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MEDITATION IN THAILAND

A New Interpretation

Somparn Promta

I

Here is a summary of the main arguments given in the paper:

1. It is widely understood and practiced among Thai Buddhists that meditation is at the heart of Buddhism. I agree with this. However, the word '*meditation*' needs a serious investigation: what is the meaning of the term as intended by the Buddha? It could be possible that the meaning as it is now widely adopted amongst the Buddhists is not the same as it was used by the Buddha at his time. It is the intention of the paper to explore, as far as possible, the meaning of meditation as it was understood by the Buddha.

2. In my view, the practice of meditation in Thailand is basically dominated by what is given in the *Visuddhimagga*, by Buddhaghosa. As I understand, Buddhist meditation first appeared systematically from the *Visuddhimagga* onwards. Before that, even though it appears in the Pali Canon that the Buddha provides us a form of meditation through various sutras like the *Maha Satipatthana Sutra*; in terms of a format, the Buddha does not suggest a method to *meditate*—he just points out how to *contemplate* our life, using four objects as tools: the body, feelings, the mind, and truths concerning the human life and the world.

For me, *meditation* as understood by Buddhists in general these days and *contemplation* as suggested by the Buddha are not the same thing. Most meditation schools in Thailand explain that meditation is not thinking. For them, liberation of the mind from suffering cannot be attained through thinking. On the contrary, during the practice of meditation, people are advised not to think. It seems that meditation as understood by these meditation schools is a mystical state. They believe that when the mind of a person focuses well on one single object, for example—breathing, his mind will be eventually locked in a mystical state in which he will experience mystical phenomena called *insights*. These insights are compared to a light for the destruction of the dark—defilements in the mind. What follows from this line of understanding is: liberation of the mind from suffering has nothing to do with the understanding of truths. This kind of liberation could be called a *mechanical* liberation.

3. I believe that if there is something that can be called the meditation taught by the Buddha, it might not be a mystical one as said above. The sources concerning the attainment of liberation of the Buddha's disciples as recorded in the Pali Canon might suggest the truth concerning the Buddhist meditation more or less. All disciples of the Buddha became *arahants* through listening to the preaching of the Buddha. For example, the first five disciples became *arahants* after the Buddha's second sermon, the *Anattalakkhana Sutra*, was completed. His third sermon, the *Adittapariyaya Sutra*, given to three thousand people under the leadership of Uruvela Kassapa, liberated them from the darkness of mind. These people turned from ordinary people into noble ones from listening to the speeches of the Buddha. No record about the Buddha's teaching of meditation in the Pali Canon. In listening to another's speech, a person needs to understand it. Liberation of the mind found in the cases of the Buddha's disciples above could be said: resulting from their understanding the Buddha's preaching—a deep understanding of deep messages. Certainly, in some sutras like the

Maha Satipatthana Sutra mentioned above, the Buddha teaches a way of mental cultivation called mindfulness, *sati* in Pali. In my view, *mindfulness* is not the same as mystic meditation. Mindfulness is an ordinary state of mind. People can have this in their daily life. No special method is required to get it—like listening to music which people do not need any special method.

4. In conclusion, the sources from the Pali Canon suggest that contemplative thinking is needed to liberate oneself from suffering, rather than mystic meditation. If my theory is correct, what we need primarily in the practice of meditation is the work of wisdom from the masters such as deep speeches or highly contemplative writings; while what we need secondarily from the disciples is just mindfulness and deep thinking. The use of language is important. Deep language cannot come from a person whose thought is not deep. Hence, meditation is not a mechanical process without understanding or realization of the subject. On the contrary, meditation should mean: the reading and understanding of the human life and the world—good books in terms of deep thoughts of the masters are very useful to help the disciples ‘read’ the human life and the world more effectively—as demonstrated through the life of the Buddha. Moreover, meditation should be practicable without leaving our normal life: it should be practicable in offices, homes, during a journey, while reading a book, and so on. It seems that these cannot be done in the practice of mystic meditation.

II

The following are details of what summarized above:

Buddhism has been referred to as an example of Indian religious opinion which is based on realistic and empiricist spirit. Buddhism stands unique in the history of Indian philosophy through its way in accepting and rejecting truths. George Grimm, a prominent German Buddhist scholar, calls Buddhism a religion of reason and meditation. What Descartes presents to us in his *Meditations* is extremely different

from the same names given by Buddhist, Jain, and Hindu masters. However, there could be two main kinds of mediation in Indian philosophy. The first one is *mystic* meditation; the second one is *rationalistic* meditation. It is the latter which belongs to Buddhism especially in its early form.

Another difference between the understanding of meditation in Eastern and Western philosophies is that for the East meditation is the tool to cultivate the soul for attaining liberation, not merely to exercise mental power for achieving knowledge as in the West. Even though Buddhism does not understand meditation as a mystic phenomenon, it fully accepts that the purpose of meditation is to attain some moral qualities. The point is, within this understanding Buddhism is of the opinion that such moral qualities will result from rationalistic meditation, and not from a mystic one.

In the second sermon, the Buddha utilizes a dialogue to teach his disciples. And the result of the dialogue brings about the enlightenment of them. The contents of the dialogue have nothing that could be interpreted mystic. All are clear and based on reasoning. The following are example.

(Buddha): Your body is permanent or not permanent?

(Disciples): Not permanent, sir.

(Buddha): If a thing is not permanent, it is subject to pleasure or pain?

(Disciples): Pain, sir.

(Buddha): If a thing is not permanent and subject to pain, it should be deemed self or non-self?

(Disciples): Non-self, sir.

(Buddha): Very good, very good. Your body is not your self. If something would be your self, it must be under your command. But you cannot command the body that "let the body be permanent and subject to pleasure." Hence, it is not your self.

Note that the objective of the Buddha is to point out that the body

can never be counted the person's self, and the method used by him is a dialogue. Using this way suggests that he wants his disciples see from their own vision that the body should not be viewed man's self. This kind of dialogue is found much in the work of Socrates. However, the difference is the dialogue given by the Buddha eventually brings about the enlightenment of the followers. This means that for Buddhism reason has the potential to liberate man from ignorance and suffering. What I have presented here is rather difficult to understand even for Buddhists because later Buddhist meditation explained by Buddhist thinkers after the Buddha's death has been based on the mystic understanding of the term. Looking from this point, the history of Buddhist meditation can be divided into two periods. The first period, which can be named the *rationalistic period*, dates between the lifetimes of the Buddha. And the second period, which can be named the *mystic period*, dates after that.

As reason and language are closely related—in exercising reason man needs language; to understand the position of the Buddha as regards meditation, we need to understand his attitude to language. Eastern mysticism, such as that of Taoism and Zen Buddhism, does not believe that language is able to hand human beings the truths. So, the sages of this tradition are persons who speak very little even though they are the masters whose primary duty is to teach the students. Differently, the Buddha has used dialogues all the time. There is no explicit evidence showing that he teaches his followers to practice meditation in the form as found today in Buddhist communities. According to modern understanding of Buddhists, especially those of Theravada tradition, meditation and thinking are of greatly difference. Most of them consider thinking as a lower kind of mental activity compared with meditation which is a higher kind of mental training and this kind of mental activity does not require language. In Thailand, most meditation schools usually set up the rules for the practitioners that during the time of meditation training they must not speak to each other and

must not read books even those concerning Buddha's teachings. This tradition of meditation practice is something can be understood if we accept that meditation is a kind of *bodily practice* like driving a car. Before a person is to be instructed about driving, he will be informed that how the car works. Information about the car is given in a handbook. In this sense, the language is needed as a starting point of the practice. After studying the handbook, then the person has to practice to drive the car. People cannot drive the car merely by studying the handbook. In the same way, the practice of meditation can be compared with car-driving practice. The practice instruction in the form of text or the master's speech is needed just as the starting point of the practice. During the process of practice, no texts or language instruction are needed.

Suppose we begin with an understanding that the practice of meditation is mainly involved with the training of thought, the role of texts or language might be different. The thought of human beings is something that can be developed and enhanced; but the problem is: what can be used as the tools to develop thought? In driving the car, bodily skill is of most importance. But in the practice of meditation it seems that what we need is a change of mind; or it can be said that we need mental skill, or more deeply: spiritual skill. It is clearly given that the objective of Buddhist meditation is to liberate the human mind from bondage. Mind* according to Buddhism has two main potentials: the first one is the potential to be calm; and the second one is to develop wisdom. In general, meditation as commonly found in ancient India at the time of the Buddha aimed to arouse the former potential; but Buddhist meditation as given by the Buddha tends to deal with the latter. Earlier in his ascetic life, the Buddha trained under two masters in the former tradition of meditation; but later he becomes conscious that

* Note that the Buddhist mind is not merely an activity of the brain. This term refers to a kind of immaterial entity that looks like the soul in Hinduism and Jainism. But for Buddhism this kind of soul is not permanent as the Hindu or Jain soul.

this kind of mental potential has nothing to do with the cessation of suffering. With calm meditation (*Samatha Bhavana*), the suffering just temporarily freezes, and has not been destroyed.

It is said that the meditation that the Buddha studied under the two masters was the highest one to be found in India at that time, meaning that there was no absorption of the mind to be achieved more than this. The Buddha decides to leave his masters to seek the way that leads to the cessation of suffering. First things to be known are: what is the 'suffering' meant by the Buddha and why it cannot be overcome by the meditations he learned from these masters?

For the first question, this can be answered with looking back at the beginning of the story about the Buddha seeking of truths. It is said that as his father needed him to live a householder life as a prince, so he was raised up inside the luxurious palaces surrounded by good things like pretty girls and prevented to see bad things like the old persons. One day he escaped from the palace and saw the *four signs of suffering* which are: an old man, a sick man, a dead body, and an ascetic. He thought these things are the truths of life, meaning that no one in the world can deny and overcome them, including himself. One day he might be sick and dead. The prince thought further that nature created things and their counterparts. When there are birth, sickness, old age, and death; there must be *something* standing opposed to these things. He decided to leave the palace and take on an ascetic life to seek such a thing.

Human life in the Indian tradition at the time of the Buddha had been viewed as a series of eternal rebirths. When a person dies his soul will leave the old body and take on another one, as: an animal, a human being, a celestial being, etc; and this is called rebirth. In some sense, to be reborn again and again could be viewed bondage. Suffering in the view of the Buddha does not mean pain because pain is not the only thing to be found in life, we have pleasure as well; hence suffering rather means a long series of rebirths. For those who feel they love re-

birth as it brings about new experiences, suffering as meant by the Buddha becomes something which is not a problem at all; but for those who feel extremely bored with this, the Buddhist suffering will have meaning for them. Actually, all religions of India have agreed that there must be a final aim of life where the series of rebirths, as said, is completely stopped. Hinduism calls it *moksha*; while Buddhism and Jainism call *nirvana*.

It should be remarked that the salvation of life as mentioned above is of two kinds—one belonging to God and another not belonging to God. The salvation that belongs to God is not difficult to understand. In *The Bhagavadgita*, Krishna said to Arjuna that the person who devoted his life to do good things in the name of God and did not want any worldly rewards from doing such things was the one highly pleasing to God. After death, God will receive this kind of person, to join him—this is salvation. The salvation that does not belong to God as found in Jainism and Buddhism could be either the union with something or totally extinction from the universe. It seems that the Jain liberation is mainly associated with the first category while in Buddhism both possibilities are found.

