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From the Buddha's Teaching to the Abhidhamma

NOA RONKIN

From its inception, Buddhism reminds us that we are constituted by how we respond to, interpret, perceive, and conceptualize our sentient experience, and it founds itself on the observation that there is something fundamentally wrong and unsatisfactory with lived experience in the round of rebirth (*samsāra*). The Buddha's teaching, the Dhamma, is presented in the *Sutta-piṭaka* of the Pali Canon as a framework of training in conduct, mental cultivation and understanding that forms a path leading to the cessation of this existential dis-ease called *dukkha*, customarily translated as "suffering". Let us bear in mind, though, the point Richard Gombrich has made in the introduction to this volume with regard to the inaccuracy in qualifying the Buddha's teaching as sheer pragmatism. Paul Williams's claim quoted by Gombrich is crucial: Buddhist tradition sees the Dhamma as beneficial in the context of the spiritual path because it is true. From the very beginning, then, the Pali texts contain a basic ambiguity about the nature of the Dhamma by assimilating pragmatism and metaphysics. On the one hand, the texts repeatedly state that the Buddha taught only what is conducive to achieving the goal of the cessation of suffering, and the Dhamma is presented in a way that notably refrains from metaphysical underpinnings. In fact, there are strong suggestions that purely theoretical speculations, especially those regarding certain metaphysical concerns about the ultimate nature of the world and one's destiny, are both pointless and potentially misleading in the quest for the cessation of suffering.¹ On the other hand, the Buddha's teaching is said to be effective because the Dhamma is the truth about the underlying nature of reality, about the way things truly are. In this sense, one might say that at the heart of Buddhist thought lies a metaphysical Truth. In this chapter, we shall see that the early Buddhist evasiveness about metaphysics resulted in a host of related ambiguities regarding matters of ontology, psychology, and cosmology. These, in turn, gave rise to divergent interpretations of the foundational teachings by later thinkers who, as Gombrich notes above, could all claim to be faithful to what the Buddha taught.

1. These concerns are captured by the famous undetermined or unanswerable questions: see, for instance, *MI* 426ff; *A V* 193ff; *DI* 187ff; *SIV* 395.

Attempting to define the early Buddhist metaphysical stance may clarify somewhat the ambiguity at stake. While it is true that the Buddha suspends all views regarding certain metaphysical questions, he is not an anti-metaphysician: nothing in the texts suggests that metaphysical questions are completely meaningless, or that the Buddha denies the soundness of metaphysics *per se*. Instead, Buddhism teaches that to understand suffering, its rise, its cessation, and the path leading to its cessation is to see reality as it truly is: not a container of persons and “things”, but rather an assemblage of interlocking physical and mental processes that spring up and pass away subject to multifarious causes and conditions. Indeed, the main doctrinal teachings found in the *Suttas*, including the postulate of impermanence (*anicca*), the principle of dependent origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*), and the teaching of not-self (*anattā*), are all metaphysical views concerning how processes work rather than what exists. Thus while the Dhamma is silent on ontological matters, it is grounded in what may be identified as process metaphysics: a framework of thought that hinges on the ideas that sentient experience is dependently originated and that whatever is dependently originated is conditioned (*sankhata*), impermanent, subject to change, and lacking independent self-hood. Construing sentient experience as a dynamic flow of physical and mental occurrences and rejecting the notion of a metaphysical self as an enduring substratum underlying experience, the Buddha’s process metaphysics contrasts with substance metaphysics.

Western metaphysics has been dominated by a substance-attribute ontology, which has a marked bias in favor of “objects”. While Plato’s view of reason and his doctrine of the realm of Forms illustrate the predominance of the notion of substance, it is in Aristotle’s writings that substance metaphysics reached its highest perfection and has thereafter dominated much of traditional philosophy from the ancient Stoics, through the scholastics of the Middle Ages, and up to the distinguished authors of modern philosophy. The core idea underlying substance metaphysics is that the world contains unalterable entities that endure through time and in which properties inhere (leaving aside the question of whether those entities are material or immaterial and the exact nature of their inherent properties) (Taylor 1983: 81). This worldview is tied in with realism, according to which we are, by and large, capable of acquiring knowledge of the world and of comprehending it because our categories, beliefs, and statements fit with the features of a mind-independent reality.

Notwithstanding the dominance of substance metaphysics and its decisive ramifications for much of the Western history of ideas, from as early as the period of the pre-Socratics, there has been present another stream of thought

that goes against the current of much of Western metaphysics. This variant line of thought is designated by modern scholarship as “process metaphysics” or “process philosophy”. Process metaphysics has deliberately chosen to reverse the primacy of substance: it insists on seeing processes as basic in the order of being, or at least in the order of understanding. Underlying process metaphysics is the supposition that encountered phenomena are best represented and understood in terms of occurrences — processes and events — rather than in terms of “objects” or “things”, and with reference to modes of change and to the category of becoming rather than to fixed stabilities and to the category of being (Rescher: 1996). The guiding idea is that processes are basic and things derivative, for it takes some mental process to construct “things” from the indistinct mass of sense experience and because change is the pervasive and predominant feature of the real. The result is that *how* eventualities transpire is seen as no less significant than *what* sorts of things there are.²

As Gombrich has explained, the Buddha conveys his focus on how processes work by using the analogy of fire as a model of reality. In particular, by comparing consciousness to fire, the Buddha shows that the processes that make up lived experience — and in this sense, the processes that make up one’s “world” — are always mediated by the cognitive apparatus embodied in the operation of the five aggregates (*khandhas*). The Buddha’s teachings thus set up the stage for developing a framework for studying sentient experience. Yet the doctrinal concepts and theoretical statements that the Buddha’s soteriological message contains regarding the rise and cessation of suffering and about the way things are do not amount to a systematic theory. The first conscious attempt to ground the Buddha’s scattered teachings in a comprehensive philosophical system was introduced with the advance of the subsequent Abhidharma (Skt)/ Abhidhamma (Pali) tradition, a doctrinal movement in Buddhist thought that arose during the first centuries after the Buddha’s death (fourth century BCE onwards) as part of the spread of the Sangha across the Indian subcontinent. Having its own distinctive theoretical and practical interests, the Abhidhamma resulted in an independent branch of inquiry and literary genre documented in the third basket of the Pali Canon, the *Abhidhamma-piṭaka*.³ A notable difference between this body of literature and the *Sutta-piṭaka* is that the *Suttas* analyze the nature of one’s experiential world in terms of the five aggregates, the twelve

2. For a detailed explanation of the early Buddhist interest in the question of *how* experience and the self are, rather than in *what* they are, see Hamilton 2000, particularly chapter 5.
3. The two canonical Abhidhamma/ Abhidharma collections that survive are those of the Theravādins and the Sarvāstivādins (the latter only in Chinese translation.) This chapter refers only to the Theravādin Abhidhamma, hence the Pali spelling.

sense spheres, and the eighteen elements of perception (*khandha*, *āyatana*, *dhātu*), while the Abhidhamma treatises develop yet another mode of analysis that is understood as most comprehensive and exhaustive, namely, the analysis of experience in terms of *dhammas*. The overarching inquiry subsuming both the analysis of *dhammas* and their synthesis into a unified structure is referred to as the “*dhamma* theory”.

