33

26 "Existential consciousness" is a modern generic term for what is commonly known in the texts as “being-to-be-born” or gandharva (gandhabba) (M 1:266, 2:157; tatrūpagata, satto, “the being that has arrived there,” MA 2:310), and in Comys as “rebirth consciousness” (patisandhi, citta, DA 2:430; MA 4:174; SA 1:184, 2:31), and “life-continuum” (bhavaṅga, DA 1:194, 2:594; MA 1:262, 2:77, 229, 352, 366; SA 1:184, 224, 2:358, 3:4, 3:54, 59, 97, 3:191).

In contrast, there is “cognitive consciousness,” which is operative during life itself, ie, in sense-experiencing. See Nagara S (S 12.65) = SD 14.2 Intro (2) & Viññāṇa = SD 17.8a(6).

27 Yai ca kho bhikkhave ceteti, yai ca pakappeti, yai ca anuseti, ārammanam ete hoti viññāṇassa thitiyā. Ārammaṇe sati pāliṭṭhāti viññāṇassa hoti. According to Bodhi, here “saṅkhārāni are referred to elliptically by the expressions yai ceteti, ‘what one wills,’ and yai pakappeti, ‘what one plans’ (pakappeti is a rare term, apparently synonymous with ceteti). The expression yai anuseti, ‘what lies latent within,’ points to the anusaya, the latent tendencies, which, according to Bodhi, refer us to the latent tendency of ignorance (avijjāanusaya) and the latent tendency of lust or craving (rāgānusaya) [M 1:190 f, 1:303 etc.]” (1998:21, digital ed). See Intro (2.1) above.

28 “One intends” (ceteti) here includes all wholesome and unwholesome volition of the three planes. See Intro (2.1) above.

29 “One plans” (pakappeti), the mental fabrications of craving and views (tassā, diṭṭhi, kappā) in the 8 cittas (mind-moments) accompanied by greed. [SAṬP: The fabrications of views occur only in the 4 cittas associated with views.] See Intro (2.1) above.

30 “What lies latent” (anuseti), ie, one habitually does something whether out of unwholesome motivation or wholesome motivation, or even without intention. See SD 7.6a Intro (2.1).

31 Yai ca kho bhikkhave ceteti, yai ca pakappeti, yai ca anuseti, ārammanam ete hoti viññāṇassa thitiyā. Ārammaṇe sati pāliṭṭhāti viññāṇassa hoti. “This is a mental basis” (ārammanā eti hoti). These various states such as volition become a condition; for here the word ārammana is intended as condition (paccaya) [that is, here ārammana does not signify an object of consciousness, the usual meaning in the Abhidhamma].

32 “For the support for consciousness” (viññāṇassa rāgīya), that is, for the purpose of maintaining the karmic consciousness. When there is this condition, “there is a support for consciousness” (pāliṭṭhā viññāṇassa hoti), that is, for the establishing of that karmic consciousness. [SAṬP: It has a capacity to yield fruit in one’s mental continuum.]

33 Ārammaṇe sati pāliṭṭhāti viññāṇassa hoti, lit “when there is a mental basis, there is the establishing of consciousness.” Here, ārammaṇa has an early non-technical sense, meaning simply “condition,” and as Bodhi takes pains to state, “does not signify an object of consciousness, the usual meaning in Abhidhamma” (S:B 758 n112). For an expl of this “condition,” see Madhu,piyālīka S (M 18.16/1:111 f) = SD 6.14.

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34 When that consciousness is established and grows therein, there is further [continued] arising of rebirth. 35 When there is the further arising of rebirth, there further arise birth, decay-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain [displeasure], and despair.

Such is the arising of this whole mass of suffering.

3 The UNCONSCIOUS ARISING OF SUFFERING. (2) If, bhikshus, one does not intend, and one does not plan, but if one still has latent tendencies (anusaya)—this is a mental basis (ārammana) that supports consciousness.

When there is a mental basis, there is a support for consciousness.

When consciousness has a support and grows, there is further [continued] arising of rebirth.

When there is the further arising of rebirth, there further arise birth, decay-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain, and despair.

Such is the arising of this whole mass of suffering.

36 Punabbhavābhinnibbatti. Here punabbhava (lit “renewed existence”) is the Sutta term for “rebirth,” which in later literature is called pañsandhi (see BDict). See Mahā Vedalla S (M 43.17/1:294). It is possible to render this phrase, taking punabbhavābhinnibbatti as a dvandva, as “renewed existence and arising in the future” (BDict). Here I have taken it in a general sense of the continuance of existence within the present life and indefinitely into future ones. Sometimes abhinibbatti by itself means “rebirth” (A 6.61/3:399-402, 10.65/5:120 f).

37 Birth (jāti), omitted in PTS ed.

38 No ce bhikkhave cetati no ce pakappeti atha ce anuseti, ārammama ametaṁ hoti viññāassa ratiyā.

39 “But if one still has latent tendency” (atha ce anuseti); here “latent tendency” is countless collective n: the latent tendencies are included because they have not been abandoned here in the resultants of the three planes, in the limited functional states (the five-door advertting and mind-door advertting cittas), and in form. As long as the latent tendencies exist, they become a condition for the karmic consciousness; for there is no way to prevent its arising. See Intro (2) for more details.

40 Comy says that this section refers to the moment when there is occurrence of volition of the 3 planes, and no occurrence of mental fabrications of craving and views (SA 2:71). See Intro (3) above for detailed n.

41 See Dependent arising = SD 5.16. On formations, see Sankhāra= SD 17.6.

42 See Bodhi, In the Buddha’s Words, Boston, 2005: 451 n49.
The Anūtāra Bhikṣu Sutta 1 (S 22.35) gives a short but clear teaching on this topic. In response to a request by “a certain monk” asking the Buddha for a short teaching for his solitary retreat, the Buddha obliges with this teaching:

Bhikṣu, one is reckoned by whatever lies latent in one.  
One is not reckoned by what does not lie latent in one.

Yaṁ kho, bhikkhu, anuseti, tena saṅkhāṁ gacchati;  
yāṁ nānuseti, na tena saṅkhāṁ gacchāti ti.  
(S 22.35/3:35) = SD 31.4

The monk then exclaims that he fully understands it, and explains it in detail in terms of each of the five aggregates (form, feeling, perception, formations, and consciousness). The Buddha applauds him. He goes into retreat and in due course becomes an arhat. (S 22.35/3:35 f = SD 31.4)

The Sutta commentary explains that if we have a latent tendency towards form by way of sensual lust, etc, then we are described in terms of that latent tendency as being lustful, hated or deluded. But when that latent tendency is absent, one is not reckoned so. (SA 3:265).

Bodhi adds an interesting note in this connection:

Additionally, we might suppose that, one is reckoned not only by way of the defilements, but even more prominently by way of the aggregate with which one principally identifies. One who inclines to form is reckoned as a “physical” person, who inclines to feeling a “hedonist,” one who inclines to perception an “aesthete” (or fact-gatherer?), one who inclines to volition a “man of action,” one who inclines to consciousness a thinker, etc. (S:B 1053 n47)

1.5 Levels of Defilements. Although all defilements are, in a sense, anusayā, the seven mentioned here are the most prominent (Abhs:BRS 268). 43 The first three latent tendencies (of sensual lust, of aversion, and of conceit) are mentioned in the Sall’athena Sutta (S 36.6) 44 and the Āvata,vedalla Sutta (M 44), the latter of which says: “The latent tendency of sensual desire underlies pleasant feeling. The latent tendency of aversion underlies painful feeling. The latent tendency of ignorance underlies neutral feeling” (M 44.25/1:303).

