

Buddhism is about the Mind

William Blake wrote of the “doors of perception”, and since ***Siddhartha Gautama*** endeavored to solve the problem of human suffering, the mechanisms of experience through the mind, have been the ground on which to solve the puzzle of perception, and live a fully expressed life.

In the early days of Buddhist practice, much, as in other disciplines for spiritual (mental experience) growth, the asceticism, practices of privations in order to more fully understand the vices and obstacles of our desires, have been used with different motivations and yet with the ultimate goal of clarity of the mind-to-body connection; to find some insight into the nature of our perception and experience of life. Buddhist efforts though, were not to discover some higher external force or logic at work within or upon the human body/mind, rather, it was the mind’s ability to construct reality anew, with deeper insights, that was the training of ascetics. Schools of various insights spawned from the early teachings of Shakyamuni to very disparate aims and misunderstandings from Nihilist systems of thought to “mind-only” schools theorizing that all of “reality” was no more than a conjuring of the mind; missing the critical point that it is our warehousing of these “realities” that is the problem, and not that things exist as a moment to moment reality not to be held or possessed. India, a place of ancient societies, had many various and priori cultural norms to unravel, and Shakyamuni was revolutionizing myths, beliefs, traditions and even language. This turmoil was the bane of the higher castes of Brahmans and Politicians as well as society in general. Much of these teachings empowered lower castes beyond anything previously considered or accepted.

The central question Buddhism set out was to do with the vast differences of perception endemic to the human experience. No two persons experience the “same thing” in exactly the same way. That perception equals experience seems simple enough. But how is perception related to the actual authentic object of perception? Could it be that the perception, is the fabrication of the individual human mind, with little if anything to do with the authentic object of its perception? And if so, what does this say of the “reality” of the “object”?

Two tracks of investigation come from this research; the pursuit of a clear understanding of the objects of discriminations and conversely, the mind’s strata of identification and data accrual. The pursuit of the true nature of objects leads to the insights of impermanence and constant change and even to the amazing insights of fluctuation of energy and impermanence through rigorous examination, akin to that of the modern sciences, and ultimately down to the structures of atoms and energy itself. As for the mind, it becomes stratified in compartments of consciousnesses to understand the nature of sensation and the sense organs of the capture or “input” of discriminations, identified, categorized, and qualified by “perception” in the mind of an individual.

Stratification of the Mind

First among the consciousnesses to evaluate are the most prominent in our mind's mechanisms of discriminations and identification. These are the sense organs of 1) sight, 2) sound, 3) taste, 4) smell, 5) touch and 6) the mind itself. Each of these consciousnesses are responsible for specific aspects of data gathering and collation. Eye consciousness gathers data on color, size and appearance, movement etc. This is developed in tandem with the necessary characteristics of the objects of perception as we find, defined in Buddhist teaching in the **ten factors** of all phenomena enumerated in the second chapter of the Lotus teaching;

1. **Appearance** (nyoze so) – is form or appearance or behavior that we can see; the outward physical manifestation of all things
2. **Nature** (nyoze sho) – the original nature or character (inherent quality) of all things
3. **Entity** (nyoze tai) – the essence, or substance of all things
4. **Power** (nyoze riki) – the potential power, capacity, or inherent ability of all things
5. **Influence** (nyoze sa) – the action(s) influenced or brought forth by potential power or inherent ability
6. **Internal Cause** (nyoze in) – an inherent or direct cause that produces a latent effect at some future point
7. **Relation** (nyoze en) – the outside trigger (relational cause) that helps bring forth the latent effect
8. **Latent Effect** (nyoze ka) – the effect produced by the unity of internal cause and relation
9. **Manifest Effect** (nyoze ho) – the consequence that emerges when a latent effect becomes manifest as a result of the unity of internal cause, relation and latent effect
10. **Consistency from Beginning to End** (nyoze hon-makku-kyoto)– means that the nine factors from 'appearance' to 'manifest effect' are ultimately equal and applicable to all matters in this world as the common principle. All the factors are related to each other.

The initial five consciousnesses are interfaces with the phenomenal world, fully flushed out in Vasubandhu's scholarship as the **Five Aggregates** or **Skandhas** that “aggregate” discriminated data sets for our warehouse of data. But something more is needed to complete our “perceptions” and impressions of the phenomenal world. The **sixth consciousness** is the Collator, the gatherer and sorter of the contemporaneous activity of assimilating all this data gathering into cohesive types and nuances. Closely allied with and interrelated with the **Seventh consciousness** of the “Warehouse” itself, maintaining a structure of “**Epistemology**” and applied

impressions in the formation of opinions and adjudications. With these “doors of perception” now open, it is the perception itself that comes under scrutiny.

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