This chapter aims to provide a concise exposition of the transition from the Suttanta thought-world to the canonical and post-canonical Abhidhamma, with focus on the role of the *dhamma* theory in this transition. In particular, I will address two primary questions: first, How does the Buddha’s experientially oriented and pragmatic teaching become a systematic philosophy? And second, What kind of a philosophical system is it that founds itself upon the concept of *dhamma*? I shall attempt to show that the doctrinal transition from the Buddha’s thought to the Abhidhamma results from a shift in early Buddhist tradition’s construal of sentient experience that is best understood in terms of a change in epistemological orientation and metaphysical outlook.

Historical background

The early history of Buddhism in India and of the school now referred to as Theravāda is remarkably little known and the attempt to construct a consistent chronology of that history still engrosses the minds of contemporary scholars. A generally accepted tradition, however, has it that some time around the beginning of the third century BCE, the primitive Sangha divided into two parties or fraternities: the Sthaviras and the Mahāsāṅghikas, each of which thenceforth had its own ordination traditions. Throughout the subsequent two centuries or so, doctrinal disputes arose between these two parties, resulting in the formation of various schools of thought and teacher lineages (*Vin* 51–4; *Mhv* V 12–13. See Cousins 1991: 27–8; Frauwallner 1956: 5ff & 130ff; Lamotte 1988: 271ff).

The Sinhalese Theravāda tradition traces its lineage through the Vibhajjavādins, who belonged to the Sthaviras. The evidence arising from a range of texts and inscriptions combines to present a picture of several related Vibhajjavāda branches (Cousins 2001: 140–6). Roughly in the first century CE, together with the demise of the other Vibhajjavādin schools in most parts of India, the Sinhalese Vibhajjavādin tradition was able to spread out in Southern India and parts of South-East Asia. It is the worldview of this particular Vibhajjavādin school that is preserved in the *Abhidhamma-piṭaka* of the Pali Canon.

Abhidhamma literary style and genre

Scholarly opinion has generally been divided between two alternative interpretations of the term *abhidhamma*, both of which hinge upon the denotation of the prefix *abhi*. First, taking *abhi* in the sense of “with regard to”, *abhidhamma* is understood as a discipline whose subject matter is the *Dhamma*, the Buddha’s teaching. Second, using *abhi* in the sense of preponderance and distinction, *abhidhamma* has also been deemed a distinct, higher teaching: the essence of the Buddha’s teaching or that which goes beyond what is given in the Buddha’s discourses, in a sense somewhat reminiscent of the term “metaphysics” (e.g., *Dhs-a* 2–3; Horner 1941; von Hinüber 1994). Buddhist tradition itself differentiates between the Sutta and Abhidhamma methods of instructing the teaching by contrasting the Suttanta “way of putting things” in partial, conventional terms that require further clarification, vs. the Abhidhamma exposition and catechism that expound the teaching fully, in non-figurative, “ultimate” terms (*A* IV, 449–56; *Vibh* 100–1; *Dhs-a* 154).

Abhidhamma literature consists of the canonical collection that includes seven books, post-canonical commentaries on these books, and a variety of manuals that introduce and expound the canonical materials. The canonical treatises manifest two features that accord with two literary characteristics of the genre. First, they attempt to analyze meticulously the significant points of the Dhamma. This is shown by the arrangement of major parts of the material around detailed lists or, more literally, matrices (*mātikā*) of doctrinal topics.⁴ Second, the texts evince the process of institutionalization undergone by Buddhist thought and its growing bent for discursive hermeneutics through catechetical exposition. This is evidenced by the catechetical style of the texts (e.g., *Kathāvatthu*, *Paṭisambhidāmagga*, and the *Vibhaṅga*, among others) and the argumentative ways in which they address various points of dispute that arise out of the abovementioned analytical project. The Abhidhamma treatises thus became a medium by which the Theravādins developed their position concerning the Dhamma through stimulating monastic debates with both their Buddhist rivals and Brahmanical opponents.

It is most likely that within the earliest Sangha, there arose two approaches to discussing the Dhamma: the first intended to summarize and analyze the

4. In fact, such textual structuring dates to the beginning of Buddhist literature: it is an oral textual tradition and was built up around mnemonic lists. The *Nikāyas* thus contain numerous *mātikas* such as the four noble truths, the five aggregates, the six sense faculties, the noble eightfold path, the twelvefold chain of dependent origination, and so forth.

significant points of the teaching, the second to elaborate on and interpret the doctrines taught by means of monastic disputations (see Cousins 1983: 10; Gethin 1992b: 165).

The changing meaning of dhammas

In the *Nikāyas*, both the singular and plural forms *dhamma/dhammas* interchangeably refer to the fundamental principles the Buddha taught, similarly to “teaching” and “teachings” in English (*S* II 16 & 18; *MI* 133). Within the specific context of meditative contemplation, however, the plural *dhammas* signify both elements of the normative system prescribed by the Buddha’s teachings and the objects that arise in a practitioner’s consciousness while absorbed in meditative attainment (*MI* 55 & *D* II 290; Collins 1982: 115). In particular, the plural form *dhammas* came to denote mental objects of the sixth sense faculty, namely, *manas* (broadly translated as “mind”), alongside the objects of the five ordinary physical senses (e.g., *M* III 62; *S* I 113–16, II 140ff, IV 114 & 163ff; *A* I 11). As such, *dhammas* are not merely mental objects such as ideas, concepts, or memories, but rather a pluralistic representation of encountered phenomena: all knowable sensory phenomena of whatever nature as we experience them through the six senses — and this is no other than the *saṃsāric* world in its entirety (Carter 1978: 2 & 62; Hamilton 1996: 28–9).