The Majjhima Ṭīki on this passage says that these three defilements are called “latent tendencies” in the sense that they have not been destroyed in the life-continuum (bhava) to which they belong and because they are capable of arising when the conditions are right (MĀ:P:Be 2:286). The Visuddhimagga explains how this happens by distinguishing three levels of defilements, that is, as follows:

1. The transgression level (vitikamma), a gross level of defilements, where they instigate unwholesome bodily and verbal action.
2. The obsession level (pariyuruñña), an obsessive level of defilements, where they arise to obsess and enslave the mind. 45
3. The latent level (anusaya), a subtle level of defilements, where they remain as latent disposition in the life-continuum (bhava).

We had already mentioned the compound adhiḥhiṃsaviṃśisānusaya, 46 translated as “the latent tendencies of mental standpoints and adherences” [1.2]. They are “mental standpoints” (adhiḥhiṃsa) 47

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43 See also Abhs:BRS 172.
44 S 36.6/4:207-210 = SD 5.5.
45 This is referred to in Mahā Maluṇika S (M 64) in connection with the lower mental fetters (orāmabhāgīya saññiyojana): self-identity view (sakkāya-dītthi), doubt (vicikicchā), attachment to rituals and vows (sīla-bhatta-parāmīsa), sensual lust (kama-rāga), and ill will (paṭigha), “and he does not understand it as it really is the escape from the arisen (fetter), and when that (fetter) has become habitual and is not eliminated in him, it is a lower fetter” (M 64.5/1:434 f) [1.3]. On the later confusion btw anusaya and pariyuṭṭhāna, see Karunaratna 1965.
because they are the foundations for the unwholesome mind, and “adherence and latent tendencies” because they adhere to the mind and lie latent there (SA 2:259; NmA 2:310).

Evidently, this compound embodies the canonical roots for the commentarial conception of the three levels of defilement. The “mindset” or “mental standpoint” (adhiṭṭhāna) here refers to the motivation behind the gross level of transgressive defilement. “Adherence or habituation” (abhinivesa) refers to the motivation behind the habitual level of addictive or obsessive defilement. The “latent tendencies” (anusaya) lie dormant in the life-continuum (bhava-ārga), ready to rear their ugly heads and wreak havoc at the slightest instigation.⁴⁷

The gross level of transgressive defilement is prevented by the observance of moral precepts (sīla). The habitual level of obsessive defilement is surmounted through mental cultivation (samādhi). And the subtle level of latent defilement is overcome by insight wisdom (pañña) (Vism 1.13/5). These three levels of defilements are often referred to throughout the Commentaries.⁴⁸

2 The latent tendency of sensual lust

2.1 Why we lust. The very first latent tendency is that of sensual lust (kāma-rāgānusaya). This is natural because all that we have are our six senses—the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind—that are relentlessly seeking for sense-objects—forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touches and mind-objects. Every moment, the mind seeks to hold on to a mental object, as the Assutava Sutta (S 12.61) says, just as a monkey clings on to one branch after another, swinging from tree to tree.⁴⁹

We are ruled impulsively by our senses because of our body, made up of the four elements—earth, water, fire, and wind (in simple terms, solidity, liquidity, heat and air)—which are the very same elements that surround and support us. So it is natural that we keep sensing the manifestations of such elements within and without ourselves.⁵⁰

But we are not just body; more importantly, we have a mind or consciousness. It is the mind that actually makes sense of our sense-experiences. The untrained and unawakened mind, unsure of the true nature of the four elements and of itself (as consciousness), keeps chasing after every object that it sees as pleasant, rejecting what it sees as unpleasant, and ignoring what it is unfamiliar with.⁵³

Sensual lust (kāma-rāga) or sense-desire (kāma-rāgānusaya) is essentially craving (taṇhā; Skt tṛṣṇā), “thirst” at its most primal or most instinctive. In humans, this craving is enhanced and complicated by our language, which conjures up virtual realities in us. We tend to make more of our sense-experiences than they really are: basically, we fail to see the impermanence of such experiences. So we keep running after every external sense-object or sense-stimuli.

2.2 Self-lust and other-lust. We are unable to see a sense-object as it really is because of our ignorance. Craving (taṇhā) and ignorance (avijjā) are the conjoined twins that sustain and perpetuate our existence. While ignorance is a sort of blindness, an inability to see beyond the surface of things, craving is the frantic survivor, always running after its selfish ends. Ignorance is blind and craving is lame. So ignorance carries craving on his shoulders; craving tells ignorance where to go, and ignorance blindly obeys.

A key characteristic of sensual lust is that it is always running after the past, even when it is looking to the future. Our sense of what is lasting, pleasant, essential or good is defined by what we were familiar with. So we end up repeating ourselves all our lives, that is why sensual lust never gets enough of itself. At its worst, it is an existential narcissism: at its best, it is an external quest for self-gratification. None of these can fill the self-created inner lack. The snake that painfully bites its own tail seeks nothing else but to end its own pain, but it only keeps on biting.

⁴⁶ le adhiṭṭhāna + abhinivesa + anusaya: S 2:17, 3:10, 135, 161; A 5:3.
⁴⁸ See also Cīgānussati = SD 15.11(2) Levels of practice.
⁴⁹ S 12.61.6-8/2:94 f = SD 20.2
⁵⁰ On the 4 elements, see Rūpa (Form) = SD 17.2a.
⁵¹ Further see Vedānā = SD 17.3.
The latent tendency of sensual lust is intimately linked with the arising of pleasant feelings. This relation, however, is not a necessary one, since some pleasant feelings, such as the bliss of dhyana or meditative absorption, do not activate this latent tendency. It is the Buddha’s ability to distinguish between these two kinds of pleasures that decisively lead him to the middle way and awakening.

3 The latent tendency of aversion

3.1 Pleasure and pain are sides of the same coin. That we have sensual desire necessarily means that we will also have aversion for what does not gratify our desires. Hence, the latent tendency of aversion (patighânusaya) goes with that of sensual lust [2]. In the Cūḷa Vedalla Sutta (M 44), the nun Dhamma, dinnā explains to the layman Visākha that pleasure and pain are relative to one another:

Pleasant feeling, avuso Visākha, is pleasant when it persists, and painful when it changes.

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

Neutral feeling is pleasant when there is knowledge of it, and painful when there is no knowledge of it. (M 445:24/1:303) = SD 40a.9

After that, she adds:

Avuso Visākha, the latent tendency of lust lies latent in a pleasant feeling.

The latent tendency of aversion lies latent in a painful feeling.

The latent tendency of ignorance lies latent in a neutral feeling. (M 44.25/1:303) = SD 40a.9

In the list of five latent tendencies given in the Mahā Māluṅkya,putta Sutta (M 64), ill will (vyāpāda) is the last one. In this particular instance, ill will replaces the more usual aversion (patigha), found in the well known list of seven underlying tendencies [1.2].

The Mahā Māluṅkya,putta Sutta explains that even a tiny infant has an underlying tendency of aversion. This is so even though a newborn child does not yet have the perception of a “being,” making it impossible for aversion towards other beings to actually arise in the child [1.3]. Thus aversion is a natural characteristic of unawakened beings, whether we are physically or mentally mature.