Anyway, suffering in the Buddhist perspective is a state of rebirths again and again and salvation is a name given to the cessation of rebirth. The Buddha learned that the meditation that he had studied from his two masters, in its essence, is the control of the mind to be 'still and silent' and has nothing to do with desires. He thought that desire might be the seed of rebirth. If a person has desire in his mind, it will cause the next rebirth. This thought the Buddha gains from a simple metaphor that as far as the seed of a tree is fresh it will only grow into a tree when a certain number of conditions are given. It should be noted that the Pali term used to denote desire, *Tanha*, means some sticky substance which generally found in the seeds of plant and living plants. It is believed that this thing gives life to things that possess it. The death of a plant is not the real death because before death the

plant has placed the sticky substance into its seed. As long as the seed is fresh in the meaning that its sticky substance is not destroyed, the new life of the tree is sure to occur. In the case of human beings, the Buddha is of the belief that desire in the mind is the main key leading to rebirth. Before death, a person still has the will to be reborn and this enables him to be reborn. The fear of death, found in every sentient being, is used by the Buddha as evidence to show that people have the will to be reborn.

The calm meditation cannot reduce the fear of death; so, the Buddha seeks a new kind of meditation for this purpose. Eventually he learns that the fear of something can be reduced or solved by an understanding of its nature. A new kind of meditation developed by the Buddha, called in Buddhist text as insight meditation or *Vipassana Bhavana* in Pali, is basically concerned with human understanding. As language is the major tool for understanding, this is why the Buddha has utilized a dialogue in his teaching. Even to liberate himself from the will to be reborn, language is needed; but it is an inner language.

In Indian philosophy, we have usually found that language is widely adopted as the tool pointing to the truth, and not the truth itself. My analysis of the Buddha's enlightenment above does not mean that I do not accept the general opinion concerning the role of language as said. On the contrary, I am talking about the Buddha's enlightenment in light of such understanding. That is, there are a number of natural truths found by the Buddha in his enlightenment. To use a metaphor, it can be said that the Buddha is compared to a man who tries to open a secret closed door. Behind the doors, there are a number of truths given and these truths are needed to liberate the man from the will to be reborn. For a general door, we just open it; but this secret door has something for any person who needs to open it to understand first, otherwise it is not possible to open it. In Buddhist texts, sometimes the Buddha has said that the world is given in the form of secrets and it is the duty of any person who needs liberation to 'read' and 'understand'

them. Buddhist meditation is nothing but the *reading* and *understanding* of the world.

In a *sutra* of Theravada Buddhism, it is said that when a person dies, if he has done many evils before death, the hell keepers will remind him of something which he should read and understand as follows.

"Did you ever see a newborn child?"

"Yes, I did."

"What did you think about it?"

"Nothing."

"Did you ever see an old man?"

"Yes, I did."

"And did you think of anything from such seeing?"

"No."

"Did you ever see a sick man?"

"Certainly, I did."

"Did you feel anything about it?"

"No."

"Did you ever see a dead man?"

"Of course, I did."

"Did you understand something from such seeing?"

"Nothing."

From the dialogue above, the man is reminded of the *four signs of suffering*, which are similar to those in the story of Buddha's renunciation. According to morality in Buddhism, these signs have moral meaning in the sense that if the person reads and understands them, his life must follow the right way. On the contrary, for the person who never notices that they exist, it is highly possible that his life follows the wrong way, as given in the above *sutra*. So, suffering in a Buddhist perspective directly results from not reading and understanding the world.

In the practice of Buddhist meditation, three characteristics of beings are given as the main things to understand. To distinguishing between Buddhist meditation and the non-Buddhist one, sometimes the

texts say that Buddhist meditation considers the *Lakkhana*, while the non-Buddhist one considers the *Arammana*. The difference between these two terms is that in considering the former, an understanding is needed; and this thing is not needed in considering the latter. For example, a person takes a lit candle as an object for meditation. He sits silently, looking at the candle. Suppose his objective is to watch the candle so that the picture of the candle will be deeply pressed into his mind, making him 'see' it even with the eyes closed; this is the practice of a non-Buddhist meditation. The way of this kind of practice is called the *Arammana* way. Suppose his objective is to understand the candle, what he needs is to think. Certainly, in thinking a quiet mind is needed; but it is still a normal mind because he needs to think, and some levels of the absorbed mind, as found in non-Buddhist meditation, do not allow the mind to think. So, the absorption of mind required in Buddhist meditation is a simple one. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu says that this simple state of mind can be found, as an example, in a scenario like when Isaac Newton sees the falling apple and is 'enlightened' about the law of gravity.

What about the candle? There is no exact or same answer for every person. As individuals have different backgrounds in life, it is not possible for them to read and understand the world in the same manner. To think about the candle does not differ from thinking about Tolstoy's *War and Peace*. One time the Buddha gave a piece of cloth to a monk for meditating. This monk was sent to him as a foolish monk. No one could teach him to meditate. The Buddha said to him, "Just move your hand on it and see what happens." The cloth was clean. After the monk moved his hand on it for hours he noticed that it turned dirty. Suddenly, he became enlightened. The text says that while doing things as the Buddha suggests, the monk sees and thinks. The enlightenment of this monk is an example of the power of thought in a Buddhist perspective. In short, for Buddhism liberation of life cannot be attained if a person does not understand the world and his life deeply.

As anything in the world can be an object for reading and understanding, Buddhist meditation does not require a format. It should be noted that Zen Buddhism seems to stand closer to what the Buddha teaches regarding meditation than modern Theravada Buddhism at least in two manners. First, Zen meditation does not require a format. Second, in enlightenment thinking is needed. It is said in the Zen texts that one time the Zen master saw a monk sitting meditative. He asked, "What are you doing?" The monk said, "Meditating." The master picked up a brick near by and pressed it over his arm and rubbed. It is said that his arm bled. Excitingly, the monk questioned, "Why are you doing that?" The master replied, "Making a mirror." The monk said, "Are you mad! How a person can turn the brick into the mirror?" The master replied, "Likewise, what are you doing cannot make you enlightened!"

The meditation that the Zen master does not agree with is—sitting alone and doing nothing. The calm meditation in its very essence is a kind of sitting alone and doing nothing as said. The Buddha accepts that human mind can be trained to be deeply absorbed into levels that within such a state a person can be said be in a vegetative state. He himself had direct experience of this kind as the result of meditation taught him by the two masters, as said; but later he questioned that such states of mind are not natural—in the sense that to live in this world a person needs to perceive things rather than shut himself down from the world. The meditation that he learned from the two masters can be compared to shutting down the mind from the real world. Certainly, suffering would not occur as far as the person is in such a state of deep dwelling; but the problem is when he awakes again, he will face the same problems because the meditation that he practices does not provide anything related to the overcoming of the problems. It is just a shutting down of the sense doors from the world. The problems still remain untouched.

The following are famous pictures from both the West and the East,

of thinking people. The first one is Auguste Rodin's *The Thinker*, and the second one is a picture of a Zen master in meditation, painted by Chinese artist Shih K'o, 10th century. (The Zen master in the picture is said to be the second patriarch after Bodhidharma—Hui-k'o.)



It is interesting that these two pictures represent something that very similar to each other. First of all, both illustrate that thinking is a serious work of the human mind. Civilization of humankind is the product of seriously thinking. Socrates and the Buddha share one important element: they are thinkers. Even though the way of thinking found in Western civilization mostly aims at the external world while the way of thinking found in Eastern civilization largely aims at the internal world, this does not mean that we cannot find thinking inwardly in the West or thinking outwardly in the East. Henry David Thoreau might be cited as an example of the West thinking inwardly. In India, the beginning stage of Hinduism is mainly concerned with the thinking of external world and God. We know that India has been the land where streams of metaphysical theories have been created day by day end-

lessly. Certainly, many parts of metaphysics concern external world.

To understand Buddhist meditation truly, a person should be reminded that at the time of the Buddha the mainstream intellectual culture of India was based on the culture of thinking. Religion in the form of thinking was created before a thing called meditation. People saw the sun and the moon and other natural phenomena which caused fear, wonder, and other emotions. It is human nature to give himself something to unite many things which share some characteristics. The best thing for uniting things is a theory and this thing is a direct result of thinking. India is well known as the main source of religion for the world because Indians are those who love to think. Besides religion, logic and mathematics are continually invented by Indian thinkers. It is believed that the creation of Zero was possibly made by the Hindu thinkers. In India, Zero is called the *Shunyam* which means the empty. The concept of empty was generally found in Indian philosophy. In Buddhism, they have teachings concerning the emptiness of life and the world. The wisdom that brings about the Zero into this world is special. This kind of wisdom can be found in Taoism as well. In the *Tao Te Ching*, it is said that the earth and the heavens last forever because they do not do anything. The great ruler behaves like the earth and the heavens in that he does not do anything and such non-doing rewards him the highest position over the people. The Indian Zero behaves like *Tao* in that both of them never possess anything but have endless values. The ruler who rules the people without ruling is the one who follows *Tao*. The great ruler according to Taoism hides himself behind people but gives them the strength to overcome their problems. Likewise, the Zero hides itself behind other numbers but gives them values. "11" when written fully is "10+1." But the Zero 'gives way' to 1 and this makes the Hindu-Arabic number system, which contains ten numbers, 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-and-0, easier to use than the Roman number system which does not have the Zero.

Within the circumstance as given above, a proper way to understand

Buddhist teachings including its meditation is that religious thoughts of India have evolved side by side with logic and mathematics. As we have said previously, ultimately the Indians are of the view that all intellectual activities should aim at real usage in life. Logic and mathematics in Indian tradition are not something that is completely separated from religion. The Zero is deeply a religious concept. Or we can say that in India they did not distinguish between religious and mathematical concepts. The very famous Indian mathematician of modern time, Srinivasa Ramanujan, always said that in doing mathematics he never felt that religion is one thing and mathematics is another thing. On the contrary, his religious belief (he is a Hindu) seems to be the spiritual guideline to discover mathematical truths. What said by Ramanujan is not strange thing even when it is considered under the perspective of Western philosophy. We know that Plato is of the view that mathematics and logic represent the real things in the world of forms. For Plato, the numbers like 3 or 7 have the real corresponding entities somewhere in the universe. They are not just the empty concepts invented by human mind. But they really exist.

In the same way, the Indians consider mathematical concepts as something really existing in the universe. Mathematical laws are deemed as kinds of natural laws. It should be noted that the Buddha as a prince used to study mathematics and logic and it is said that he was skillful in doing these disciplines. Mathematics is called *Ganita Shastra* in India; and when Thailand adopted mathematics from the West, we translated it as *Ganita Shastra*. The fact that the Buddha used to study mathematics and logic implies what? The answer of this question can vary depending on how we understand what the enlightenment is. As given by the Buddha himself, enlightenment means two things. First, it means totally knowing what should be known to make suffering in life extinct. Second, it means totally being free from the influence of the dark sides of life. These two meanings must come together. Sometimes the Buddha utilizes a parable of light to illustrate how enlightenment

appears. When the light is given, it is doing two things. One, it makes people see things as they are. Two, it sets people free from the fear of darkness. It might be the above definition of enlightenment that causes most Buddhist thinkers to be inclined to understand that enlightenment has nothing to do with logic, mathematics, or reasoning. Freedom or liberation for them might result from *becoming*, and not merely *reasoning* or *philosophizing*.