The canonical Abhidhamma treatises, especially the *Dhammasaṅgaṇi* and the *Vibhaṅga*, draw subtle distinctions within the scope of the mental and marginalize the differences between a variety of mental capacities. They especially emphasize *manoviññāṇa* (literally “mind-consciousness”), the sixth cognitive modality based on the faculty of *manas*, or rather mental cognitive awareness, which is deemed the central cognitive operation in the process of sensory perception.⁵ *Manoviññāṇa* is the distinctive consciousness that is the cognitive basis of sense perception issuing from the contact between the sixth, mental sense faculty (referred to as “mind element,” *manodhātu*) and its respective *dhamma* objects (*Dhs* 132, 178, 229; *Vibh* 10, 14–15, 54, 60–62, 71). It is not an act of

5. The compound *manoviññāṇa* specifies *viññāṇa* while functioning as the sixth modality of cognitive awareness, since it is a mental awareness that arises in conjunction with its appropriate mental objects. *Viññāṇa* as cognitive awareness occurs in six modes: visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, tactile and mental cognitive awareness, based on the concomitance of their respective sense faculties (the five physical sense organs plus *manas*) and their appropriate sense objects. A specific form of cognitive awareness arises when an appropriate sensory object enters the field of its respective sense faculty (*indriya*), impinging on this unimpaired sense faculty, and there is sufficient attention on the part of the mind (e.g., *D* III 243; *MI* 111–12 & 190; *S* II 72–5, IV 32–4 & 66–9).

cognition in the sense of an agent that acts upon its objects by cognizing them, but rather a discerning awareness of distinctions between the stimuli impinging upon the fields of the sense faculties that issues when the requisite conditions come together. *Dhammas* as the objects of mental cognitive awareness may now be rendered as apperceptions: rapid consciousness-types (*citta*) that arise and cease in sequential streams, each having its own object, and that interact with the five sensory modalities of cognitive awareness as they arise in dependence on their corresponding material phenomena. The canonical Abhidhamma portrays these *dhammic* apperceptions as diverse capacities of psychophysical occurrences by means of which the mind unites and assimilates a particular perception, especially one newly presented, to a larger set or mass of ideas already possessed, thus comprehending and conceptualizing it (Gethin 1992A: 149-50, 1998: 209-10 & 2004; Ronkin 2005: 35-42; Waldron 2003: 28-33 & 50-2).

The dhamma categorization: a theory of mind

Within the Abhidhamma canonical framework, *dhammas* are reckoned psycho-physical occurrences as presented in consciousness. The Abhidhamma turns this notion of the plurality of *dhammas* into the basis of an intricate theory of consciousness. The *dhammas* fall into various categories, the number of which is more or less finite: Pali Abhidhamma counts eighty-two categories. The term *dhamma* signifies each category that represents a possible type of occurrence as well as any particular categorial token. Thus, according to the Theravādin typology, there are eighty-two possible types of occurrence in the encountered world, not eighty-two occurrences. Eighty-one categories are conditioned, meaning that the many and various *dhamma* instances they embrace constitute conditioned cyclic experience in the round of rebirth from the lowest realms of hell to the highest heavens of the gods. The eighty-second *dhamma* category is unconditioned and has one single member, namely, nirvana.

The eighty-one conditioned *dhammas* fall into three broad categories: the bare phenomenon of consciousness (*citta*), which encompasses a single *dhamma* type and of which the essential characteristic is the cognizing of an object; associated mentality (*cetasika*), which encompasses fifty-two *dhammas*; and materiality or physical phenomena (*rūpa*), which include twenty-eight *dhammas* that make up all physical occurrences (*Abhidh-av* 1). The Abhidhamma analyzes in great detail each of these categories to the extent that the notion of the plurality of *dhammas* becomes the basis of an intricate theory of consciousness, or rather,

as I will argue, a metaphysics of mind. Germane to this chapter is the analysis of *citta*, on which much of Abhidhamma doctrinal thought is built.

The paradigm for the operation of *citta* is *citta* as experienced in the process of sensory perception. *Citta* can never be experienced as bare consciousness in its own origination moment, for consciousness is always intentional, directed to some particular object that is cognized by means of certain mental factors. *Citta*, therefore, always occurs associated with its appropriate *cetasikas* or mental factors that perform diverse functions and that emerge and cease together with it, having the same object (either sensuous or mental) and grounded in the same sense faculty. Any given consciousness moment—also signified by the very term *citta*—is thus a unique assemblage of *citta* and its associated mental factors such as feeling, conceptualization, volition, or attention, to name several of those required in any thought process. The classic Abhidhamma scheme—as gleaned from the first book of the *Abhidhammapiṭaka*, the *Dhammasaṅgani*, and as organized by the commentarial tradition—describes eighty-nine basic types of consciousness moments, i.e., assemblages of *citta* and *cetasika* (*Dhs* Book I; *Vism* XIV 81–110; *Abhidh-av* 1–15; *Abhidh-s* 1–5). It begins with the sense-sphere (*kāmāvacara*), which includes unskillful consciousnesses at the bottom, followed by consciousnesses that concern the mechanics of bare awareness of the objects of the five senses, and then by skillful consciousnesses; next come the various form-sphere (*rūpāvacara*) and formless-sphere (*arūpāvacara*) consciousnesses that constitute meditation attainments (*jhānas*); finally, there are world-transcending (*lokuttara*) consciousnesses that constitute the mind at the moment of awakening itself: these have nirvana as their object. In addition, within these four broad categories, various other classifications operate. For instance, some *dhammas* are wholesome or skillful, others unwholesome; some are resultant, others are not; some are motivated, others are without motivation.

The basic structure of this hierarchy of consciousness parallels quite explicitly the basic structure of the cosmos: beings exist in the sense world (*kāma-dhātu*), the form world (*rūpa-dhātu*), or the formless world (*arūpa-dhātu*), in which they are continually reborn in accordance with their actions and experience the appropriate types of consciousness. As Rupert Gethin opines, the shift from the psychological hierarchy of consciousness to the cosmological hierarchy of beings is essentially a shift in time scales, both of which are subject to the principle of dependent origination (1997: 194–5). From one perspective, the mind might range throughout the possible levels of consciousness in moments, while from another perspective, beings progress from life to life over years. Gethin further suggests that in assimilating psychology and cosmology, the

Abhidhamma conforms to a basic ambiguity, which lies at the heart of Indian Buddhism, about the objective outer world and the subjective inner world. This ambiguity can be interpreted as a loosely idealist tendency to locate reality in the mind and its processes rather than in something “out there” that exists ontologically other than the mind (id: 211). Sidestepping the question of the ontological status of the external world and the world of matter, experience in *samsāra* is constructed mentally insofar as it is the result of past karma. In technical Abhidhamma terms based on its analysis of consciousness, “our basic experience of the physical world is encompassed by a limited number of classes of sense-sphere consciousness that are the results of twelve unskillful and eight skillful classes of sense-sphere consciousnesses: what we thought in the past has created the world we live in and experience in the present; what we think in the present will create the world we shall live in in the future” (id: 211-12). Ultimately, the particular world each of us experiences is something that we individually and collectively have created by our thoughts.