3.2 Emotional reactivity. The Pāli term for aversion is patigha, which literally means “striking back.” It connotes an instinctively reactive behaviour. This behaviour is based on a dualistic state of affairs. As we have stated [3.2], sensual lust and aversion are the opposite sides of the same coin. What we instinctively like defines what we would dislike. Sensual lust here is a pulling factor, while aversion is a pushing factor.

An emotionally reactive person instinctively reacts to any stimulus, both internal and external stimuli. When such a person is hurt or he fear, he at once seeks to hurt others or seek an external refuge. When he perceives others as hurting him, he at once hits back. Such a reactive behaviour is not only predictable but also subhuman, as he has no choice, as it were, but to act in that way. He has resigned himself to the lizard brain, and almost never uses the cerebral cortex.

Proper meditation is vitally healing here. Breath meditation stills and clears the mind, so that it is free of its reactivity, at least for the duration of the meditation. When the meditation is properly sustained, it becomes a positive habit that displaces the reactive tendencies.

This practice should be supported by lovingkindness practice, which is basically an unconditional acceptance of self and of others. Lovingkindness begins with unconditional self-acceptance, which sees no need for external domination. As we begin to see other just as we see ourselves in a wholesome manner, there is no more need to be reactive, as we have transcended the self-other duality.

52 Cūḷa Vedalla S (M 44.28/1:303 f) = SD 40a.9.
53 See further Kāma-c, chanda = SD 32.2.
54 See further, Analayo 2009: 44-56.
4 The latent tendency of conceit

4.1 The threefold graspings. We may have weakened our sensual lust, and correspondingly, our aversion, too. And we might feel some sense of self-achievement here. Our feeling of self-importance, a sense of personal ability or excellence, even uniqueness, is usually too subtle or too overpowering to be noticed by us. We might gain a glimpse of insight into ourselves when someone points it out to us, but then again, the self’s veto power is overwhelming. This is because of the latent tendency of conceit (mānānusaya).

Conceit is self-blinding and overpowering because it is very rare that we can really look at, much less, look into ourselves. We are preoccupied with looking outwards, at others, measuring and comparing ourselves with others. So powerful is this tendency that the discourses, such as the Alagaddūpama Sutta (M.22) teaches that the five aggregates, each and every one of them, should be regarded as ‘This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.’

These three statements—“This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self”—are the respective opposites of the threefold graspings (ti, viññāna gāha), namely,

“This is mine” (etam manasa) (arises through craving, taṇhā, gāha) = “mine-making”;
“This I am” (eso’ham asmi) (arises through conceit, māna, gāha) = “conceit”; and
“This is my self” (eso me attā) (arises through wrong view, diṭṭhi, gāha) = “I-making.”

(Anātā, Lakkhaṇa Sutta, S.3:68 = SD 1.2)

These three wrong attitudes are also known as the “latent tendencies to ‘I’-making, ‘mine’-making and conceit” (ahāna, kāra, maman, kāra, mānānusaya), which is a more complex name for the latent tendency of conceit.

These threefold graspings are the main factors behind conception (maññana) (M.1) and mental proliferation (papāñca) (M.18). In short, such experiences are not merely “beliefs” but are direct reactions to reality.

The Khemaka Sutta (S.22.89) uses a parable to show the difficulty of detecting the latent tendency of conceit (mānānusaya):

23 A vūso, even though a noble disciple has abandoned the five lower fetters, yet in regards to the five aggregates of clinging, there still lingers in him a residual conceit ‘I am,’ a desire ‘I am,’ a latent tendency ‘I am’ that has not yet been uprooted.

The perception of impermanence. Some time later he dwells contemplating arising and passing away in the five aggregates of clinging:

such is form, such its arising, [131] such its passing away;
such are feelings, such their arising, such their passing away;
such is perception, such its arising, such its passing away;
such are formations, such their arising, such their passing away;

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[58] “Fetters,” sāviyayāna, of which there are 10, that imprison one to the cyclic world of suffering. The 10 fetters (dasa sāviyayāna) are: (1) Self-identity view (sakkāya, diṭṭhi) [see Antar (S.22.103) = SD 14.1], (2) persistent doubt (vīcchīna), (3) attachment to rituals and vows (sīla-bāha, paṃma-sa), (4) sensual lust (kāma-rāga), (5) repulsion (paṭigha), (6) greed for form existence (rāpa-rāga), (7) greed for formless existence (anrāpa-rāga), (8) conceit (māna), (9) restlessness (uddhacca), (10) ignorance (avijjā) (S.5:61; A.5:13; Vbh 377) [1.2]. In some places, no 5 (kāma-rāga) is replaced by ill ill (vāpāda). The first 5 are the lower fetters (orambhavīga), so called because the lower realms, i.e., the sense-worlds, and the rest, the higher fetters (uddhambhavīga), so called because they bind one to the higher realms, i.e., the form worlds and the formless worlds. On the sequence of the fetters broken by the saints, see Kīṭagiri S. (M.70) = SD 11.1 Intro (S.) & Anāpānasati S. M.118.8-12/3:80) = SD 7.13.
[59] “Residual,” anusahagato, which Comy glosses as sulkhumo, “delicate,” i.e. fine or subtle (SA 2:315). This passage is qu at Dhsa.244.
such is consciousness, such its arising, such its passing away.

24 As he dwells contemplating arising and passing away in the five aggregates of clinging, this residual conceit ‘I am,’ this desire ‘I am,’ this latent tendency ‘I am,’ that has not yet been uprooted become uprooted.

25 THE PARABLE OF THE CLOTH. Avuso, it is just like a piece of cloth, when it has become soiled and stained, its owners would hand it to a washerman. The washerman would scrub it evenly with cleaning salt, lye or cow-dung, and rinse it in clean water.

26 Even though that cloth would become pure and clean, it would still have a residual smell of the cleaning salt, lye or cow-dung that had not yet dissipated.

The washerman would then return it to the owners. The owners would then put it in a fragrant casket, and the residual smell of cleaning salt, lye or cow-dung that had not yet dissipated would dissipate.60

27 Yet, avuso, although a noble disciple has abandoned the five lower fetters, yet in regards to the five aggregates of clinging, there still lingers in him a residual conceit ‘I am,’ a desire ‘I am,’ a latent tendency ‘I am’ that has not yet been uprooted.

Some time later, he dwells contemplating arising and passing away in the five aggregates of clinging:

such is form, such its arising, such its passing away;

such are feelings, such their arising, such their passing away;

such is perception, such its arising, such its passing away;

such are formations, such their arising, such their passing away;

such is consciousness, such its arising, such its passing away.

As he dwells contemplating arising and passing away in the five aggregates of clinging, this residual conceit ‘I am,’ this desire ‘I am,’ this latent tendency ‘I am,’ that has not yet been uprooted would be uprooted.” (S 22.89.23-27/3:130 f) = SD 14.13

4.2 THE THREE COMPLEXES. Here we will briefly examine the second of the threefold graspings—that of “This I am” (eso’ham asmi)—which arises because of grasping through conceit (māna, gāha).