A very simple example to show the very truth of the above claim is, as they argue: suppose you are given a fruit. The question is what should be done to that fruit—between eating it and reasoning with it? It is said in the Zen texts that at one time, a Zen master came to the field where they had planted the carrots with his disciples. The master picked up one carrot, raising it and saying, “What do you think about this thing?” One of his clever disciples said, “O Master, it is voidness.” The monk referred to the Buddhist teaching of voidness as the inner nature of things and for him this applied well to the carrot. There were a number of monks answering the question of the master and all of them answered through some kind of theory. At last, the master noticed that there was one monk who did not say anything. “Did you have anything to say about this carrot?” he said. The monk did not reply, coming to the master and taking that carrot—he ate it. The master said loudly, “This monk best knew what to do with the carrot! Is there anything more appropriate for the carrot than eating it! When I am hungry I eat. When I am thirsty I drink. When I am sleepy I sleep. When I am tired I rest. This is the practice of Buddha’s teaching!” In this story many monks deal with the carrot through reasoning or philosophizing, and this is not valid. Many Buddhist scholars are of the opinion that the enlightenment of the Buddha must not result from the use of reason because this thing cannot bring about the real truth to the person. What is the real truth? In the case of carrot, the real truth is a direct experience with it—eating and tasting it by a person’s sense experience. Reason can only bring about the shadow of truth, and not

the truth itself.

The problem with the above analysis is that it works well with bodily action only. The eating of carrot does not require things other than bodily action. But the truth concerning enlightenment is much more complicated as it requires mental and spiritual actions rather than bodily ones. Given that we are asked, "What should be the most appropriate thing to do with your life?" How do we answer this question? Certainly, this question, even though it is given in the same format as the question about carrot, needs some theory and we know that any theory is the result of reasoning more or less.

There are two basic forms of human reasoning—induction and deduction. We know that science is based on induction while logic and mathematics are based on deduction. In short, deduction means a way of gaining other knowledge from what are readily known without the help of experience. For example, if we know that between the town *A* and the town *B* the distance is 200 miles, and we know further that the train which runs between these towns runs 100 miles per hour; from these facts, we can derive that the train must spend 2 hours in running between the towns. This reasoning was taught widely in India at the time of the Buddha in the name of *Ganita Shastra* as said previously. If there is some Buddhist thinker of the view that this kind of reasoning is not the result of direct sense experience so it should not be adopted by Buddhism, this claim is something irrational as a kind of extreme skepticism. In real life the Buddha and his disciples utilized many mathematical rules in calculating things. Induction is more interesting in that even though we have some facts which are gained from sense experience this does not mean that merely having facts is enough. Ultimately, we still need some kind of reasoning. For example, a scientist performs an experiment with drug. He has found that the drug can reduce the pain resulting from blood cancer. Before announcing the result in the form of a research article to be published in the medical journal, he needs to test the drug for a certain number of times. Why

does he need to do such a thing? The reason will confirm that what he gains from the experiment is valid. Validity is not a property of fact but of theory. Induction is a way of gaining new knowledge from some known ones. It is done on the belief that there is some conformity in nature. If the drug reduces the pain in Mr. *A*, Mr. *B*, and Mr. *C*, it might be the same with Mr. *D*.

Why do we need theory? Why mere facts are not enough? The answer is simply: the facts that we have are usually limited to the certain time and space. It is worth mentioning here that after being convinced that he had been enlightened, the Buddha had spent time reconsidering what he had known before giving it to other. The Buddha might be aware that his personal experience with truth was limited to time and space, and it could be illusion. How could he be sure whether it was knowledge? This is why he needed time to reexamine it. In Buddhist texts the Buddha gave a number of rules to confirm that what we have attained or to be attained are not illusions, as follows:

Rule One:

There must be a causal relation between the practice and its result, and this causal relation does not need a special method to understand it other than plain reason. For example, Buddhism teaches that a forgiving mind is happier than an angry mind. This truth can be understood through reasoning, simply because a forgiving mind is the mind that lets the burden go while angry mind is the one that does not let it go. The point is: between these two minds which one should be happier? The answer is not difficult to find. Reason tells us that there is a causal relation between forgiving and happiness, and there is no causal relation between anger and happiness. To apply this rule to the practice of meditation, we can question: is there a causal relation between sitting alone/doing nothing except reciting some mysterious words like '*Buddha... Buddha...*' and the extinction of suffering in our mind? Suppose we have a doubt that there might not be such a causal relation, to practice this kind of meditation is against the rule.

Rule Two:

Buddhist liberation is based on understanding. The practice of meditation as given by the Buddha himself is a process of mental cultivation through awareness and understanding of life and the world. For example, in a very famous *sutra* called the *Maha Satipatthana Sutra*, the Buddha gives four objects as the grounds of meditating. They are body, feelings, mind, and mental objects (called in the Pali words as *Kaya*, *Vedana*, *Citta*, and *Dhamma* respectively). In short, the *sutra* does not give any official format of Buddhist meditation. Exactly we do not have such a thing in early Buddhism. In the text, the Buddha begins with a suggestion that we can learn to liberate ourselves from these four things. The body seems to be the most concrete object, so it deserves to be used as the starting point. To learn from the body, the Buddha points out that we have two things: first, to use the body as the object of the practice of mindfulness; second, to critically examine the body and determine whether it should be counted as ours. The practice of mindfulness is to prepare the mind to be as skillful as possible. The mind itself is the tool for studying itself and the world. Mindfulness in Buddhism is a state in which man's thought focuses on something continually and peacefully without restraint. A man plays the violin for hours joyfully and efficiently. This is an example of a thing called mindfulness in Buddhist teaching. Given that a person has no problem with mindfulness, the next step is to think about the body through such mindfully consciousness. In the text the Buddha gives many aspects to look at the body. Ultimately he says that wise consideration of the body will lead to a conclusion that it is not right to think that the body is ours. As mentioned in the *Anattalakkhana Sutra*, the Buddha is of the view that the body cannot count as man's self, even for those who believe that the body is composed of matter only. Even though it is true that a man is totally composed of matter only and there is no any soul, this fact has nothing to do with two things to be found in human life as the contradictory to each other. One, the body has its

way to go. Two, man's consciousness is inclined to take it for granted that the body should be as he wants it to be. We do not want the body to become old or sick, but the body does not hear what we want. One day it must be sick and die. And this is why the Buddha advises us to consider it as not ours.

The same is given to the rest which are feelings, mind, and mental objects. According to Buddhism, we live in the body and it is natural to feel something as the result of living in the body. When the season changes sometimes we get a headache and fever. This is an example of pain which is one among the three feelings. On the hot day, the cool wind is something desirable. The feeling caused by the cool wind within such a circumstance is an example of pleasure which is one among the three feelings as well. Besides these two feelings there is also the neutral one as to be found when we do not have both pain and pleasure. These feelings should be considered like the body—they are not ours in the sense that we cannot command them to persist or disappear as we need. The mind as meant by the Buddha is consciousness. When we see, we should know we are seeing. This applies to other perceptions like hearing and so on. Like the body and the feelings, the mind is the object for meditation in two meanings—for the cultivation of mindfulness and wisdom. Suppose we do not have the problem with mindfulness concerning the working of mind, the next thing to be done is to consider it as not ours. The Buddha says that when a sight occurs a person is naturally inclined to feel that there is 'me' and this 'me' is playing a role as the seer. The creation of 'me' in man and animal is illusion as there is no entity called 'me' inside them. Certainly, the Buddha accepts that the feeling of 'me' must stem from something inside human life; but this does not mean that there must be some entity really existing inside our life as the corresponding reality of the word 'me.' In short, the Buddha opines that the complicated conditions inside human life form a feeling of 'me.' As this word does not have corresponding reality, we should know exactly, that there is no

agent inside us playing the role as the doer. There are only the seeing, the hearing, the smelling, the tasting, and the touching without the seer, the hearer, the smeller, the taster, and the toucher at all.

In some sense, meditation is considered by the Buddha to be a tool for 'seeing' hidden things in our life. Generally people have the feeling that "I exist and I am the person who does these or those things." The meditation will disclose the truth that actually there is no such "I." In the text, the Buddha has suggested that the "I" is just a phenomenon in the meaning that we can feel it but cannot see where it is located. This is enough to conclude that there is nothing playing the role as the owner of our life. Meditation greatly helps us to understand that we should consider our whole life in terms of a stream of conditions. This stream has no core. So when we get pain or pleasure all should be considered as if merely the passing wind. It comes and goes away anywhere and anytime.

Suffering in Buddhist perspective has its root in ignorance. And ignorance in the Buddha's teaching is nothing but a lack of knowing that actually life is just a stream of conditions. Buddhist meditation has its primary function to reduce or destroy suffering in human life, so meditation should be concerned with human thoughts. As the Buddha himself says in the first stanza of the *Dhammapada*, thoughts are the roots of everything in man's life. Suffering must be found in the life of a man whose thoughts are not arranged wisely. On the contrary, happiness must be found as well in the life of a man whose thoughts are well arranged. In the *Maha Satipatthana Sutra* mentioned previously, the Buddha talks about the mind and mental phenomena which can be merged into one concept: *thought*. There are two things given by the Buddha as the ways to deal with thought: first, thought as an internal phenomenon has no entity playing the role as corresponding agent, it should be viewed like the passing wind; second, thought as an external phenomenon or a consciousness of something in the world should be directed to some valuable theory. In the text, the Buddha gives the

Four Noble Truths as an example of a valuable theory as said. It should be noted that meditation as found at this stage is directly concerned with contemplative thinking. In this sense, reading books or even watching movies, which give us insight, should be counted a kind of meditation practice.



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BUDDHIST INFLUENCED OBJECTIONS

TO THE RULE OF LAW

AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL POLICY

Mark Tamthai



Having been involved in social policy design and implementation for the past 10 years (primarily in security and political development matters) I have become fascinated by the influences on people's ideas regarding society and the acceptable ways to deal with its problems which seem to come from their Buddhist backgrounds. [For example, in drafting a new National Security Policy for the Southern Border Provinces in 1998 there was initially great hesitation and uncertainty in the different committees that had to pass the new policy (made up almost entirely of Buddhists) because it stood out from past policies in its high level of inclusiveness and acceptance of diversity. The policy was eventually approved, not however by intricate security based arguments but by introducing into the discussion the idea of the Muslim population in the region as being "friends in the birth-ageing-sickness-death cycle".] Two things stand out pertaining to these Buddhist influenced views. First, only a few Buddhist points of references are usually used over and over (karma, friends in suffering, good society coming from good people etc.) and secondly, these points of reference are so entrenched that any new proposed understanding of such commonly held views which come out of Buddhist scholarship and research

are either ignored, or those who make such suggestions are considered to need more study, or if they are monks are considered as “monks at the end of the line”, a common phrase that senior monks use to describe such monks. This perspective raises the question of in what way is Buddhist doctrinal scholarship relevant to understanding how Buddhism influences actually held views on the rule of law and other legal issues.