Rather than a closed inventory of all existing *dharmas* “out there” in their totality, the canonical *dhamma* typology yields a manual, as it were, of whatever occurrences may possibly present themselves in consciousness. Each such occurrence represents an interlocking complex of phenomena made up of the appropriate type of *citta*, a number of necessary *cetasikas* and various kinds of material phenomena. The goal here is to map out the constituents and workings of the mind in an attempt to account for the basic types of *dhamma* that make up ordinary consciousness as opposed to the awakened mind of Buddhas and *arahants*. Such a theory of mind—and of the enlightened mind in particular—required the Abhidhamma theoreticians to set out criteria for identifying, distinguishing, and determining what any given *dhamma* that may possibly occur in one’s consciousness is. It is this metaphysical undertaking that distinguishes the *dhamma* theory from the Buddha’s thought as presented in the *Suttas*.

The *dhamma* theory was supplemented by related doctrines that shaped the development of the Abhidhamma systematic thought. In what follows, I provide a concise overview of four major Abhidhamma doctrines: 1) the theory of momentariness; 2) the theory of the consciousness process; 3) the doctrine of own-nature; 4) the theory of causation.

The Abhidhamma theory of momentariness

The theory of momentariness (*khaṇa-vāda*) probably originated in conjunction with the teaching of impermanence and the three characteristics of conditioned

phenomena (*saṅkhārā/ saṅkhatadhammā*), i.e., impermanence, suffering, and not-self (*anicca, dukkha, anattā*). The principle of impermanence is part of the basic position of the Buddha's teaching that all empirical phenomena—physical and mental alike—are constantly subject to conditioned construction and are interconnected, being dependently originated (e.g., A I 286; S III 24–5, 96–9; M I 230, 336, 500; D II 157; Dh 277). The Suttanta elaboration on these ideas results in the notion that conditioned phenomena are of the nature of origination, cessation, and “change of what endures” (A I 152).

The *Abhidhamma-piṭaka* takes the analysis of the term “moment” (*khāṇa*) to the next level: here “moment” denotes a very brief stretch of time, the dimension of which is determined by its context, and is said to be divided into origination and cessation submoments (in a manner quite different from the atomistic Sarvāstivādin view, according to which this term denotes the smallest, indivisible unit of time) (Kim: 1999: 60-1). The Pali commentaries later present a full-fledged scheme wherein each moment is subdivided into three different instants of origination (*uppādakkhāṇa*), endurance (*thitikkhāṇa*) and cessation (*bhaṅgakkhāṇa*) (*Spk* II 266; *Mp* II 252). These are three phases of a single momentary phenomenon defined as one single *dhamma* or consciousness-moment. A *dhamma* occurs in the first sub-moment, endures in the second, and ceases in the third. The commentarial tradition thus analyzes phenomena temporally by dissecting them into a succession of discrete, momentary events that fall away as soon as they have originated in consciousness. As one event is exhausted, it conditions a new event of its kind that proceeds immediately afterwards.

The theory of momentariness spawned a host of problems for the Buddhist schools, particularly with regard to the status of the endurance moment. One might argue that the conceptual shift from “impermanence” to “endurance” is a result of scholastic literalism and testifies to the Abhidhamma tendency towards reification and hypostatization of the *dhammas*, following which ontology began to creep into Buddhist thought (Gombrich 1996: 36-7, 96-7, 106-7). Nevertheless, the object of the doctrine of momentariness is not so much existence in time, nor the passage of time per se, but rather, in epistemological terms and a somewhat Bergsonian sense, the construction of temporal experience. Instead of a transcendental matrix of order imposed on natural events from without, time is seen as an inherent feature of the operation of *dhammas*. The doctrine of momentariness analyzes *dhammas* as they transpire through time: as psycho-physical events that arise and cease in consciousness and, by the dynamics of their rise and fall, construct time. The sequence of the three times is therefore

secondary, generated in and by the process of conditioned and conditioning *dhammas*.

As is the case with the shift between the psychological hierarchy of consciousness and the cosmological hierarchy of beings that organize the *dhamma* typology, the conceptual shift from the principle of impermanence to the theory of momentariness is a shift in time scales. While the *Suttas* interpret the three times as referring to past, present and future lives, the Abhidhamma sees them as phases that any conditioned *dhamma* undergoes each and every moment. Impermanence marks *dhammas* over a period of time, but is also encapsulated in every single consciousness-moment (*Vibh-a* 7–8; Sv 991; *Vism* XIV 191; Collins 1992: 227).

The theory of the consciousness-process

The temporal analysis of phenomena derived from the commentarial tradition's theory of momentariness reveals an uninterrupted, flowing continuum of causally connected psychophysical events. These momentary events succeed each other so rapidly that we conceive of the phenomena they constitute as temporally extended. At stake here are these events as they appear in consciousness, and hence it is no coincidence that the commentarial tradition assimilated this analysis of phenomena-in-time-as-constituted-by-consciousness to a highly complex description of the consciousness process (*citta-vīthi*).

The theory of the consciousness process is set out in the Abhidhamma commentaries and manuals—mainly in the works of Buddhaghosa, Buddhadatta (5th century), and Anuruddha (10th or 11th century)—although it is based on the description already found in the first and seventh books of the *Abhidhamma-piṭaka*, the *Dhammasaṅgaṇi* and the *Paṭṭhāna* respectively (Cousins 1981; *Vism* XIV 111–24, XVII 126–45; *Dhs-a* 82–106 & 267–87; *Vibh-a* 155–60; *Abhidh-s* 17–21). This scheme is not separate from the *dhamma* analysis as outlined above. Rather, it analyzes mental cognitive awareness as resulting from particular functions in the consciousness process period. These functions are performed by certain consciousness types, *cittas* (that is, *dhammas*, of the total number of which 45 are relevant when restricting the account to the ordinary person). The point is that according to this analysis, the specific functions in the consciousness flow occur at particular instants of that continuum—hence the close connection between the theory of the consciousness process and the theory of momentariness. The result is a fairly static account of mental and material phenomena as they arise in consciousness in particular moments. The elaborate theory of

the consciousness process accounts for their occurrence over a series of such moments.