When we hold the view, “This I am,” we are clinging to the notion of duality, that is, there is an “I” and “other” beyond the mere conventional usage of the words. In colloquial terms, this is the “judgemental” mentality, or the “this is my personality” attitude, that is, we measure ourself against others following these three discriminations,61 along with their psychological cognates:

(1) “I am better than…” (seyo’ham asmi ti) superiority complex;

(2) “I am equal with [the same as]…” (sadiso’ham asmi ti) equality complex; and

(3) “I am inferior to…” (hīno’ham asmi ti) inferiority complex.

In the (Māna) Soṇa Sutta (S 22.49), the Buddha declares that recluses and brahmins who fail to see the impermanence, unsatisfactory and changing nature of the five aggregates, on the basis of form, feeling, perception, formations or consciousness compare themselves as being better than, or equal to, or inferior to one another.62

60 Comy: The worldling's mental process is like the soiled cloth. The 3 contemplations (of impermanence, of suffering and of not-self) are like the three cleansers (cleaning salt, lye and cow-dung). The non-returner's mental process is like the cloth that has been washed with the 3 cleansers. The defilements to be removed by the path of arahathood are like the residual smell of the cleansers. The knowledge of the path of arahathood is like the fragrant chest. The destruction of all defilements by the path is like the dissipation of the residual smell of the three cleansers from the cloth after it has been placed in the chest. (SA 2:317)

61 The 3 conceits are also called “the three discriminations” (tayo vidhā): see Samiddhi S (S 1.20/1:12) = SD 21.4. The 3 are listed at: D 33.1/23 (3:216); S 22.49/3:48 (+4), 35.108/4:88 (-5), 45.162/5:56, 46.41/5:98, A 4.185/2:176 f (+2); Tha 1079; Nm 1:80 (+4), 107, 194, 195, 196, 244, 251, 2:350, 413, 426 (+3), 443.

The latent tendencies, as unconscious mental roots of motivation, work in tandem with one another, in one way or another. The Taṅhā Māna Sutta (A 6.106), for example, lists the triad of cravings together with the triad of conceits, thus:

**The 3 cravings**
1. The craving for sense-pleasure \( (kāma, \text{taṅhā}) \),
2. The craving for existence \( (bhava, \text{taṅhā}) \), \(^{63}[7]\)
3. The craving for annihilation \( (vibhava, \text{taṅhā}) \), and

**The 3 conceits [complexes]**
1. Conceit \( (māna) \), \(^{64}\)
2. Inferiority conceit \( (omāna) \),
3. Superiority conceit \( (atimāna) \), \( (A 6.106/3:445) \)

and ends up by saying that the three cravings should be abandoned, and the three conceits should be penetrated. Accomplished in both, we bring an end to suffering (that is, attain arhathood).

The latent tendency of conceit also functions with those of the lust for existence \( (bhava, rāgānusaya) \) and of view \( (diṭṭhānusaya) \). The three are all connected to and interconnected by a sense of self-identity \( (sakkāya, diṭṭhi) \) \(^{66}\). Such a self-view can range from an innocuous sense of self-satisfaction to an insidious self-glorification.

The three discriminations or measuring of self with others are false and harmful because of the way they are done. When we feel that we are better than someone else, or as good as him, or inferior to him, what are our parameters? What are we comparing? The point is that whatever we truly have are our six senses and the six sense-objects, and our feelings and perceptions of them. But none of these are permanent. At best we are only comparing perceptions and appearances, and they all change at the time.

The ironic thing about conceit is that they are actually self-defeating. Although a conceited person is self-centred, he really has no sense of self. In fact, such a person is always dependent on others to define himself. He is often so busy in trying to keep ahead or abreast of others, and fearing to lag behind, that he almost never sees any wholesome quality in himself. So powerful is the latent tendency of conceit, that it is destroyed only in the arhat. \(^{65}\)

5. The latent tendency of views

5.1 Wrong view. We have already noted that latent tendencies often work with one another \(^{5.2}\). This is certainly the case with the latent tendency of views \( (diṭṭhānusaya) \), which connives with the latent tendencies of conceit and of the lust for existence. \(^{66}\) These three are all connected to and interconnected by a sense of self-identity \( (sakkāya, diṭṭhi) \) \(^{4.2}\).

In a sense, our mind is like a voyeur in a secret chamber with five sophisticated consoles for monitoring sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and touches around us. Since we are secretly locked up in our own room, we can only helplessly watch the console monitors, and can really do nothing about what we see there. We can only form ideas about what we see in these five console monitors.

As Paul Fuller suggests, “the corruption \( [āsava] \) of views is the attachment to knowledge” (2005: 79). The existential voyeur is driven to collect views and knowledge, because none of them really gratify him. This is because the sixth console—that monitoring of our own minds—is not working. So we have no idea what really is going on in ourselves (or outside). In fact, whatever we see in the five consoles are our

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\(^{63}\) By itself, ie as a latent tendency, \( bhava, \text{taṅhā } \) is called \( bhava, rāga \), which includes both the other two cravings. \(^{7}\)

\(^{64}\) Here, clearly, \( māna \) refers to “equality conceit,” but by itself can refer to any of the three.

\(^{65}\) See further, Me: The nature of conceit = SD 19.2a.

\(^{66}\) Gethin observes that “diṭṭhi can only be present in the mind when greed and attachment occur” (1997: 218). See also Paul Fuller 2005: 78-91.
own perceptions and notions of the five physical sense-experiences. We rarely, if ever, venture out into
the fresh and open air of reality out there. So we are trapped in our own virtual world of self-made views.
In a sense, all views are false views.\(^{67}\) Maybe that is why we feel so self-righteous when we patronize
a particular guru, or have our own website, or address a crowd. Our starving self feels well fed, gratified,
for the moment. But what are we really doing here? We are trying to extend our sense of self (or lack of
it) over society and cyber-space, so we think. That is, until a clear understanding dawns upon us through a
direct experience of true reality.

5.2 Self-identity view. The most insidious of views is self-view, or more exactly, self-identity
view (sakkāya, diṭṭhi). This is the view that tells us: I exist; listen to me; this is my body; I am a male or a
female, famous or important; this girl or guy is mine; I have cash, credit cards, a car, a condominium, and
country club membership. The next thing that self-identity view does is to make us talk about these
things, or hear others talk about these things, that define our selfhood. Then, to crown it all, perhaps, we
might look for a religion or at least a guru who endorses all our self-views; or, better, if we have enough
money and charisma, to start our own religion or temple. This explains why there are so many money-
generated and money-generating Buddhisms and religions today.

The Isidatta Sutta \(^{2} \text{ (S 41.3) states that when there is self-identity view, the ten “unanswered ques-
tions” (avyākata)\(^{68} \) and the 62 bases for wrong views of the Brahma, jāla Sutta (D 1)\(^{69} \) arise.\(^{70} \) Self-identity
view, in other words, is the source of worldly discourse.