In many parts of Thai society there has always existed a sense of uneasiness in discussions about ways to improve society when the question of building strong institutions is raised. The uneasiness most often comes because it seems as if we are walking someone else's path, a path alien to our own way of understanding what the foundations of a desirable society should be built on. As the discussion on social policy progresses, whether it be in official meetings or academic seminars, the counter position most often raised is that good societies come about by having good people making decisions and not by having strong institutions such as rule-of-law. Upon further probing it will then be suggested that this is the Buddhist way of understanding human beings and society. [The term “Buddhist way” is used here to refer to Thai Buddhism at the level of a moral system (in this case a moral system for social ethics) and not as enlightenment or as a philosophical system, using the typology of Saeng Chandra-ngarm]. To find the roots of this understanding of what the features of a Buddhist moral system are we need to look into two kinds of sources for such ideas, the writings of Buddhist scholars written for the general public and the sermons delivered by Buddhist monks on various occasions. This paper will discuss the views on this topic of two such Buddhist scholars, Preecha Changkhwanyuen from The Royal Institute and Somparn Promta from the Chulalongkorn Center for Buddhist Studies (one of the purposes of setting up this center was to encourage the study of the relationship between one's understanding of Buddhism and one's social-political-economic views). The analysis of Buddhist sermons requires

another kind of study which goes beyond the scope of this discussion, though the views of some influential monks will be discussed.

At the same time in present day Thailand there are attempts to solve various social problems by exactly the methods being opposed, namely by the strengthening of institutions. Two such directions which shall be discussed are The National Reconciliation Commission's proposal to deal with the violence in southern Thailand by reform of the legal system and strengthening rule of law, and the advocacy position of the Asian Human Rights Commission on the connection between rule of law and the protection of human rights, a position taken by Thai human rights organizations as well.

Until these opposite ways of understanding how to work towards a better society are reconciled there is the risk of much of the progress from each side canceling each other out. In the conclusion we discuss a possible path towards this reconciliation.

The view of two Buddhist scholars

The two scholars whose writings on this topic will be discussed are chosen because of the nature of their works. Preecha's style is very accessible to the general public and he also gives numerous talks to a wide range of institutions such as schools, military academies, political institutions. Because of this, the impact of his ideas go beyond the walls of academe and can continually influence public debate. Somparn, on the other hand, intentionally writes to engage the public (as he explains in detail in the preface to his book *Buddhist Philosophy*). Though he takes a somewhat controversial position in his understanding that being a Buddhist does not mean being just a follower of the dharma but also means debating with the dharma on some issues while still following the Path, his ideas are influential because of his many "popular" books on the Buddhist view of such things as abortion, cloning, violence, law, environmental problems etc. which are written for general public consumption. He also has a close involvement with the Bud-

dhist monastic universities both as an alumni (of Mahachulalongkorn) and as a lecturer.

Preecha's view on the Buddhist way to build a better society begins with his understanding of what the nature of a Buddhist society should be like. For Preecha it is a society whose members are compassionate human beings. Such a society could be referred to as a compassionate society. The question for our concerns then is whether the rule of law is a feature of such a society. Preecha's general answer is that the rule of law is irrelevant to building a compassionate society because if people are not compassionate they will either take advantage of imperfect laws or find a way around the better ones. On the other hand, if people are compassionate then there is no need for the rule of law.

Somparn's view on this matter is slightly different. Though he begins with the same understanding as Preecha that a desirable society in the Buddhist sense means a compassionate society, he sees the necessity of having the rule of law present in such a society. His view is that there are people who can become compassionate and others who are not able to so easily. The rule of law is a means to protect the compassionate members of society from those others who would otherwise do them harm. What Somparn is proposing is that a desirable society must have rule of law but only as a tool and not as a fundamental feature of such a society. He disagrees with Preecha in that he believes that there can be laws which effectively curb the behavior and the ability to harm others by those members who might wish to do so. However, in the important question of whether the rule of law is a fundamental feature of a desirable society, both Preecha and Somparn are in agreement that it is not.

We might ask why views like those of Preecha and Somparn are so opposite to many who see the rule of law as not only being a fundamental feature of a desirable society, but in some cases its defining characteristic. Can there be a greater contrast between "We wish to be a nation of laws, not of men" and "We wish to be a nation of compas-

sionate men, not of laws”? One answer might be that the two views understand the meaning of ‘rule of law’ differently. But whether the definitions given by each view be formal, substantive or functional (following the classification used by Matthew Stephenson), once the difficulties with the different definitions of ‘rule of law’ are worked out (e.g. not allowing for the desirability of the rule of law to be tautological) it seems likely that both views will tend to understand the meaning of the rule of law quite similarly, and so this should not be the answer. I think that a more accurate answer to the above question is that the two views begin with different ideas of what a desirable society is. For one view it is a society whose members are compassionate human beings, for the other it is a society whose members do not infringe on each other’s rights. With such a difference we can see how the role played by the rule of law in working towards such societies would be different. Taking a Buddhist cosmology seriously would mean many more such differences in regards to issues pertaining to law, for example the possibility that some commonly considered criminal acts might be a compassionate act on some occasions. Such possibilities would then have to be dealt with in the legal code in use. When discussing how to actually put such ideas into practice it is often said that the direction of a person’s karmic status might be too difficult to substantiate. But projecting the direction of a person’s behavior is done in many other contexts (advertising, voting behavior etc.) and so it seems as if the real obstacles lie not with those types of problems but with the idea of preventing something not yet done. This is only a problem if we accept an “innocent until proven guilty” position with the usual accepted understanding of proof.

The impact on social policy

Dealing with the violence in the South

The National Reconciliation Commission’s recommendations for dealing with the violence in the south have the strengthening of rule of

law as one of its main pillars (in the past, extrajudicial killings and state hit squads operated unhindered, or at best ignored). The recommendations cover such things as expanding responsibility for investigation of criminal cases beyond just the police force, establishing a center to handle cases of disappearances and abductions, putting into place mechanisms that provide wider access to the justice system, introducing ADR mechanisms, creating ways for the justice system to be accountable to the public etc.

But in order to be successful these recommendations need general public support to create society-wide ownership of the process of reform, otherwise the reforms will just be another case of trying to seem up to date in matters of the justice system.

The Protection of Human Rights

Strengthening the rule of law is necessary to counter impunity, something which is mainly responsible for human rights abuses (see the 3 articles from Article 2). Protecting rights and affording remedies are all about strengthening institutions such as the Department of Special Investigation, Department of Rights and Liberties Protection, Central Institute of Forensic Science, National Human Rights Commission etc. For example, consider the matter of torture. Torture continues to be practiced routinely by the police because no laws exist to proscribe torture and prescribe penalties; no procedures exist to investigate acts of torture. It is more efficient to deal with this matter not by convincing the police that torture is morally wrong, but by changing certain laws, such as the law involving detention of suspects, since reducing prolonged periods of detention will then lessen the likelihood of torture, also important are laws which put investigation procedures in place where institutions such as those above can follow up on abuses.

Reconciling the two attitudes towards the rule of law in Thailand

The debate between the two attitudes towards rule of law discussed above is based on one view believing that no matter what institutions

are put in place they can be undermined by immoral people in charge (either by good laws and institutions being undermined, or by weak laws being used for justifying improper acts). Examples of this way of understanding such matters are widespread in Thai society. Consider the following:

(1) The view of the prominent monk Phra Khru Dhammatornnipol, the abbot of Wat Toongkoi in Pattani. Himself a member of the NRC, he told the commission that "...we need moral human beings to deal with the violence in the south not more institutions and legal reforms..."

(2) A Sunday morning Buddhist sermon on TV explaining that solving social problems with institutions is like having an itch and dealing with it by scratching the wrong place.

(3) A radio talk show on politics with a call-in guest giving his opinion on the uselessness of reforming the Constitutional Court because no matter how good the law governing the workings of the court, it comes down to what kind of people the members of the court are.

(4) The present political/constitutional crisis where a large network of civil society groups want the King to determine if it is time to give the constitutional arrangement a rest and appoint a 'good' person to set society back on track.

However, from the other view we have the rejoinder that until we can come up with concrete ways to move Thai society towards a "compassionate society" there seems to be no better alternative than relying on the rule of law.

Engineering Compassion, but with a safety net

So how might we proceed? One way is to revisit the possibility of finding concrete measures that can make Thai society become a more compassionate society. Most of the pessimism relating to such projects stem from the fact that past attempts center around different forms of moral education, all of which have been failures. But there might be other ways to proceed. For example we could think about the possibil-

ity of 'engineering compassion'. Though this might sound strange it is because 'engineering' usually leads us to thinking about constructing manuals. But in this case it could be engineering by 'showing truth'. Such a project could begin the building of a more compassionate Thai society through policy: for example there could be daily TV spots, after the news, of hospitals and funerals showing people from all parts of society going through the cycle of Birth-Ageing-Sickness-Death, thus creating feelings throughout Thai society of everyone being fellow sufferers. From this recognition of our common humanity will then flow feelings of compassion towards our fellow citizens. Engineering compassion could also be a task for the King to engage in. One such task would be for the King to become the transitive point of passing on 'caring' among citizens. [I have proposed such a rethinking of what it means to be a good King and have suggested the necessity of going beyond the "Tossapit Rajadhamma" (the 10 Kingly virtues) in my paper on constitutional monarchies.]

Meanwhile, as these projects make slow but steady progress, we proceed with programs to strengthen the rule of law as a temporary safety line tied around our waist as we make our climb towards a compassionate society. This line keeps society afloat while 'bad' people are still in positions of power, allowing for the gradual change of these people (either internal change or by replacement). But since safety lines not only prevent falls, but also puts a limit on how high we can climb, eventually this line must be cut loose if we are to reach the peak.

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ATTRACTION AND REPULSION

FROM A SCIENTIFIC BUDDHIST PERSPECTIVE

Dion Oliver Peoples



“One cannot employ an example (*dr̥ṣṭānta*) visible in the world to repudiate the noble *Dharma*, for the noble *Dharma* and the conventional *Dharma* are different.”¹

¹ Bhikkhu KL Dhammajoti: *Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma* (Center of Buddhist Studies, University of Hong Kong, 2007), p. 88 – quoting: the *Abhidharma-mahā-vibhāṣa-śāstra*, T no. 1545

Why? The above non-scientific view should not represent absolute-dhamma. Sarvāstivādan Buddhists even object to the manner in which conventional similes are used to refute others.² ‘Common’ knowledge [figuring ‘commonality’ to be training below the non-specialist or university level] has certainly and rightfully departed from what was traditionally taught in various religious systems, but lags behind modern scientific discoveries. Former conventions have been overturned, newly interpreting ultimate realities. The negligent – nearly all of which clamor to incorporate proofs that their system incorporates modern wisdom – as to remain in good standing and not defeated by higher-sciences, are, erroneously operating. Militaries often educate their young soldiers on modern technologies – to gain edges over potential rivals – then there is the *Yodhājīva Sutta* from the *Samyutta-nikāya* to overturn any call to arms. Musicians are often aware how their apparatus can manipulate audio-frequencies. Buddhist monks become experienced with high attainments during meditation. Thus, this article wishes to participate with what has been established towards the modern Buddhist scientific view of the cosmos. Please take some moments to investigate the pictures or graphic representation of the universe, above and below.