The normal flow of consciousness involves the mind picking up and putting down successive objects by means of successive sets of associated mental factors. Restricting the complex account of the consciousness process to ordinary beings, two types of process are described: five sense-door processes (*pañcadvāra*) and mind-door processes (*manodvāra*). These may occur in succession, or mind-door processes may occur independently. Five-door processes account for sensory perception as information is directly received from the senses. Mind-door processes internalize the information received through the senses, but occur without direct perception of one's sensory environment. If there is no mind activity, as is the case in deep, dreamless sleep, the mind is in a state of rest or in its inactive mode (*bhavaṅga*). Throughout one's life, the same type of mentality will perform this function of the inactive mind. It can be understood as the natural mode to which the mind reverts and as what defines precisely who one is. The mind switches from its inactive mode to a simple mind-door process when a concept or memory occurs and no attention is directed to the senses. The simplest mind-door process is a succession of the following functions:

- Adverting to the object of thought: the duration of this function is one moment;
- Impulsion: occurs for up to seven moments and performs the function of the mind's responding actively to the object with wholesome or unwholesome karma;
- Retaining: holding on to the object of the consciousness process for one or two moments.

The mind switches from its inactive mode to the sense-door process when an object occurs at one of the five sense doors. This process of sensory perception involves a greater number of functions:

- Disturbed inactive mind: a function that arises due to the stimulus of a sense object. It lasts for two moments during which sensory contact takes place, i.e., a physical impact of the sense object on the physical matter of the appropriate sense field;
- Adverting: lasts one moment, during which the mind turns towards the object at the appropriate sense door;
- Perceiving: lasts one moment and is the sheer perception of the sense object, with minimal interpretation;

- Receiving: lasts one moment and performs the intermediary role of enabling transit to and from the sense consciousness;

- Investigating: lasts one moment and performs the role of establishing the nature of the sense object and of determining the mind's response to that object that has just been identified;

- Impulsion: same as in the mind-door process;

- Retaining: same as in the mind-door process. For instance, visual perception involves not only seeing itself, but also a succession of moments of fixing of the visual object in the mind, recognition of its general features, and identification of its nature. In both mind- and door-processes, when the retaining function ceases, the mind reenters its inactive mode (Cousins 1981; Gethin 1994: 17-22).

Most of the functions that make up the mind- and door-processes are performed by types of resultant consciousness types, i.e., the result of past actively wholesome or unwholesome consciousness. As Gethin notes (1998: 216), this means that the experience of the sense data presented to the mind is determined by one's previous actions — it is the result of one's previous karma and is beyond of one's immediate control. Whenever one remembers or conceptualizes, sees, hears, smells, tastes, or touch something that is desirable or pleasing, one experiences a result of previous wholesome consciousness. And *vice versa* with objects that are undesirable or unpleasing and previous unwholesome consciousness. Only in the final stage of the consciousness process, when the mind has chosen to respond actively to its object in some way, actively present unwholesome or wholesome consciousness operates and constitutes karma that will bear future results. The Abhidhamma thus “provides an exact small-scale analysis of the process of dependent arising” (ibid).

The point I wish to stress here is that the highly technical theory of the consciousness process embodies the Abhidhamma pragmatic concern with psychology and soteriology. The reason is that the systematic account of the consciousness process is not meant to specify what exists *per se*, but what goes on in one's consciousness at each and every moment. The higher one progresses along the Buddhist path, the more complex the states of consciousness become, involving more mental factors. Still more significant are the qualitative differences that characterize one's mind: for instance, consciousness types that arise while experiencing higher meditation attainments become increasingly refined and may never involve unskillful tendencies or defilements that might potentially occur in ordinary (even wholesome) consciousness. Gethin expresses the concern of the Abhidhamma as follows: “If consciousness is understood to

consist of a temporal series of consciousness moments each having an individual object, then when an ordinary being is experiencing wholesome consciousness, what at that moment distinguishes him or her from an *arahant*?" (1994: 30). The attempt to account for this question underlies the Abhidhamma's signature doctrine of own-nature.

The doctrine of own-nature

Throughout the Abhidhamma's formative period, Buddhist thought underwent a gradual process of institutionalization, schematization and conceptual assimilation, which was accompanied by an increasing interest in establishing the nature of *dhammas*. Crucial to this development is the concept of own-nature (*sabhāva*), which plays a major role in the systematization of Abhidhamma thought, is closely related to the consolidation of the *dhamma* theory, and is regarded as that which gave an impetus to the Abhidhamma's growing concern with ontology.

The term *sabhāva* does not appear in the *Suttas* and is rare in the Pali Canon in general. It does feature in five canonical or para-canonical texts that are considered later additions to the Canon, although they contain parts that predate the latest works of the *Abhidhamma-piṭaka* and that are certainly older than the main Pali commentaries. The first text is the *Paṭisambhidāmagga*, which endorses a broad notion of *sabhāva* as the nature of *dhammas*, but it is by no means clear that this nature necessarily defines what a *dhamma* is, or that a *dhamma* exists by virtue of this nature which it possesses (*Paṭis II* 177–83). The *Buddhavaṃsa* and the *Milindapañha* present a somewhat narrower and more technical notion of own-nature by juxtaposing *sabhāva* with “quality” (*rasa*) and “characteristic mark” (*lakkaṇa*), thus anticipating the three basic categories of *dhamma* exegesis in the commentarial tradition (*BV II* 167; *Mil* 149, 185, 241). The hermeneutical manuals *Peṭakopadesa* and *Nettipakaraṇa* elaborate on the idea of own-nature as intrinsic to sets of *dhammas*, or as the particular nature that defines what a given set of *dhammas* is: what it means to be *this* stream of *dhammas* rather than *that* (*Peṭ* 104; *Nett* 78–9). Since sentient experience is seen as an ongoing flow of interlocking streams of consciousness, an attempt is made to analyze this process by defining the particular nature of each such stream. No certain conclusion, however, can be derived from the paracanonical texts about the ontological status of either *dhammas* or their own-natures.

This situation changes significantly in the post-canonical, commentarial and subcommentarial literature, in which *sabhāva* becomes a standard concept extensively used in *dhamma* exegesis. A recurring idea in the commentaries is that

dhammas are defined by virtue of their *sabhāva*: “*dhammas* are so called because they bear their particular natures” (e.g., *Dhs-a* 39-40; *Paṭis-a* I 18; *Vism-mhṭ* I 347). The commentaries also regularly equate *dhammas* with their particular natures, using the terms *dhamma* and *sabhāva* interchangeably. For example, the *Visuddhimagga* proclaims that *dhammas* mean but particular natures (*Vism* VIII 246) and the sub-commentary to the *Dhammasaṅgaṇi* indicates that there is no other thing called *dhamma* apart from the particular nature borne by it (*Dhs-mṭ* 28). A similar idea is expressed by statements like: “The term *sabhāva* denotes the mere fact of being a *dhamma*”, or “There is no such thing called ‘activity’ apart from a *dhamma*’s particular nature” (*Dhs-mṭ* 94; *Abhidh-av-pt* I 296).