Again we need to remind ourselves that whatever self-view that can arise, always has to do with one
of the five aggregates: form, feeling, perception, formations or consciousness. Or, more simply put, whatever
self-identity view we might have, has to do with our physical being or mental state: either way, it is
impermanent, and what is impermanent is unsatisfactory, and what is impermanent and unsatisfactory has
not abiding entity or self.\(^{71}\)

5.3 Right view is to be practised. Religion, like any human discourse, makes use of views, and
right view is especially valued in Buddhism. However, even right view, if taken dogmatically, that is, as a
tool of crowd control and economic growth, rather than of spiritual renunciation and personal growth,
becomes negative. For this reason, in the Alagaddūpama Sutta \(^{2} \text{ (M 22), the Buddha, using the parable of
the raft, reminds us to use the Dharma only as a tool, like a raft, to cross over the waters of suffering.\(^{72} \)

And having understood the parable of the raft, admonishes the Buddha, “you should abandon even the
dhammas, how much more that which is not dhammas!” (id).\(^{73} \)

Holding on to right view makes fanatics of us; letting go of right view liberates us. The purpose of
Buddha Dharma is not merely to give up wrong view and gain right view. Both are views all the same. In
meditation training, serious practitioners know that we can only truly focus after we have let go of both
wrong views and right views. Any kind of view entails words and ideas, which hinders us from a direct
experience of true reality.

Buddhist training may begin with right view, but we need to go beyond right view, and see our bodies
and minds wholesomely developed. Right view, in other words, “is practised, not adopted or believed

\(^{67}\) See Piya Tan, Simple Joys, 2009: 156-158 (11.4).
\(^{68}\) See The Unanswered Questions = SD 40a.10.
\(^{69}\) See Brahma, jāla S (D 1:1-46) = SD 25.
\(^{70}\) S 41.3/4:285-288 = SD 65.11.
\(^{71}\) For a study, see Paul Fuller 2005: 26-40.
\(^{72}\) M 22.13/1:134 f = SD 3.13 & M 38.14/1:260 f = SD 7.10.
\(^{73}\) Dhammā pi vo pahātabbā pag'eva adhammā. Comy takes dhammā (pl) here to mean “good states,” ie calm
and insight (samatha, vipassanā), citing Luarikīpama S (M 66.26-33/1:455) as an example of the teaching of the
abandonment of attachment to calm, and Maha Tappasikha S (M 38.14/1:260 f = SD 7.10) as one of the aban-
donment of attachment to insight. Bodhi, however, is of the view that “dhamma here signifies not good states them-
selves, but the teachings, the correct attitude to which was delineated just above in the simile of the snake.” (M:NB
1209 n255). This parable of the raft is sometimes misquoted—eg by J.B Horner (1950:1), Dharmisri (1986:183)—to
mean that the arhat, being “beyond good and evil” is above morality: see Keown 1992:92-102 for a detailed study.
See SD 3.13 Intro (3).
in.\textsuperscript{74} To truly have right view is to have no view, but it is not having an empty head: it is the conduct of a liberated saint who is both wise and compassionate, like the Buddha.

\section{The latent tendency of doubt}

\subsection{Bad doubts} When the latent tendency of doubt (vicikicchā'\textsuperscript{m}usaya) appear as a mental hindrance (saṁyojana), it can manifest in connection with internal or with external phenomena.\textsuperscript{75} The commentary to the Pariyāya Sutta (S 46.52) explains that the “internal” phenomena that are doubted refer to our own five aggregates (whether they are truly impermanent, etc), and the “external” phenomena refers to the “great doubt” (mahā vicikicchā) about eight points, that is, the Three Jewels, the training, the past, the present, the future,\textsuperscript{76} and dependent arising (SA 2:309, 3:170).

Understandably, a well known imagery for doubt is a fork on the road.\textsuperscript{77} This may represent these two kinds of doubts, but more commonly refers to the fact that we have to make important choices at some point in our life’s journey. The choice is difficult, or wrong, when we are spiritually ignorant; or worse, having made the wrong choice, we are convinced that it is the right one, which is delusion.

Ignorance (avijjā) here refers to a lack of spiritual understanding (or better, experience) of the four noble truths \[8.2\]. An academic or intellectual understanding of the truths, no matter how sophisticated, is still speculative: they may be “right view: but they are still views. \[8.2\]

The first noble truth—the statement on suffering—should be understood. Here, it refers to the dynamic nature of life itself, or more technically, the nature of the five aggregates. The second noble truth—the arising of suffering, that is, craving—is to be abandoned. The third noble truth—the ending of suffering, that is, nirvana—is to be realized. And the fourth noble truth—the path leading to the ending of suffering, that is, the noble eightfold path—is to be realized.\textsuperscript{78} In short, they are practical realities we have to deal with, if we wish to be liberated from suffering.

The latent tendency of doubt often works closely with the latent tendency of views. In other words, doubts often arise in us on account of our views. The Mahā Taṇhā,saṅkhaya Sutta (M 38), for example, records that the monk Sāti (driven by the view of self-identity) holds the wrong view that it is the same consciousness that continues after death.\textsuperscript{79}

Another case of pernicious doubt, recorded in the Alagaddûpama Sutta (M 22), relates how the misguided monk Ariṭṭha thinks that sexuality is not an obstacle to the spiritual life, despite having taken the monastic vows of celibacy.\textsuperscript{80} In the Kosambiya Sutta (M 48), the Buddha says that a mind that is troubled by doubts and speculations is said to be an “obsessed mind” (pariyuṭṭhita,citta).\textsuperscript{81}

The Brahma,jāla Sutta (D 1), in its analysis of the 62 bases for wrong view, describes the effects of doubts arising from ignorance, leading to prevarication, thus:

And, thirdly, based on what, invoking what, do the good recluses and brahmmins, when questioned about one point or other, resort on four grounds, to evasive statements and to endless hedging?

Here, bhikshus, a certain recluse or brahmin does not understand according to reality, “This is wholesome”; he does not know according to reality, “This is unwholesome.” He thinks thus:

“I do not know according to reality what is wholesome or what is unwholesome.

\textsuperscript{74} Paul Fuller 2005: 1 (italics added), also 55, 65, 125 f.
\textsuperscript{75} Pariyāya S, S 46.52/5:110 = SD 62.6.
\textsuperscript{76} On doubts about the past, present and future, see “the 3 darknesses” (tama) (D 33.1.10(29)/3:217); cf S 42.-11/4:327.
\textsuperscript{77} See Vammika S (M 23.4/1:144) = SD 28.13 & (Thina,middha) Tissa S (S 22.84/3:108) = SD 32.12.
\textsuperscript{78} See Dhamma,cakka-p,ppavattana S (S 56.11.9-12/5:422) = SD 1.1.
\textsuperscript{79} M 38/1:256-271 = SD 7.10.
\textsuperscript{80} M 22/1:130-142 = SD 3.13.
\textsuperscript{81} M 48.8/1:323 = SD 64.1.
Now, there are recluses and brahmins who are wise, subtle, experienced in debate, who go about shooting down, indeed, tearing asunder, the views of others with their wisdom. They might cross-examine me, ask me for reasons, invite me to address issues therein. But when cross-examined, asked for reasons, invited to address issues therein, I am unable to answer them. Should I be unable to answer, it would vex me. Such vexation would be an obstacle for me. As such, out of fear of being cross-examined, loathing cross-examination, he does not explain what is wholesome or what is unwholesome. And when questioned about one point or other, he resorts to evasive statements and to endless hedging, thus:

“I do not take it as this. I do not take it as that. I do not take it as otherwise. I do not take it to be not so. I do not take it to be not not so.”

This, bhikhus, is the third reason, based on which, invoking which, some recluses and brahmins, when questioned about one point or other, resort to evasive statements and to endless hedging.