In the artistic representation of the universe’s celestial-mechanics, above – sub-atomic or atomic quanta collect together to form clouds of stellar-dust, and under the laws of attraction [electromagnetic, gravity, and others] – these particles further condense, until they collapse and begin to ignite and form a star, and eventually a solar-system like the one we are currently participating in. “Simply put, star formation begins when part of the interstellar medium – one of those cold, dark clouds – starts to collapse under its own weight. The cloud fragment heats up as it shrinks, and eventually its center becomes hot enough for nuclear fusion to begin. At that point, the contraction stops and a star

² Bhikkhu KL Dhammajoti: *Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma* (Center of Buddhist Studies, University of Hong Kong, 2007), p. 88-89

is born.”³ This is a demonstration of a natural, observational law that any astronomy student can ascertain.

One might investigate into the *Vimamsaka Sutta* from the *Majjhima-nikāya*, stating: “Bhikkhus, a bhikkhu who is an inquirer, not knowing how to gauge another’s mind, should investigate the Tathagata with respect to two kinds of states, states cognizable through the eye and through the ear thus: ‘Are there found in the Tathagata or not any [defiled states; mixed states; cleansed states...] cognizable through the eye or through the ear?... When he comes to know this, he investigates him further... The Teacher teaches him Dhamma with its higher and higher levels, with its more and more sublime levels, with its *dark and bright counterparts*. As the Teacher teaches the Dhamma to a bhikkhu in this way through direct knowledge of a certain teaching here in that Dhamma, the bhikkhu comes to a conclusion about the teachings. He places confidence in the Teacher...”⁴ Like the Dhamma, matter is both known and unknown – bright and dark, sublime certainly at the atomic and astronomical levels.

Humans, are of course, limited to what can be perceived and cognized through the sense organs – certainly with what is determined from the eyes and ears. Because human’s perceptions are limited, our perspective is limited as well – within that of the visual and other sensual realms of experience. Yet, do humans forget that other beings operate in different realms, apart from our own? Humans are also limited to perceive certain phenomena– only allowed by our technological developments. Consider: animals can sense earthquakes before humans and our technology.⁵ Bats, for instance, may be blind and

³ Eric Chaisson & Steve McMillan: *Astronomy Today* – Fourth Edition (Upper Saddle River: Prentice-Hall, 2002), p. 490

⁴ Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi: *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha – A New Translation of the Buddha* (Boston: Wisdom Publications 1995)pp. 415-418

⁵<http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/unleashed/2008/07/whole-lotta-sha.html>

utilize sonar – consider what can be found from the following chart⁶ – illustrating the frequency range of hearing for different types of animals:

Hearing Perceptions		
Animal Hearing (Approximate ranges)	Frequency (hertz)	
	Low	High
Humans	15	20,000
Elephants	16	12,000
Cattle	16	35,000
Horses	31	34,000
Dogs	40	60,000
Cats	45	64,000
Whales & Dolphins	70	150,000
Sheep	100	30,000
Grasshopper & Locusts	100	50,000
Rodents	200	91,000
Seals & Sea lions	300	55,000
Bats	1,000	150,000

Humans, due to limitations placed upon them, need technology to assist towards being a greater cognoscente. Additionally, humans cannot see everything that there is, in the ‘visual spectrum’; humans cannot see x-rays, ultraviolet rays, and other types of emissions - receivable only from equipment that can measure or record ‘information’ available from the cosmos or hospitals. Others also are aware of this: “the eyes of different species are sensitive to different-colored light or rays that are invisible to us. A dog can see in the dark because its eyes are more sensitive to infrared light than ours. A pigeon can see ultraviolet rays that we cannot. Bats don’t use sight, but perceive objects thanks to the echoes from the high-frequency sounds they produce. Their representation of the world is certainly very different from ours.”⁷ Humans,

⁶ Source:<http://hypertextbook.com/facts/1998/JuanCancel.shtml>-citing Encyclopedia Britannica.

⁷ Matthieu Ricard & Trinh Xuan Thuan: *The Quantum and the Lotus – A Journey to*

therefore cannot perceive total reality, although there are some who claim such attainments; never-the-less, Buddhists should never cease striving.

It is interesting to learn that the Sarvāstivādins claimed: “The non-existence of the past and future implies that the present likewise does not exist, since the present is designated in relation to the past and future. The three times not existing, the conditioned would not exist. The conditioned not existing, the unconditioned too would not exist since the latter is established in relation to the former. The conditioned and the unconditioned both not existing, then there would not be any dharma whatsoever, which entails that there is no liberation and *nirvāṇa* – a serious false view!”⁸ The light that we see from stars, is this present light, or passing [past] light – billions of years old? This being said, science should be greatly understood.

We can perceive only partial reality, although our scientific achievements allow us to gain insight into the ‘relative’ or ‘theoretical’ unknown – but may be known to other species, illustrating that there is indeed, a “physical world that exists independent of human experience.”⁹ Humans are subjected to even more misperceptions - the Hubble Space Telescope¹⁰, found: “multiple images of a quasar gravitation-

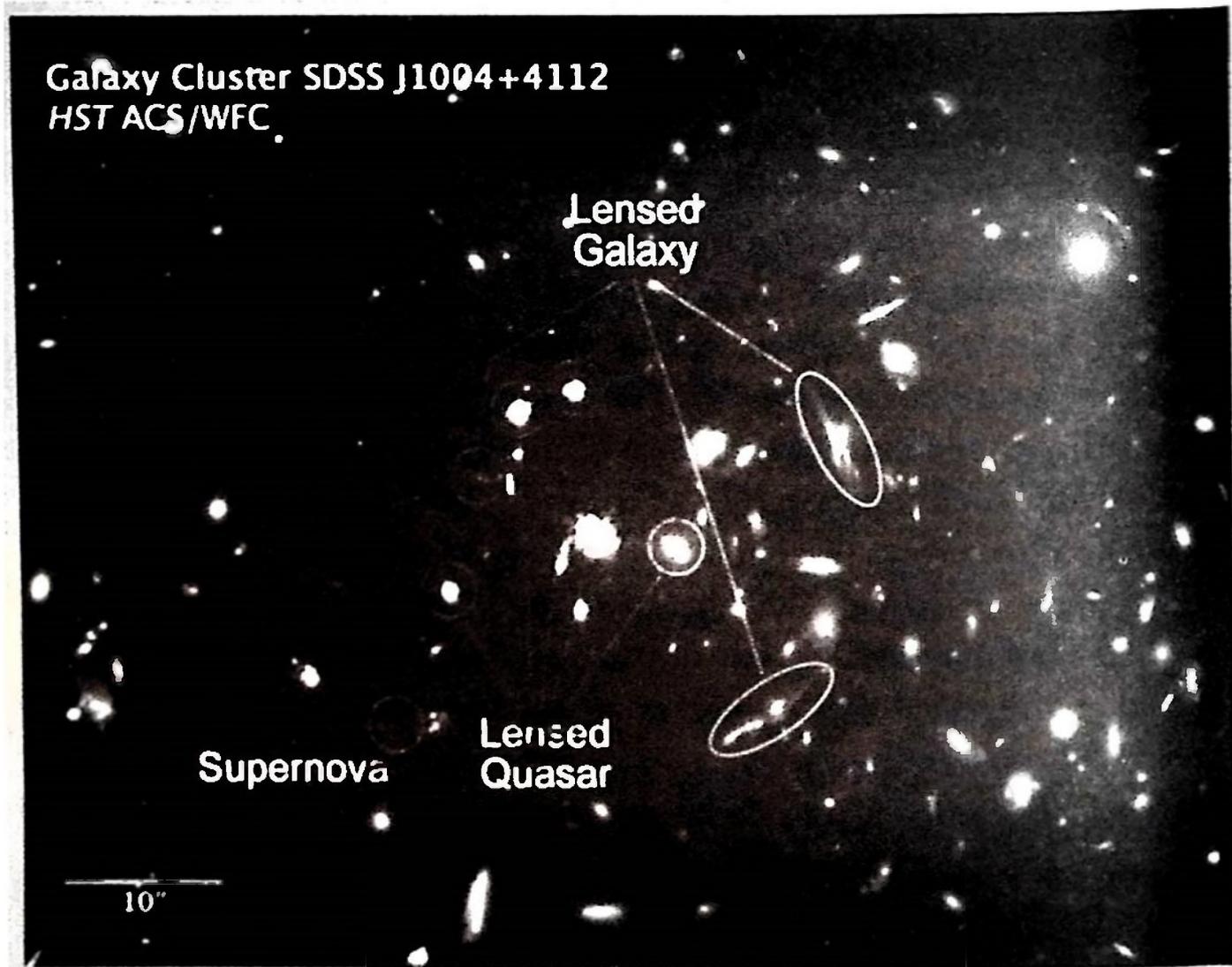
the Frontiers Where Science and Buddhism Meet (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2001), p. 120

⁸ Bhikkhu KL Dhammajoti: *Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma* (Center of Buddhist Studies, University of Hong Kong, 2007), p. 73

⁹ Matthieu Ricard & Trinh Xuan Thuan: *The Quantum and the Lotus – A Journey to the Frontiers Where Science and Buddhism Meet* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2001), p. 121