In the commentaries, then, the term *sabhāva* acquires a narrower sense than in the earlier, para-canonical texts: rather than a vague nature of clusters of *dhamma*, it signifies an atemporal category determining what any single *dhamma* is. Note that it determines *what* a *dhamma* is: what it means to be this particular *dhamma* rather than any other, and not necessarily *that* a *dhamma* exists. The concern here is not so much with the ontological status of *dhammas*—whether their primary existential status as ultimately real constituents or their temporal existence—but primarily with what makes a *dhamma* unique. This is manifested in the commentarial assimilation of the concept of own-nature with that of particular characteristic (*salakkhaṇa*/ Sanskrit *svalakṣaṇa*). “*Dhammas*”, the commentarial literature states, “are so called because they bear their particular characteristics” (*Vibh-a* 45; *Vibh-mṭ* 35; *Paṭis-a* I 79; *Vism* XV 3), and a particular characteristic “is the own-nature that is not held in common by other *dhammas*” (*Vism-mhṭ* II 137).

The Sanskrit term *lakṣaṇa* generally means a mark, or a specific characteristic that distinguishes an indicated object from others. The Logicians use this term in the sense of “definition” of a concept or logical category (Matilal 1985). This notion may well have influenced the Pali commentaries in their use of the term *salakkhaṇa* and its identification with *sabhāva* in the sense of a *dhamma*’s particular definition (e.g., *Vism* VI 19, 35). That a *dhamma* has an own-nature, then, means that it possesses an essential characteristic that defines it as a certain psychophysical occurrence unique and distinct from any other instance of its type. Inasmuch as *sabhāva* is identified with *salakkhaṇa*, it primarily functions as an epistemological and linguistic determinant of a *dhamma qua* a particular

nameable by a unique verbal description, rather than an ontological determinant of a *dhamma* as a primary existent.⁶

Nevertheless, from the foregoing epistemology the Pali commentaries also draw metaphysical conclusions, specifically with regard to the reality of *dhammas*. The final units of the Abhidhamma analysis of sentient experience, the *dhammas*, are reckoned as the ultimate constituents of experience. “There is nothing else, whether a being, or an entity, or a man or a person”, a famous commentary proclaims (*Dhs-a* 155. See also *Dhs-mṭ* 25; *Vism-mhṭ* I 347 on *Vism* VIII 246). While this statement is meant to refute the rival Puggalavāda position of the reality of the person by insisting that there is no being or person apart from *dhammas*, there emerges the idea that the phenomenal world is, at bottom, a world of *dhammas qua* individuals:⁷ that within the confines of sentient experience there is no other actuality apart from *dhammas*. And the evidence for the status of each *dhamma* constituent is its *sabhāva*. In the context of the theory of momentariness, *sabhāva* is understood as what underlies a *dhamma*’s endurance moment and as a point of reference to the two other sub-moments. Before a *dhamma* arises it does not yet have a *sabhāva*, and when it ceases its *sabhāva* dissolves with it. In the endurance moment, though, while possessing its *sabhāva*, a *dhamma* arises as a present, ultimate reality, and its *sabhāva* attests to its actual existence as such (*Dhs-a* 45; *Vism* VIII 234, XV 15). One commentarial passage even goes so far as naming this instant “the acquisition of a self” (*Vism-mhṭ* I 343).

In sum, the post-canonical Abhidhamma steps further away from both the *Suttas* and the canonical Abhidhamma, espousing a naturalistic explanation of *dhammas* as the fundamental constituents of the phenomenal world. Some may observe ontology creeping into this system, but in the Buddhist context, if the concept of *sabhāva* has ontological bearing, then this is markedly different from the idea of ontology as the branch of philosophy that is concerned with being and what there is. Here ontology is largely blended with psychology and influenced by the Abhidhamma inquiry into the enlightened mind vs. the ordinary mind. Rather than a comprehensive ontological model, the Abhidhamma lays out the

6. This is a point on which the Theravāda and the Sarvāstivāda-Vaibhāṣika, the Northern Abhidharma school, differ. In the Sarvāstivādin framework, *svabhāva* is an ontological determinant of primary, real existence (*dravya*). *Svalakṣaṇa*, on the other hand, is an epistemological, linguistic determinant of a *dharma* as that which is discernable, definable, and knowable. The Theravādins do not seem to hold such a distinction: *salakkhaṇa* and *sabhāva* are used interchangeably as epistemological and linguistic determinants of *dhammas*: as what renders any given *dhamma* distinguishable and definable.

7. In using the term “individuals,” I refer to P.F. Strawson’s rendering in his book *Individuals* (1971), where he uses the term in the sense of distinguishable particulars that can be referred to.

foundations of a metaphysics of mind. The Abhidhamma theory of causation helps better understand this claim.

The theory of causation

The early Buddhist interest in causation is shaped by a concern for the human condition in *samsāra*, the round of rebirth, and hence is closely related to the dynamics of the law of karma, which is what fuels this repetitive experience. Broadly speaking, sentient experience is seen as a “mass of karma”, of which any segment arises depending on the origination of certain sequences of coordinated factors. As explained in the introductory chapter of this volume, the relationship between the patterns of these sequences is called dependent origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) and is articulated by the stock twelvefold chain of links leading from ignorance to ageing and death, which symbolize whatever kinds of suffering there are. In the sense that all phenomena arise and cease dependently on causes and conditions, dependent origination can be understood as the early Buddhist general principle of causation, not in the sense of a law of universal causation, but inasmuch as it is an explanation of the nature and origin of suffering. In light of the Buddha's ethicization of karma and its recasting from “action” to “intention” (A III 415; Gombrich 1996: 50-6), the early Buddhist notion of causal conditioning is primarily concerned with the workings of physical and mental processes, explaining how they occur in a non-random order, without at the same time presupposing an underlying substance that unifies the moments of those occurrences and from which they derive their actuality.

As the image of the chain suggest, the formula of dependent origination represents a linear succession of processes, whereby each link is a necessary condition for the arising of whichever link is said to follow it. The focus is on knowing which *dhamma* or *dhammas* are most essentially related to ageing and death and how these processes occur. An explanation of all the possible relations that may hold among the sum total of conditions and between those conditions and their related processes constitutes a metaphysical account of the world, and this was dispensed with. It was the task of the Abhidhamma to offer such an account in terms of “what things are”. This account is given in the seventh book of the *Abhidhamma-piṭaka*, the *Paṭṭhāna* (literally “conditions”).