6.2 GOOD DOUBTS. On various occasions, when his audience complain that they have uncertainties and doubts, the Buddha would answer that they rightfully doubt as “doubt has arisen in you over what is doubtful.” In other words, not all doubt are blameworthy.

The Mahāparinibbāna Sutta (D 16) records that even during his last moments, the Buddha resolves the doubts of the wanderer Subhadda so that he is the last candidate to go forth before the Buddha (D 2:149). Later, the Buddha encourages the assembly to voice any doubt they have, so that it could be clarified as long as he is still alive (D 2:155). Thus, although the arising of doubt is an obstruction to deeper concentration and insight, it is can occasion for investigation, leading to matters that should be investigated.

The commentary on the Āhāra Sutta (S 46.51) gives the following six things that conduce to the abandoning doubt, namely:

1. great learning;
2. counter-questioning (regarding the aggregates, elements, sense-bases, etc);
3. knowledge of [monastic or lay] Vinaya practice;
4. conviction [commitment to the spiritual life];
5. spiritual friendship;
6. suitable talk. (SA 3:168)

The Pārileyya Sutta (S 22.81) explains that doubt like other defilements is a formation (saṅkhāra), and as such should be regarded as impermanent, thus:

29 That uncertainty, doubt, indcision in regard to the true Dharma is a formation. That formation—what is its source, what is its origin, from what is it born and produced? When the uninstructed ordinary person is touched by a feeling born of contact connected with ignorance, craving arises: from there is born that formation.

30 Thus, monks, that formation is impermanent, conditioned, dependently arisen;

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82 Sānti hi kho panā sanavā, brāhmaṇā paṇḍitā nipuṇā kata, para-p, pavādā vāda, vedhi, rūpā vohhindantā maññe caranti pañña, gatena diṭṭhi, gatāni.
83 Ye maśa tattha samanuyajjeyyā samanugāheyyū replicated samanubhāseyyū.
84 Anuyogā, bhāyā anuyoga, parihegacchā.
85 Kaṁkhānte ca pana te thāne vicikicchā uppannā ti, S 42.13.42/4:350 = SD 35.4a; 44.9.12a/4:399 = SD 23.- 15: A 31.3a/1:189 = SD 35.4a.
86 S 46.51.19/5:106 = SD 7.15.
87 Comy: Even though doubt (vicikicchā) does not exist in the cittas [“minds”] associated with craving, the doubt-formation arises from it because craving has not been abandoned. For, doubt arises in one who has not abandoned craving. (SA 2:306)
that craving is impermanent, conditioned, dependently arisen;
that feeling is impermanent, conditioned, dependently arisen;
that contact is impermanent, conditioned, dependently arisen;
that ignorance is impermanent, conditioned, dependently arisen.

When one knows and sees thus, monks, there is the immediate destruction of the mental influxes.

(S 22.81/3:99) = SD 6.1

Even if we do not attain arhathood, doubt is can be fully destroyed in the streamwinner. The Sābba-āsava Sutta (M 2) gives seven methods of overcoming “all the influxes” (sabb'āsava), and the very first is that of overcoming them by “seeing” (dassana), that is, overcoming doubts. Various kinds of doubting are listed arising through unwise consideration (ayoniso manasikāra), and how they are overcome through wise attention (yoniso manasikāra). Practising wise attention in this way brings about seeing or direct vision of true reality, which leads to streamwinning.\(^{88}\)

7 The latent tendency of lust for existence

7.1 Ego-driven views. The latent tendency of lust for existence (bhava,rāgāmuscaya) is the seventh and last of the latent tendencies, which it lies very deep in the unconscious and has the most powerful hold upon us, second only to ignorance, the last of the latent tendencies. Psychologically, it is the ego-instinct, an abiding self-love that keeps us going. The function of the ego-instinct is self-construction (aham,kāra). This most commonly manifests itself as the lust for sense-pleasures (kāmā,taṇhā), the collecting of sense-experiences as pleasant. The lust for sense-pleasure or sensual craving arises in connection with any of the six senses, resulting in altogether six modes of craving on account of each sense-object. These are the six “bodies of craving” (taṇhā,kāya), comprising craving for forms (rūpa,taṇhā), for sounds (sadda,taṇhā), for smells (gandha,taṇhā), for tastes (rasa,taṇhā), for touches (phoṭṭhabba,taṇhā), and for mind-objects (dhamma,taṇhā).\(^{89}\)

The lust for sense-pleasures keeps up caught up and tied down with the self-centred sense-world. This reinforces the meaning or value of our existence (bhava), giving us the false or wishful notion of an abiding that enjoys all these pleasures. This is called the “existence view” (bhava,diṭṭhi), which is more commonly known as the “eternalist view” (sassata,diṭṭhi), that is, the belief in an unchanging entity (such as a soul) that exists independent of the five aggregates (the body-mind processes constituting life) and continues after death.

As long as we are enjoying some gratifying level of sense-pleasure or self-satisfaction, and life seems meaningful. However, this is not always the case: we may be denied such pleasures (such as through illness, relationship difficulties, or economic problems) or we simply do not seem to be able to attract pleasurable people, things and experiences. This may come to such a level, that we lost faith in ourselves, or even hate ourselves. Life seems meaningless, and we contemplate ending it all.

What is interesting here is that a person could end his life here thinking that the ensuing rebirth would be a better one. But the point is that this is unlikely because suicide victims rarely die happy; so the rebirth would not be a happy one.\(^{90}\)

On the other hand, the self-hating person could hold the view that this our only life: end it, and we end it all. This is the “annihilation view” (uccheda,diṭṭhi), that is, the wrong view that the self, whether it is identical with the five aggregates or not, is annihilated at death.\(^{91}\)

7.2 The three cravings. In theoretical discussions, the latent tendency of existence is broken up, as we have seen \(\{8.1\}\), into the three kinds of craving, that is, the cravings for sense-pleasure, for existence, and for annihilation \(\{5.2\}\), as these are really three different aspects of the lust for existence. Now, the Vibhāṅga defines the three cravings as follows (abridged):

\[^{88}\text{M 2.5-11/1:7-9 = SD 30.3. See further Analayo 2009: 70-76.}\]
\[^{89}\text{Eq Saṅgīti S (D 33.2.2(8)/3:244).}\]
\[^{90}\text{See Piya Tan, Simple Joys, 2009: 17-19 (2.4).}\]
\[^{91}\text{See Dhamma,cakka-pavattana S (S 56.11.6/5:421) = SD 1.1; also Saṅgīti S (D 33.1.10(16)/3:216).}\]
(1) the craving for existence is the lust of a mind attended the existence view (bhava,diṭṭhi);
(2) the craving for annihilation is the lust of a mind attended by the annihilation view (uccheda,-

[456x714]diṭṭhi); and
(3) the craving for sense-pleasure is the lust of a mind yoked to the sense-world (kāma,dhātu,pati-

[84x666]samyutta).

(Vbh §916/365)

Craving for existence can be for rebirth in a form-sphere or formless sphere, on account of, respect-

[49x629]fully, a craving for form (rūpa,taṇhā) and craving for the formless (arūpa,taṇhā), which the Saṅgīti-

[49x616]Sutta lists with craving for cessation (niruddha,taṇhā), “craving for cessation.” This sort of craving is

mostly found in meditators, or the inhabitants of the form or the formless worlds, that is, a desire to attain

higher levels of being, but neither understanding the real reason nor making the right effort.