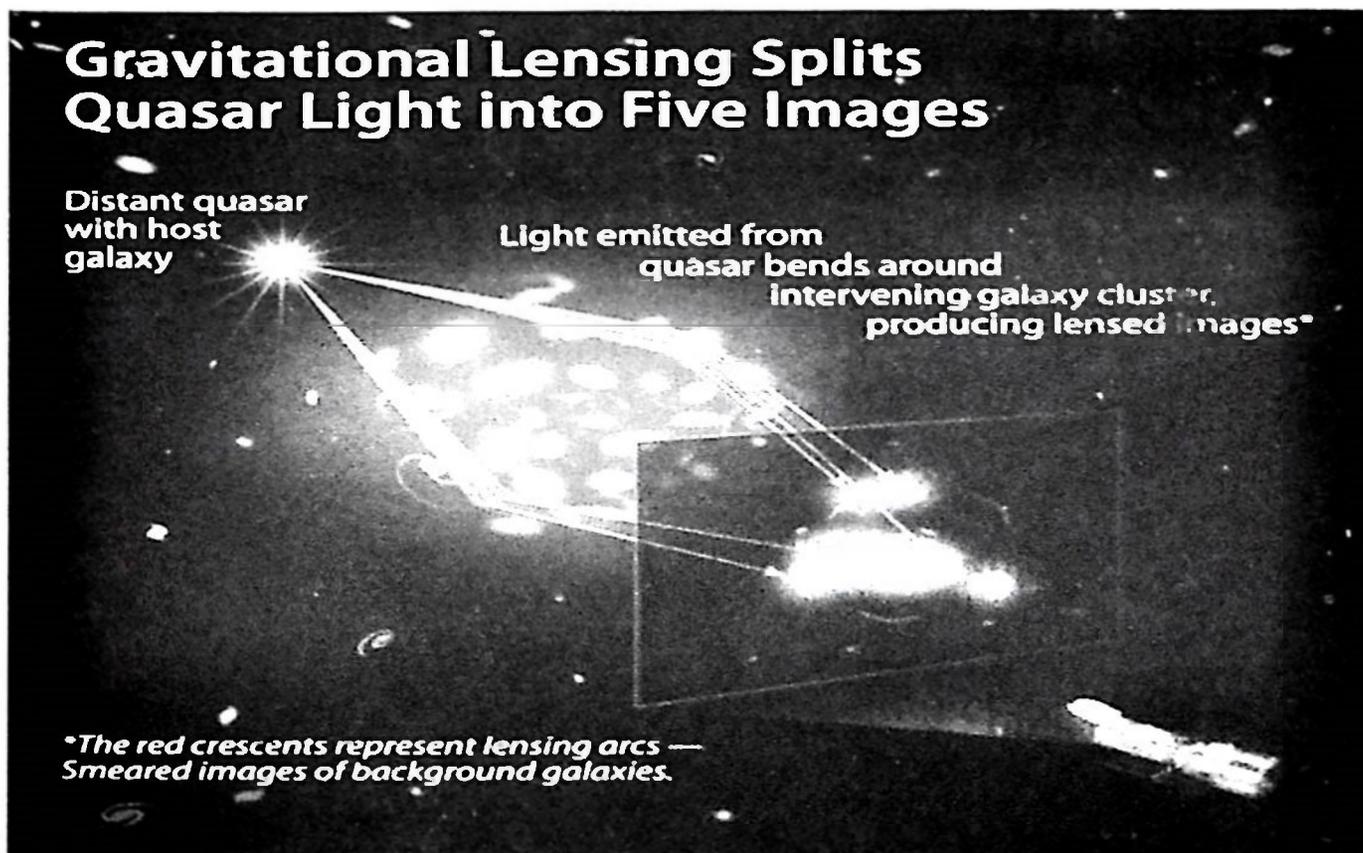
¹⁰http://hubblesite.org/newscenter/archive/releases/2006/23/image/c/format/web_print/ - the actual explanation reads: “Although many examples of gravitational lensing have been observed, this “quintuple quasar” is the only case so far in which multiple quasar images are produced by an entire galaxy cluster acting as a gravitational lens. The background quasar is the brilliant core of a galaxy. It is powered by a black hole, which is devouring gas and dust and creating a gusher of light in the process. When the quasar's light passes through the gravity field of the galaxy cluster that lies be-

ally lensed by the galaxy cluster SDSS J1004+4112... two images [of the same quasar] come from light bending around opposite sides of the galaxy cluster."¹¹



tween us and the quasar, the light is bent by the space-warping gravity field in such a way that five separate images of the object are produced surrounding the cluster's center. The fifth quasar image is embedded to the right of the core of the central galaxy in the cluster. The cluster also creates a cobweb of images of other distant galaxies gravitationally lensed into arcs. The galaxy cluster creating the lens is known as SDSS J1004+4112 and was discovered in the Sloan Digital Sky Survey. It is one of the more distant clusters known (seven billion light-years away), and is seen as it appeared when the universe was half its present age."

¹¹ Vic Mansfield: *Tibetan Buddhism and Modern Physics – Toward a Union of Love and Knowledge* (West Conshohocken: Templeton Foundation Press 2008), p. 156



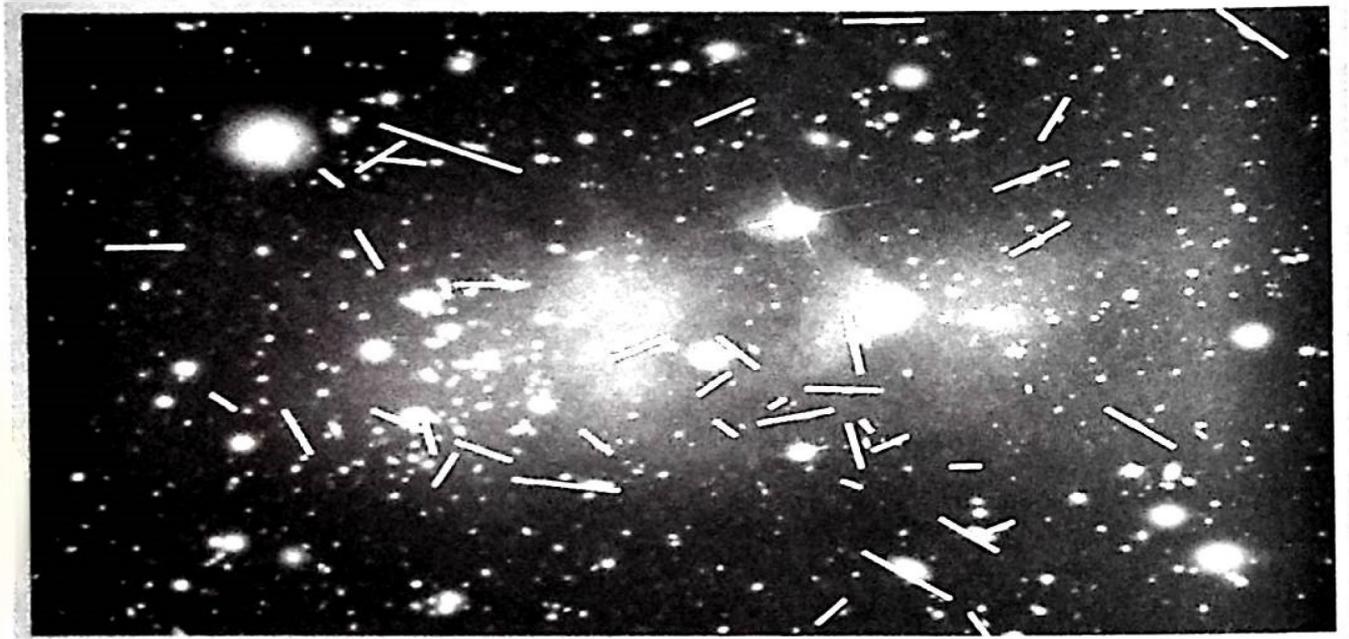
Updating our own knowledge of the ‘perceived’ or ‘received’ phenomena – through various forms [a technological education allows for this!] – this is our ethical responsibility to learn and teach to our children and young students. Teaching old scientific information can be embarrassing – when students might possess greater insights into specific subjects. Educators should learn more scientific information to support or reject teachings gained from their ancient traditions. Being attracted to new pieces of knowledge can improve our wisdom¹², being repulsed by new technological, philosophical, or even other religious traditions ‘narrow’ our perspectives. Buddhism mandates that we explore the wisdom or knowledge from the various systems or traditions – and when we find them to be true, we can accept and teach this wisdom to the next generation of ‘upholders of the Buddhist tradition’. Laughable, it may be, if Buddhists cannot adapt to the ever-changing

¹² For instance – imagine what happens to Buddhist theories, when inquisitive students visit: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cosmology>

modern world, while being respectful to our centuries-old tradition, starting from the Buddha's own Enlightenment about 2,600 years ago.

Picture of Multiple Galaxies on Different Planes

Explanation¹³ & Analysis:



¹³ *The Matter of the Bullet Cluster: Composite Credit: X-ray: NASA/CXC/CfA/ M. Markevitch et al.; Lensing Map: NASA/STScI; ESO WFI; Magellan, U.Arizona, D.Clowe et al.; Optical: NASA/STScI; Magellan, U.Arizona, D. Clowe et al. Found on: <http://antwrp.gsfc.nasa.gov/apod/ap080823.html> - accessed on 9 September 2008: "The matter in galaxy cluster 1E 0657-56, fondly known as the "bullet cluster", is shown in this composite image. A mere 3.4 billion light-years away, the bullet cluster's individual galaxies are seen in the optical image data, but their total mass adds up to far less than the mass of the cluster's two clouds of hot x-ray emitting gas shown in red. Representing even more mass than the optical galaxies and x-ray gas combined, the blue hues show the distribution of dark matter in the cluster. Otherwise invisible to telescopic views, the dark matter was mapped by observations of gravitational lensing of background galaxies. In a text book example of a shock front, the bullet-shaped cloud of gas at the right was distorted during the titanic collision between two galaxy clusters that created the larger bullet cluster itself. But the dark matter present has not interacted with the cluster gas except by gravity. The clear separation of dark matter and gas clouds is considered direct evidence that dark matter exists." Additional pictures can be found at:*

—<http://antwrp.gsfc.nasa.gov/apod/archivepix.html>

Solar Systems and Galaxies operate on different tilted-planes. I draw some lines, on top of some galaxies, to illustrate this finding. What does this mean? This means that during the formation of these bodies, matter or radiation was expelled in different directions, potentially influencing nearby bodies in different ways. Therefore, some abnormalities might exist in trajectories. This should have diverse effects on where matter is, and in which direction it has traveled. We know that asteroids and other space-objects are covered with craters or have collected dust – which could have influenced its original [if uninfluenced] trajectory. Certainly, there are considerable distances between these different objects, subjected to influence from various angles at different speeds and times.¹⁴

Professor Trinh Xuan Thuan has stated: “Science was itself born from a total and categorical rejection of any such teleological [relating to the study of ultimate causes in nature or of actions in relation to their ends or utility] thinking, which is the province of religious doctrines. With that said, modern cosmology has discovered that the conditions that allow for human life seem to be coded into the properties of each atom, star, and galaxy in our universe and in all of the physical laws that govern it.”¹⁵ He goes on to state that the universe depends on ‘initial conditions’ – specified conditions that factor gravity, strong and weak nuclear forces, electro-magnetic forces, the speed of light, the Planck Constant [fixing the size of atoms]; and lesser elementary particles such as protons electrons, quarks, etc – all playing a role in the formation of a universe and location of particles or objects. Changes or variances in these can create differences in the characteristics of species – even the mass of stars.¹⁶

¹⁴ Also see: <http://hubblesite.org/newscenter/archive/releases/2004/32/text/>

¹⁵ Matthieu Ricard & Trinh Xuan Thuan: *The Quantum and the Lotus – A Journey to the Frontiers Where Science and Buddhism Meet* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2001), p. 39

¹⁶ Matthieu Ricard & Trinh Xuan Thuan: *The Quantum and the Lotus – A Journey to*

Vibrations are damped not by friction, because there is no friction inside an atom, but by the reemission of radio waves. By working backward through this chain of reasoning, one can determine the geometric arrangement of the hydrogen atom's neighboring atoms. It is also possible to locate atoms in space from determining their red or blue shift, and allow for medical images to be made using highly advanced equipment using a variety of wave-lengths. A red shift in the analyzed spectrum indicates the object is moving away and a blue shift indicates an approaching object. Atomic vibrations are of the strange and spooky kind described by the laws of quantum mechanics. It is impressive, however, that the few simple ideas we have learned about resonance can still be applied successfully to describe many aspects of this exotic system.¹⁷ Sub-atomic quanta are now known¹⁸: a quark assists in the formation of protons and neutrons and its other – the lepton assists in the making of electrons and neutrinos. These quanta can be right [positive] or left handed [negative] – dependent on which way the particle spins [helicity].