The *Paṭṭhāna* meticulously synthesizes *dhammas* into their multiple conditioning relations. Here the account of the conditioned nature of all phenomena is not arranged according to the twelvefold formula of dependent origination,

but according to twenty-four conditional relations (*paccaya*). The result is a highly complex account of all possible ways in which a phenomenon may function in conditioning the rise of another phenomenon. The twenty-four conditional relations are: 1) root cause; 2) object; 3) predominance; 4) proximity; 5) contiguity; 6) simultaneity; 7) reciprocity; 8) support; 9) decisive support; 10) pre-existence 11) post-existence; 12) habitual cultivation; 13) karma; 14) fruition; 15) nutriment 16) controlling faculty; 17) *jhāna* (a relation specific to meditation attainments); 18) path (a relation specific to the stages on the path and their associated *dhammas*; 19) association; 20) dissociation; 21) presence; 22) absence; 23) disappearance; 24) non-disappearance.

A detailed discussion of all the conditional relations is beyond the scope of this chapter, but two points relevant for our purposes are worth mentioning here in brief. The first is that the simultaneity condition is a focal axis of the *Paṭṭhāna* system. No less than seven other conditions further down the list are, in fact, variations on the categorical relation of simultaneity (these are #7, 8, 14, 19, 20, 21, and 24). All the seven are types of dependence-in-coexistence, which strongly implies interdependence: in other words, they all instantiate the abstract category of interrelatedness. In the formula of dependent origination, however, the ideas of reciprocal conditioning and interconnectedness are merely latent. This difference between the Sutta and the Abhidhamma notions of causal conditioning is reflected by the shift from the image of a linear chain of the twelve causal links to that of a web or network of causal conditions.

The second important point concerns the first conditional relation, namely, root cause condition (*hetu-paccaya*). Outside the *Paṭṭhāna*, only two para-canonical texts— the two methodological manuals, *Nettipakaraṇa* and *Peṭakopadesa* of the *Khuddaka-nikāya*— uphold the semantic distinction between *hetu* and *paccaya* in the sense of “cause” and “condition” respectively. Both texts equate *hetu* with *sabhāva* and state that a cause is the very *sabhāva* of a particular *dhamma* instant arising in a certain situation, while a condition is some other *dhamma* or a group of *dhammas* that establish this situation once the *sabhāva* has been obtained (*Nett* 78-9; *Peṭ* 104). Among a group of necessary conditions for the occurrence of a *dhamma*, then, there is one that is the root cause of that *dhamma*’s individuality. The remaining conditions are all necessary, but become relevant only once the primary cause has fulfilled its function. Cause condition is a *dhamma*’s activity within its own stream in precipitating the next moment of this consciousness stream, and it is this function that defines the *dhamma* as that particular event.

We may think of cause condition *qua* a *dhamma*'s own-nature as its "horizontal" causality that defines *what* it means to be a particular *dhamma* of that kind and what makes it so—though it does not necessarily imply *that* it is. The remaining twenty-three conditional relations further elaborate on this account by revealing the quality and intensity of operation unique to each *dhamma*, viz., its capability of "vertical" conditioning by which it facilitates the occurrence of other *dhammas* outside its consciousness stream.⁸ These conditions locate a *dhamma* within the web of interrelations by which it is connected with the incessant rise and fall of all other *dhammas*. It is here that the image of the network model of causal conditioning takes over the earlier image of the causal chain. The relative positioning of each *dhamma* within this network of vertical causal conditioning is, first and foremost, a means for its individuation. Only in an indirect, subsidiary sense is this network an analysis of causal production.

What arises here is a metaphysical theory of mental events in terms of sameness of causal conditions. Analogous to the space-time coordinate system that enables one to identify and describe material objects, the network of conditional relations may be seen as a coordinate system that locates within it any given *dhamma*, implying that to be a *dhamma* is to be an event that has a place in that web of relations—an idea reminiscent of Donald Davidson's principle of sameness of causes and effects as a condition of identity of events (2001: 119–20 and 154–61). Two *dhamma* instances of the same type would fit into the web of causal conditions in exactly the same way, but would then be distinguished as individual instances on the grounds of their unique degrees of causal efficacy.

This idea, in fact, is well aligned with the early Buddhist soteriological quest for the cessation of suffering. The *Paṭṭhāna* shows that dependent origination and the twenty-four conditions are two different methods of analyzing sentient experience. It turns out that dependent origination applies not only to one's past, present and future lives, but also to each and every single moment of consciousness.⁹ As the theory of the consciousness process implies, every *dhamma*, every moment of thought arises in consciousness in accordance with the twelve links of dependent origination, meaning that in every single moment the twelve links

8. This interpretation is informed by discussions of the Sarvāstivāda theory of causation (Williams 1981). There is reasonable ground for believing that in distinguishing between *hetu* and *paccaya*, the Theravādins were influenced by contemporary Sarvāstivādin sources (Kalupahana 1975).

9. Note that the twelvefold formula of dependent origination has traditionally been interpreted as depicting the process that makes up a person as it stretches over three cycles of lives: past ignorance and formations are the sufficient condition of one's present life (represented by consciousness up to feeling), while this present fruit conditions the set of necessary conditions (craving up to becoming) that will bear fruit in a future cycle of birth, ageing and death.

arise simultaneously and are all interrelated (*Vism* IV 78, VIII 39, XIV 190–191, XVII 101ff, XX 22–6 & 97–104; *Vibh-a* 192; Gethin 1998: 154–5). As Gethin observes, “The list of twenty-four *paccayas* can be considered by way of two basic concepts. The first concerns those *paccayas* that illustrate the various relationships that exist simultaneously between *dhammas* that arise together in a given assemblage or complex at a given moment in time. The second concerns those *paccayas* that focus on the relationships that exist between *dhammas* over a period of time, that is to say, the way in which a *dhamma* that arises at one moment can be related to a *dhamma* that arises at another time” (1992: 301). Just as ordinary experience is the result of the interrelated network of conditions encapsulated in every single consciousness moment, so the path factors leading to the cessation of this process are contained in every single consciousness moment that contributes to awakening. Any one of the path factors embraces all the factors, and hence, by the relations of simultaneity and reciprocity, to cultivate any one of the *dhammas* that contribute to awakening is to develop them all (id: 244–7). The awakening moment is that at which all the path factors arise simultaneously as a unified whole. At this moment the chain of dependent co-origination is demolished in its entirety.