The God-believers of our time who do not meditate generally have no idea of the form and the form-

less worlds. The kind of heaven they envision would be at best that of the sense-world (that is, if they

have accumulated the right karmas to be reborn there). Their view is that such a heavenly life is eternal,

and as such is overwhelmed by the wrong view of eternalism (sassata,diṭṭhi), which ironically would in

fact hinder them from being reborn there!

Craving for non-existence (vibhava,taṇhā) is a kind of death-wish or desire “to end it all,” that is, a

craving for annihilation in a materialist as well as a spiritual sense. This is the wrong view of annihilation-

ism (uccheda,diṭṭhi), which could range from the wish to destroy ourselves by suicide or euthanasia,

thinking that we would abandon the self (for a materialist), or by way of a religious suicide, hoping to

merge or be in companionship with a supreme reality (like Brahman or God).

The key factor behind all such modes of craving is a view of a self that abides behind them. From a

Buddhist perspective, “all these forms of craving are but manifestations of ignorance, since however

refined the experience they aim at may be, the truth of the matter is that there was never a self to be anni-

hilated in the first place.” (Analayo 2009: 22)

7.3 THE DESIRE FOR BECOMING.
The word bhava can also be translated as “becoming,” which helps

us understanding the latent tendency of existence better. In simple terms, this is an unbridled desire for

self-promotion or over-ambitiousness. On a deeper level, a person troubled

by psychological obsession,

[492x385]or even emotional transgression [1.5], triggered by the latent tendency of existence, would be restless

with over-assertiveness or over-ambitiousness. The Sabb'āsava Sutta (M 2) gives us a good idea of how,
on account of wrong attention, wrong views reinforce our latent tendency for existence by way of the

“sixteen doubts,” thus,

(1) ‘Was I in the past?’
(2) ‘Was I not in the past?’
(3) ‘What was I in the past?’
(4) ‘How was I in the past?’ 93
(5) ‘Having been what, did I become in the past? [What was I before I became that in the past?]’
(6) ‘Will I be in the future?’
(7) ‘Am I not in the future?’
(8) ‘What will I be in the future?’
(9) ‘How will I be in the future?’
(10) ‘Having been what, what will I become in the future? [What now would lead me to that
future state?]’

Or else, right now he inwardly has doubts about the present, thus:
(11) ‘Am I?’ 94

92 D 33.1.10(16)/3:216.
93 Comy: eg “What was I like, tall or short, fair or dark?” (MA 1:69).
94 Comy: He doubt his own aggregates, or his own existence (MA 1:69).
The Sabb’āsava Sutta goes on to say that to give up these sixteen doubt, we should avoid wrong attention (not to pay attention to unwholesome states), and should practise wise attention. This is best done in reflecting on the four noble truths. In doing so, we would be able to break the first three fetters, namely, those of the self-identity view, spiritual doubt, and attachment to rituals and vows, which makes us streamwinners.

A full understanding the four noble truths entails spiritual liberation by way of streamwinning because we have overcome wrong view so that our lives have changed to a higher spiritual level. However, this may not always be easy, when we only have an academic or intellectual understanding of the truths. For, spiritual ignorance remains, and we are still under the power of the latent tendency of ignorance.

8 The latent tendency of ignorance

8.1 WHAT IS AVIJJĀ? In what is traditionally regarded as the Buddha’s first discourse, the root-cause of suffering is stated to be “craving” (taṇhā). Moreover, in such discourses as the Mahānīdāna Sutta (D 15), the dependent arising formula is not only shorter, but also does not mention avijjā (Skt avidyā), which is here translated as “ignorance.” This has led scholars such as Bimal Krishna Matilal to examine the proper definition and usage of avijjā (1980). Matilal’s study is quite thorough but is meant for the academic. Here I will only cull what is useful for our understanding of the latent tendency of ignorance (avijjā’nusaya).

Matilal bases most of his arguments on Vasubandhu’s Abhidharma,kośa Bhāṣya where, as in early Buddhism, avidyā (Skt) is listed both as one of the principal latent tendencies (Skt anuśaya) or defilements (Skt kleśa) and as the last factor of dependent arising. A few interesting remarks by Matilal are worth noting.

Firstly, he says that although āvijjā/avidyā is “grammatical negative” (formed with a negative prefix), it does not mean negation or absence of lack of anything. “But in Buddhism a non-entity or non-existence cannot (causally) condition another thing” (1980: 156). Secondly, “following Patañjali, we will have to say that ‘avidyā’ refers to what can be mistaken as vidyā [Skt]” (id). That is, if we take vidyā (P pijā) to mean knowledge of true reality; then avijjā “will mean something that is liable to be mistaken as such” (id).

8.2 THE PERVERSIVE NATURE OF IGNORANCE. As an overview of the nature of the negative particle in Sanskrit, Pali, and related Indian languages, I would agree with Matilal. But it is so simple when we apply such general principles to a particular case, such as avijjā, as used by the early Buddhists. Let me...

96 M 2.11/1.9 = SD 30.3.
97 On the latent tendency of existence, see further Silva 1992: 119-152.
98 History of Indian Philosophy (tr VM Bedekar, Delhi) vol 1 (E Frawallner) 1973: 150-269.
100 Abhk 3 (21a) = Abhk:Pr 403; 3 (28a-b) = Abhk:Pr 419.
101 He quotes Vāsudeva Dikṣīṭa’s Bāla,manorama, comy on Bhaṭṭoji’x Siddhanta,kaumudī which gives these 6 different meanings of the negative particle: similarity, absence, otherness (difference), diminution, impropriety (or reproach), and opposition (contrariety), Vaiyākjaraṇa-Siddhāntakaumudī (ed G Sharma & P Sharma, Benares) pt 2 1941: 75. See also his The Navya-nyāya Doctrine of Negation. Cambridge, MA, 1968: 148.
start by referring to the well-known infant imagery in the Mahā Māluṅkya,putta Sutta (M 64), where the Buddha declares that even though a young helpless infant does not have the notions of “self-identity,” of “things,” of “virtue,” of “sense-desire,” and of “a being,” yet he still has the respective latent tendencies of self-identity view, of doubt, of attachment to rituals and vows, of sense-desire, and of ill will [1.3]. In this sense, it is meaningful to say that the infant is “ignorant” because he has no knowledge of these things.

Another important facet of avijjā is referred to in the Cūla Vedalla Sutta (M 44), where the nun Dhamma,dinnā tells the layman Visākha that the latent tendency of ignorance lies latent in a neutral feeling. The Pali word for “neutral” here is adukkham-asukha, “neither painful nor pleasant,” which is a double negation. Here again is a clear example of a lack of knowledge of an experience, that is, not experiencing pain and not experiencing pleasure, which is said to be neutral. The failure to regard such an experience as being impermanent, conduces reinforces the latent tendency of ignorance.

The early discourses often define ignorance (avijjā) contextually. The Sammā Diṭṭhi Sutta (M 9), for example, Sāriputta analyses ignorance using the four-truth template: a noble disciple who understands ignorance, the ending of ignorance, and the way leading to the end of ignorance, is said to have right view. Ignorance is then defined as not understanding the four truths. Then, he declares:

With the arising of the influxes, there is the arising of ignorance.
With the ending of the influxes, there is the ending of ignorance.