Theravada Buddhists have something similar to quanta: *kalapas*, or small materialities – but few are conversant enough to explain what these are. Another interpretation suggests: “what is real is what has a *svabhāva*. Among these various synonyms of *svabhāva* is the term *avayava*, ‘part’. A ‘part’ here refers to the smallest possible unit which cannot be further analyzed; it is the ultimate real. Whatever can be further analyzed either physically or mentally – a composite – is ‘having a part’ (*sāvayava*); it is a relative real, superimposed on the ultimate

the Frontiers Where Science and Buddhism Meet (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2001), p. 39

¹⁷http://www.lightandmatter.com/html_books/3vw/ch02/ch02.html - accessed on 17 September 2008

¹⁸ For a complete list, see:

- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_particles - and
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Particle_identification - and
- <http://pdg.lbl.gov/2007/reviews/kmmixrpp.pdf>

reals [the five aggregates]. This also means that what is real or what exists truly is what exists from the highest or ultimate standpoint as opposed to what exists relatively/conventionally.”¹⁹

We need to consider the above artistic representation of the universe: This picture sums up the knowledge of the cosmos – and at no step is there a demonstration of deity-interaction [a mind-construction rooted from human ignorance and delusion]. Ricard states: “The Universe has not been adjusted by a great watchmaker so that conscious can exist. The universe and consciousness have always coexisted and so cannot exclude each other. To coexist, phenomena must be mutually suitable.”²⁰ This would seem to imply a general theory of everything – which is in fact, something sought by some scientists – an excursion into modern science books or deeper inquiries into *Wikipedia* [which is actually updated by knowing ‘scientists’] would reveal a wealth of scientific information. However, as anyone can determine – everything falls into three possibilities: laws of attraction; laws of repulsion, and neither or static-type operations [a broader category]. Specialized-operating scientists can better explain what is now considered basic education in these scientific disciplines.

Humans are a combination of incidental arrays of space-dust.²¹

¹⁹ Bhikkhu KL Dhammajoti: *Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma* (Center of Buddhist Studies, University of Hong Kong, 2007), p. 77

²⁰ Matthieu Ricard & Trinh Xuan Thuan: *The Quantum and the Lotus – A Journey to the Frontiers Where Science and Buddhism Meet* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2001), p. 42

²¹ Professor Robert L. Zimmerman is from the Institute of Theoretical Science, at the University of Oregon. I attended his ASTR 121 and ASTR 122 courses at the University of Oregon. See: <http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~phys600/>; <http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~phys600/ASTR121.html>; <http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~phys600/ASTR122.html> ; additionally, I studied astronomy as a fifth grader, taking a field trip to: <http://www.griffithobs.org> and as part of 7th or 8th grade – the only course from elementary, junior high or high school that I saved my coursework. I continue to save newspaper articles on astronomy and preserve them inside my textbook from Professor Zimmerman’s course. For more than twenty years, I have been interested in

How is this illustrated? Recall the above graphic – space-dust ‘particles’ became attracted to each other – gravity, and other forces became stronger and more influential, the particles became tighter and tighter and eventually ignited into a star [generally speaking] – a nearby star’s collapse and expulsion of its charged particles interacted with our solar-system and possibly created the conditions that we are knowing in our comparatively short life-spans. The secrets to ‘life’ can be observed from stellar-explosions and star-formations. Other ‘nearby’ stars collapsing and shedding of outer layers interact eventually with the next adjacent solar-system – this would demonstrate that particles are not all moving in the same direction in the galaxy, and could demonstrate a cyclic form of cosmos in terms of the age of solar-objects rising, occurring and collapsing. Astronomy presents such a picture of the cosmos.

Although Dr. Trinh Xuan Thuan discusses a “principle of organization” – this term should be defined as either: attraction of repulsion – and neither or static/erratic situations, rather than another metaphor for a grand theory of everything. Here two theories or laws need to be discussed – involving “attraction” and “repulsion” – which govern sub-atomic particles, human consciousness, and molecules moving throughout space.

Attraction:

Attraction in scientific terms includes: the above mentioned contraction of stellar particles clustering to eventually form stars; dark matter; black holes; gravity, vacuums; magnetism, protons... and any binding principle, including the Higgs-boson particles that may soon be discovered by the Large Hadron Collider CERN, operating in Switzerland, near France. In Buddhism, the terms: greed, wholesome, loving-kindness, compassion – are terms that could apply to this category of attraction.

Matthieu Ricard wrote: "Buddhism considers that phenomena aren't really 'born', in the sense that they pass from nonexistence into existence. They exist in terms of what we call 'relative truth', and have no actual reality."²² The mother's egg-cell is not dead, and the father's sperm-cell is not dead. The baby growing inside a pregnant woman is said to be in a period of gestation after conception; and the moment one is 'born' [the mother's body can no longer internally-support the baby and a period of repulsion begins with labor-pains] – the new 'life' begins, continues to grow, and then naturally decays. I have seen this through my wife's three pregnancies, and death of one newborn son. After birth, external support becomes necessary.

In Buddhism, living organisms are sensually attracted to certain phenomena – repulsed by 'another'. Flowers can sense the warmth of the Sun and thus, bloom. Animals can sense pheromones – to sexually excite another of the same species. Humans and other animals can sense phenomena through various sense-doors or organs capable of receiving and the eventual perceiving resulting from this encounter – some are even deceived or misinterpret the presented phenomena.

Repulsion:

Repulsion in scientific terms would include: the dispersal of atoms after their initial accidental clustering - the Big Bang – creating the galaxy, or the inflation that created the 'universe'; temperature [heat] which is really just a measurement of the average speed of the atomic movement; the conceptual stability of the sun is really based on the extreme pressure of high-speed atomic particles whose outward pressure equates to the effects of the inward effects of gravity²³; radiation; and

²² Matthieu Ricard & Trinh Xuan Thuan: *The Quantum and the Lotus – A Journey to the Frontiers Where Science and Buddhism Meet* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2001), p. 29

²³ Eric Chaisson & Steve McMillan: *Astronomy Today – Fourth Edition* (Upper Saddle River: Prentice-Hall, 2002), p. 490

polarization. In Buddhism, the terms: unwholesome, aversion or hatred – are terms that could apply to this category of repulsion; and any processes of time, decay, or impermanence.

Neither:

Neither or static/erratic situations in scientific terms would include: neutrons [and any neutrally charged object; and concepts that are under the influence of attraction or repulsion, such as: rotation, diffraction, and interference or modulation of a wave's amplitude or frequency; even scientific 'analysis' or observation. In Buddhism, the terms: delusion, equanimity – are just some of the terms that apply to this category of neither or static/erratic situations, as well as consciousness and any useful analytical/ intellectual processes.

The 'void' or nothingness qualifies into categorization here, along with 'space'. Relatively speaking, then – as Dr. Trinh Xuan Thuan stated: "Quantum mechanics thus eliminates all idea of locality. It provides a holistic idea of space. The notions of 'here' and 'there' become meaningless, because 'here' is identical to 'there'. This is the definition of what physicists call separability."²⁴ Mansfield defines separability as: "Mutually independent existence (the 'being-thus') of spatially distant things [Inherent existence for Buddhists]."²⁵ This isolationized independence allows for definable properties. Further: "Quantum physics has never been found to be wrong. So phenomena do seem 'interdependent' at a subatomic level, to use the Buddhist term."²⁶ In a previous location, Dr. Trinh Xuan Thuan states: "if

²⁴ Matthieu Ricard & Trinh Xuan Thuan: *The Quantum and the Lotus – A Journey to the Frontiers Where Science and Buddhism Meet* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2001), p. 68

²⁵ Vic Mansfield: *Tibetan Buddhism and Modern Physics – Toward a Union of Love and Knowledge* (West Conshohocken: Templeton Foundation Press 2008), p. 81

²⁶ Matthieu Ricard & Trinh Xuan Thuan: *The Quantum and the Lotus – A Journey to the Frontiers Where Science and Buddhism Meet* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2001), p. 69

something appears it means that the potential for manifestation was already present”²⁷ - [thus attraction].

Cosmic-Atomic Relationship:

The human brain operates between 0-30 Hertz²⁸, operating with Delta, Theta, Alpha, Beta, and Gamma waves. There are some interesting videos that can be found on www.youtube.com demonstrating how human brainwaves can operate – one could search for related topics.²⁹ However interpretations of this data can be skewed from ‘artifacts’ or errors caused by body movements – thus are non-cerebral in nature. There are interesting medical experiments that can be found documented.³⁰

There are ‘waves’ in our brain/bodies, and there are waves in the cosmos – arguably, we are not so different from what astronomers see in their telescopes, or what microbiologists see in their microscopes. However, as humans we can only see a limited portion of reality. Atomic particles also emit waves that can be measured. Our realities are subjected to change. The Nine-Planets was a ‘reality’ that has already been changed. Astronomers³¹ have recently discovered more plutinos similar to Pluto – which has been reclassified as a dual-dwarf planet, locked into orbit with Charon.³²

²⁷ Matthieu Ricard & Trinh Xuan Thuan: *The Quantum and the Lotus – A Journey to the Frontiers Where Science and Buddhism Meet* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2001), p. 30

²⁸ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecg> - accessed 17 June 2008

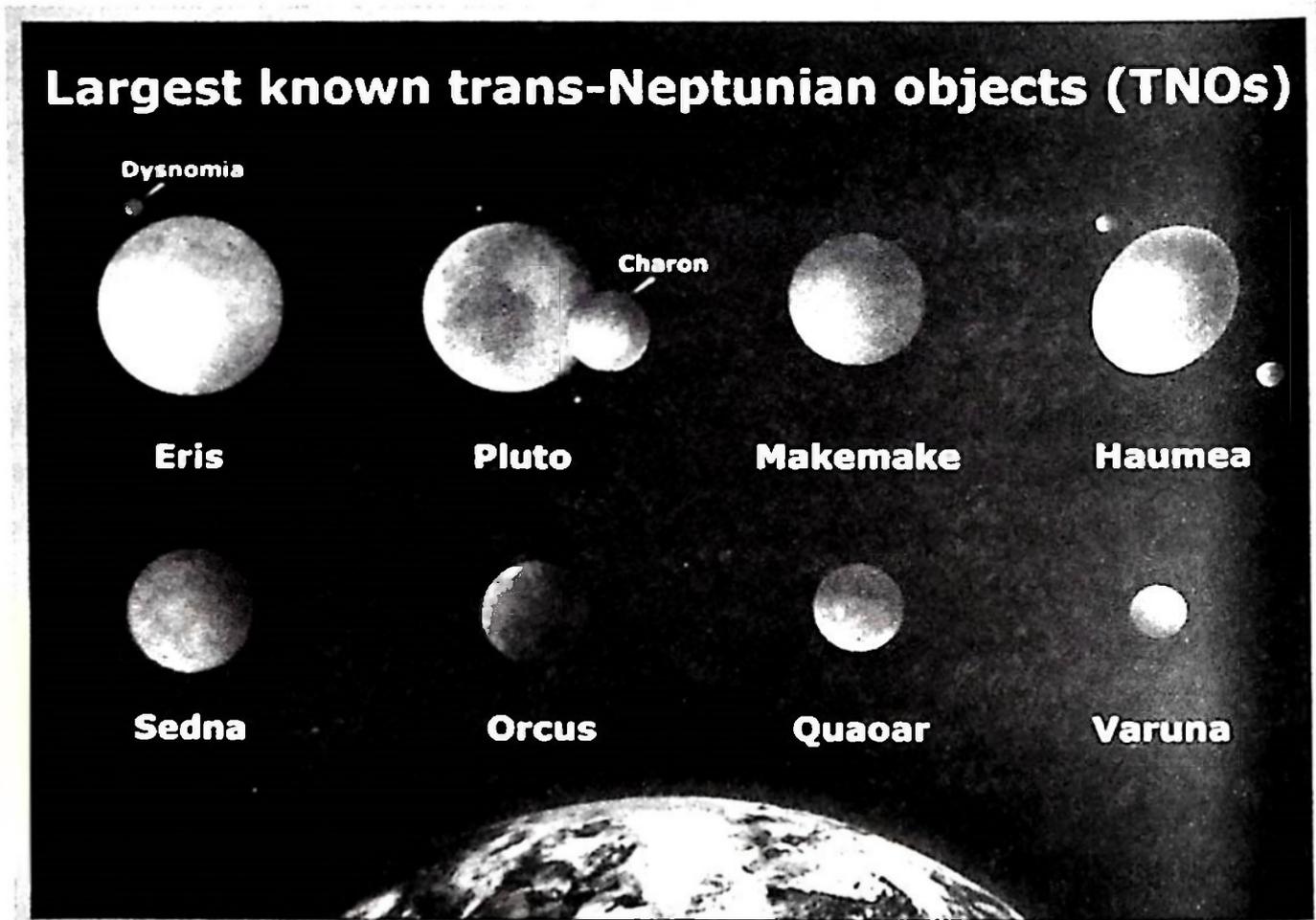
²⁹ “Ken Wilber Stops his Brain Waves” - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LFFMtq5g8N4>