Summary: from process to event metaphysics

We have already seen that the Buddha analyzes sentient experience from various standpoints (in terms of name-and-form, the five aggregates, the twelve sense spheres, or the eighteen sense elements) as mental and physical processes: as occurrences rather than substances. The same anti-substantialist attitude is shared by the Abhidhamma: it sets out a description of mental processes and their interaction with the physical and the transcendent. Encapsulated in the *dhamma* theory, the Abhidhamma system is meant to individuate one’s conscious experience according to one’s position on the noble eightfold path, thus distinguishing the ordinary mind from the awakened mind. *Dhammas*, then, are not substances: they always prove to be types of consciousness in its broadest sense of a series of particular mental occurrences. The striking difference between the Suttanta and the Abhidhamma worldviews is that the *Suttas* depict the occurrences that make up sentient experience as ongoing processes or sequences, while the Abhidhamma portrays them as discrete, specific, evanescent events. These are seen as short-lived minds (*cittas*) related to specific sense objects, accompanied by a number of structures composed of basic mental elements (*dhammas*), and constantly change in their quality, object, content, and function (Cousins: 1983: 7).

As occurrences, events and processes alike have a direct relation to time, but any attempt to distinguish between them cannot simply draw on temporal duration. It is not the amount of time they occupy (in fact, there can be long events and short-lived processes), but rather the way in which they occupy time, or their “temporal shape”—e.g., whether they *persist through*, or *occur during*, or *obtain throughout* time—that marks the distinction between events and processes (Steward 1997: 72). The most pertinent questions to be asked about mental and physical processes are of the *how* type: how such happenings are distributed in time, how they unfold, how they come about and how they can be ended. By contrast, once events have been analyzed into their sub-phases, they are ordinarily found to be instantaneous. For this reason it does not make sense to ask how they transpire through time. Unlike universals and along with material objects and people, events are regarded as concrete particulars, i.e. occurrences of which the nature and individuality can be determined. Hence a rather more suitable set of questions about events is of the “what” group: what makes up an event, what its starting and culmination points are, and above all, what it means to be this particular event rather than another. The notion of events as particulars would, in turn, urge one to establish the principles of their categorization into types and the criteria for individuating the innumerable tokens of each type by virtue of their causal origins (Bach 1986: 8–10; Davidson 2001: 181ff; Steward 1997: 98).

I argue, then, that the history of the Theravādin Abhidhamma reflects a shift in metaphysical foundation and epistemological approach. The transition from the earliest strata of Buddhist teaching to the Abhidhamma consists in replacing a process-based approach to the analysis of sentient experience with an event-based approach. This shift challenged criteria for distinguishing every possible event that may present itself in consciousness and for specifying what makes it the very particular it is. Aiming at this objective, the Abhidhamm developed its *dhamma* analysis as a categorial theory of individuation of the mental and supplemented this theory with systematized notions of own-nature, momentariness, and causation. In this sense, the *dhamma* theory and its accompanying doctrines offer an event-based metaphysics of mind that sets out to answer two primary questions: 1) the intension of the *dhammas*' individuality, namely, what it means to be this very particular and no other, what the nature of any particular *dhamma* is; 2) the principle or cause of individuation: what, in the internal constitution of a *dhamma*, makes it the very particular it is (Gracia 1988: 8ff).

The canonical Abhidhamma is concerned primarily with the former question. The *dhamma* analysis as a categorial theory of individuation of the mental is

an endeavor that is, at bottom, epistemological. Yet the *dhamma* theory also intends to ascertain that every psychophysical event is knowable and nameable, and that the words and concepts employed in the systematic discourse that is thus developed uniquely define their corresponding referents. In this respect, the *dhamma* analysis paves the way for conceptual realism: a worldview that is based on the notion of truth as consisting in a correspondence between our concepts and statements, on the one hand, and the features of an independent, determinate reality, on the other hand. Conceptual realism does not necessarily have implications for the ontological status of this reality as externally existing. But to espouse such a position is to make a significant move away from the earliest Buddhist teaching, which, as Gombrich has mentioned, presents the Buddha's view of language as conventional (Gombrich 2009: Ch. 10, esp. pp. 144–55; Ronkin 2005: 244–50).

The post-canonical Abhidhamma emphasizes the question of the principle of the *dhammas'* individuality. Seeking the foundations of individuality in the *dhammas qua* individuals themselves while further systematizing the notions of own-nature and momentariness, the post-canonical Abhidhamma not only attempts to account for the nature of one's mind, but also to establish the indubitable correlates of thought and speech in reality. A *dhamma* upholds its individuality and is uniquely defined by its particular nature, which determines its internal structure and mode of operation and which discriminates it from all other eventualities. It is true that in pursuing this project, the post-canonical Abhidhamma is gradually drawn into espousing a naturalistic explanation of *dhammas* as the fundamental constituents of the phenomenal world. But inasmuch as this system accommodates ontology, this is primarily a "meta-psychological" ontology rather than a reductionist ontology (Piatigorski 1984: 182). For what is at stake here is the conditions of our thinking about the phenomenal world in terms of *dhammas qua* psycho-physical events rather than the substrata of psycho-physical events as such. The *dhammas* are first and foremost the ultimate units of categorization, analysis, and distinction of the consciousness process and, in this sense, of one's "world".

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Abbreviations and Bibliography

Unless otherwise noted, Pali texts refer to the Pali Text Society (PTS) editions.

A	Āṅguttara-nikāya
Abhidh-av	Abhidhammāvatāra

Abhidh-av-pt	Abhidhammāvātāra-purāṇa-abhinava-ṭīkā-1
Abhidh-s	Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha
D	Dīgha-nikāya
Dhp	Dhammapada
Dhs	Dhammasaṅgaṇi
Dhs-a	Atthasālinī (Dhammasaṅgaṇi commentary)
Dhs-mṭ	Dhammasaṅgaṇi-mūlaṭīkā (Dhammasaṅgaṇi sub-commentary)
Nett	Nettipakaraṇa
Paṭis	Paṭisambhidāmagga
Paṭis-a	Saddhammappakāsinī (Paṭisambhidāmagga commentary)
Peṭ	Peṭakopadesa
Bv	Buddhavaṃsa
M	Majjhima-nikāya
Mil	Milindapañha
Mp	Manorathapaūraṇī (Aṅguttara-nikāya commentary)
Mhv	Mahāvaṃsa
Vin	Vinaya-piṭaka
Vibh	Vibhaṅga
Vibh-a	Sammohavinodanī (Vibhaṅga commentary)
Vibh-mṭ	Vibhaṅga-mūlaṭīkā (Vibhaṅga sub-commentary)
Vism	Visuddhimagga (Harvard Oriental Series)
Vism-mht	Visuddhimagga-mahāṭīkā (Visuddhimagga commentary)
S	Samyutta-nikāya
Spk	Sāratthappakāsinī (Samyutta-nikāya commentary)
Sv	Sumaṅgalavilāsinī (Dīgha-nikāya commentary)

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