Avuso, when a noble disciple understands ignorance thus, understands the arising of ignorance thus, understands the ending of ignorance thus, and understands the way leading to the ending of ignorance thus, he utterly abandons the latent tendency of lust, he removes the latent tendency of aversion, he abolishes the latent tendency of the view and conceit ‘I am,’ and by abandoning ignorance and rousing true knowledge, he makes an end of suffering here and now. (M 9.65-67/1:54) = SD 11.14

As such, avijjā is commonly defined as the lack of understanding of the four noble truths, which is the most basic condition for samsaric existence. These definitions here, notes Bodhi, “show that the view of self is an aspect of clinging, which is itself conditioned by craving, while the latter is in turn conditioned by ignorance” (S:B 728 n8). For these reasons, too, Buddhaghosa says that ignorance should not be regarded as the “causeless root-cause of the world…it is not causeless,” quoting the Sammā Diṭṭhi Sutta passage (Vism 17.36-37/525).

The Nibbedhika (Pariyāya) Sutta (A 6.63), on the other hand, using the four-truth template, explains that the “source of arising” (nidāna,sambhava) of influxes is ignorance. Hence, with the ending of ignorance, there is the ending of the influxes. As such, we see an interdependent arising of the two, ignorance and the influxes. Or rather, they feed or support each another, as explained in the Avijjā Sutta (A 10.61) and the Taṇhā Sutta (A 10.62).
8.3 DIRECT KNOWLEDGE OF TRUE REALITY. In the context of early Buddhism, avijjā is perfectly meaningful being translated as "ignorance." In this case, we need to be aware of two aspects of ignorance:

1. lack of knowledge of true reality (e.g., as defined in the four noble truths); and
2. mistaking false knowledge for true knowledge, that is, a misunderstanding of the four noble truths. We have already discussed (1) [8.2]. The second kind of ignorance is better known as "delusion" (moha). This distinction is useful because ignorance, as a latent tendency, embodies both a sort of a blindness or not knowing the four truths, or a kind of a blurred or distorted vision of them. It is this second form of ignorance, as delusion, that is active on a pre-conscious level, which moves us to break any of the precepts or commit an unwholesome act.

It can be said that we do not so much of “get rid” of ignorance (since there is no knowledge there), as we should cultivate right view, which leads us to spiritual liberation. Paul Fuller makes an interesting proposal that the influx of views is "the attachment to knowledge," and that the influx of ignorance is "false knowledge itself" (200: 79) [6.1].

The first step to wisdom is to acknowledge our ignorance, but this is usually only a word level of learning. The next stage is to straighten what we have learned, and link the strands of wisdom together for a bigger and clearer picture: this is the mind level of learning, best down with a spiritual friend and with our own meditation. And finally there is the wholesome change in our actions, speech and mind. Right view, as such, is not a proposition; it is not about knowing something (such as Buddhism, etc), but a wholesome change that we experience and remains with us, making us better individuals, even saints.

9 Overcoming latent tendencies

The latent tendencies are the roots of suffering. They keep us in a loop of not-knowing, an emptiness that feeds on itself, so that we are merely self-inflated bubbles of self-importance, boiling over with busyness, signifying nothing. We turn to pleasure, wealth, power, philosophy, religion, science, or selfishness, but these are at best symptomatic respite. When we understand our latent tendencies, we begin to work at radically healing ourselves: we get to the roots of our personality.

The latent tendencies are overcome by the practitioner gradually and in part. The streamwinner (sotāpanna) and the once-returner (sākad‘āgāmi), for example, have overcome the latent tendencies (4) of view and (5) of doubt. The once-returner, however, has also weakened the three roots of greed, hate and delusion. But he still has latent tendencies 1, 2, 3, 6 and 7.

The non-returner (anāgāmi) has overcome lust, which means that he is also free from aversion and related defilements. The two latent tendencies go together. He still has only latent tendencies (3) of conceit, (6) of lust for existence, and (7) of ignorance, which are very subtle but powerful defilements that are overcome only by the arhat (arahata), that is, upon full awakening. (Pm 2:36-38)

One of the oldest list of latent tendencies is perhaps the list of two, found in the Kaccānagotta Sutta (S 12.15) and the Channa Sutta (S 22.90). The Buddha describes one with right view (in terms of latent tendencies) in the following way:

This world, Kaccāna, is mostly bound by mental fixation [attachment], clinging and adherence. 110

107 Meaning-to-meaning translation is not always possible when the host language does not have the same experience of the word or passage: if this were the case, computerized translations would be easier and better than human translation. The translator’s skill lies in how he conveys the intended meaning or purpose of the passage, and also its aesthetics or “feeling,” that is, how the passage is spoken or narrated. See eg the Humpty Dumpty rule: Satīni = SD 17.4 (2.3).

108 S 12.15/2:17 = SD 6.13. 109 S 22.90/3:135 = SD 56.5. 110 "bound…adherence," PTS upāy ‘upādānābhinivesa,vinibandha, but preferred reading is Be Ce upāy ‘upādānābhinivesa,vinibandha = upāy ‘attachment, fixation’ + upādāna (clinging) + abhinivesa (adherence) + vin-
But this person (with right view) does not engage in, cling to, incline towards, that fixation and clinging, that latent tendency of mindset and of adherence—he does not take a stand (that anything is) "my self."\(^{111}\)

He has neither uncertainty nor doubt that what arises is only suffering arising, what ceases is only suffering ceasing.\(^{112}\) His knowledge about this is independent of others.\(^{113}\)

(S 12.15.6/2:17 = S 22.90/3:135) = SD 16.13

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baddha (bound, shackled) [alt reading vinibandha, bondage]. Comy: Each of the three—fixation, clinging, adherence—arise by way of craving (taṇhā) and views (diṭṭhi), for it is through these that one fixates to, clings to, inclines to the phenomena of the three spheres as "I" and "mine." (SA 2:33). These three words appear to be syns or near-syns of latent tendency, but I have rendered them in order of their subtlety (fixation, clinging, adherence). See S:B 736 n31.

\(^{111}\) "But this...‘My self’," tācāya upāy upādānaṁ cetaso adhiḥṭhānāṁ abhinivesānusayaṁ na upeti na upādiyati nādiḥḥati "attā me" ti. Comy: Craving and views are called "mental standpoint" (cetaso adhiḥṭhāna) because they are the foundation for the (unwholesome) mind, and "the latent tendency of adherence," or perhaps "adherence and latent tendency" (abhinivesānusaya) because they stay to the mind and lie latent there (SA 2:33). This is a difficult sentence, and I am guided by the Sutta spirit than the letter. See S:B 736 n32. Cf Haliddakāni S 1 (S 22.3.9/3:10) = SD 10.12.

\(^{112}\) Comy: Suffering (dukkha) here refers to the 5 aggregates of clinging. What the noble disciple sees, when he reflects on his own existence, is not a self or a substantially existent person but only the arising and passing away of causal conditions (paccay'uppanna, nirodha) (of dependent arising). (SA 2:33). Cf Seta’s verses (S 548-551/1:134) & Vajirā’s verses (S 553-559/1:135).

\(^{113}\) "Independent of others," apara-p, paccayā. From stream-entry on, the noble disciple sees the truth of the Dharma by himself, and as such is not dependent on anyone else, not even the Buddha, for his insight into the Dharma. However, he may still approach the Buddha or an enlightened teacher for instructions and guidance in meditation until he attains liberation.

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