³⁰ EEG and Clinical Neuroscience Society - <http://www.ecnsweb.com>

³¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portal:Solar_System – accessed on 17 July 2008

³² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charon_%28moon%29 – accessed 17 July 2008

Trans-Neptunian Objects



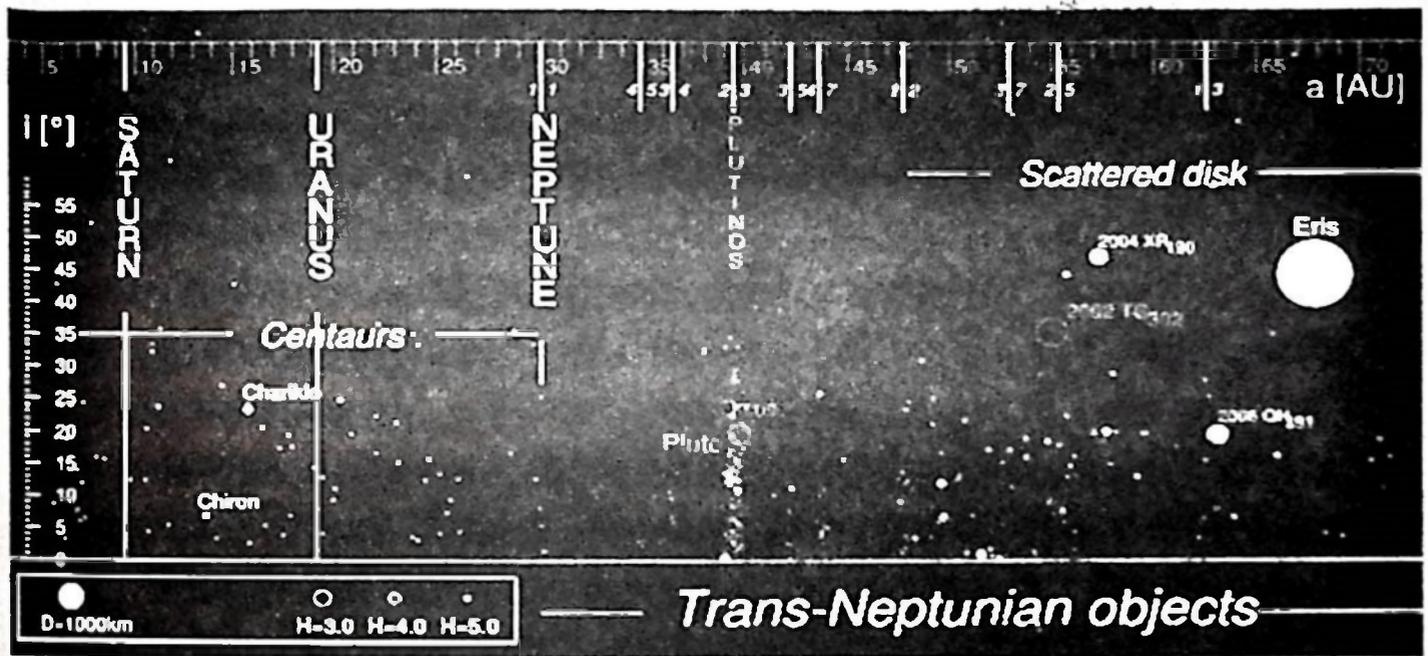
(Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pluto> - accessed 24 September 2008)

In 2003, Eris [and its moon, Dysnomia] was discovered, and it is 27% larger than Pluto, and orbits the Sun every 557 years [according to measurements].³³ Another: Makemake was also, recently discovered. On 17 September, 2008, Haumea was officially classified as a dwarf planet.

Other Cosmic Objects

As the diagram below depicts, there are more, yet to be officially recognized, and are shown where they 'orbit':

³³ [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eris_\(dwarf_planet\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eris_(dwarf_planet)) – accessed 24 September 2008



Known objects in the Kuiper belt, derived from data from the Minor Planet Center. Objects in the main belt are colored green, while scattered objects are colored orange. The four outer planets are blue. Neptune's few known Trojan asteroids are yellow, while Jupiter's are pink. The scattered objects between the Sun and the Kuiper belt are known as centaurs. The scale is in astronomical units.

Emissions:

Our brains emit waves; stars emit waves – other ‘cosmic’ objects emit waves. The Buddha even emitted waves – several times since contemplating the contents of the Abhidhamma, shortly after his enlightenment, and later, as found in several Jātaka stories: On several occasions, the Buddha is known to give standing discourses in front of his ‘scented chamber’, and would ‘emit’ rays from his head... on other occasions, the Buddha would give a discourse and meditation theme, and would emit the six-colored rays... and from a final situation – an occasion finds five-hundred female friends of Vīsakha enjoying strong alcohol, and afterwards present themselves before the Buddha, in their drunken condition. The Buddha emitted a shocking ray-of-light from

his eyebrows, followed by a “blinding darkness”. The drunk-women became terrified with a fear of death – until the effects of the drinks wore off. After the end of a stanza, the women became established in stream-entry – an implication that they never took up alcohol again. Rays here seem to be emitted from the Buddha’s disapproval of the ‘unethical situation’. Any person with ‘emotions’ can ascertain that when these situations are collectively analyzed, it seemed rays occurred when the Buddha was frustrated or intently focuses – perhaps signifying a ‘tight forehead’ or lowered-brow. It might be correct to state that these rays could be a different type of teaching to settle the masses with numerous problems or perspectives. How many of us have become ‘radiating’ with anger, or hot with some sort of sickness – we also emit this sort of heat. Our modern technology can detect many sorts of wave/particle emissions.

Additional Material to Consider:

Mathieu Ricard wrote: “A physical wave can be destructive, like a radioactive discharge for example [or an earthquake], or the source of well-being, such as sun-rays warming up a weary traveler. A radio wave can launch an appeal for war or for peace. In a similar way, the modifications made to our wave of consciousness by our thoughts and by the altruistic or malevolent motives behind our words and actions are expressed as happiness or suffering.”³⁴

This brief article demonstrates the importance of studying waves, at the micro and cosmic levels – and in doing so, this allows for a greater comprehension of the human mind – certainly when Buddhists spend durations of time trying to manipulate their personal mind-states. Buddhists, not ‘should’, but ‘must’ incorporate scientific discoveries into their literature and education – in order to provide a greater ser-

³⁴ Matthieu Ricard & Trinh Xuan Thuan: *The Quantum and the Lotus – A Journey to the Frontiers Where Science and Buddhism Meet* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2001), p. 178

vice to their lay-patrons in modernizing nations. Nothing prevents monks from seeking truths – certainly scientific discoveries. Humans don't understand or cannot perceive a total 'reality' – certain animals outdo humans in these various sense-realms. Therefore, at least cognitively - Buddhists must learn the principles of attraction and repulsion to gain a clearer understanding of reality.

Science would ask us to observe our bodies, and think about how the body works in relation to other components, then further investigate if additional tests duplicate the observed phenomena – if not the theory needs adjusted, until proven as a law – then sent out to be published. Buddhism is not far from this approach. Buddhism though, still recognizes the four primary elements: earth, fire, water, air – science tells us that there is more. There are secondary elements like color [artists], sound [musicians], smell [perfumers], taste [chefs], gender, nutriment – all of these have odd-scientific components. Even further, there are minute, elementary quanta: kalapas – forming all animate and inanimate material composed phenomena. The life-span of a kalapa can last about seventeen-mind moments. The brevity of a kalapa³⁵ signifies the scientific concept of radiation – as can be determined when dealing with plasma, particles or energy-waves. Kalapas originate from kamma [action/volition], citta [mind], temperature, and nutriment. Time factors into these relationships as well – and it is widely known that Buddhists can consider the past, present and future, as well as the impermanence of phenomena. Buddhism, even has the concept of *akaliko* [timeless] – for the nature of Dhamma, which is '*opanayiko paccattam veditabbo viññūhi*' - worthy of realizing, directly experience-

³⁵ The Sarvāstivādins have their own theory: paramāṇu – “the extremely fine”, an atom – this is the smallest rupa. It cannot be cut, broken, penetrated. It is neither long nor short. It has no smaller parts; it cannot be decomposed... it is the finest of all rupas. See: Bhikkhu KL Dhammajoti: *Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma* (Center of Buddhist Studies, University of Hong Kong, 2007), p. 683. This type of atom is known through mental analysis and is a conceptual atom. A real atom would thus be the intrinsic nature of matter [visible] – known through direct perception. [pp. 259-260]

able by the wise [scientist] for themselves.

An 'Abhidhamma Hermeneutics' might determine: the experiencing the presence of the 'feeling'; asking to discover the root cause of the present "feeling/situation" experienced; are there other root conditions found; can one experience the passing and fading away of these experiences; move towards the experience of a new 'feeling'; and ...with the awareness of the extinction of the previous feeling? This is a highly scientific undertaking for the study of the human mind – the possession of operating wisely within equanimity and the capability to remain in this neither-wholesome nor neither unwholesome, middle-way, mental-state, takes a lot of effort to maintain. Understanding the whole human-mental cognitive process is a highly scientific system, involving: the six-senses; processes, presentations, modes, great/slight objects, absorption, registration, attainment processes, planes – clearly scientific. Hermeneutics links both Buddhism and Science together through parallel analytical tools. Buddhism additionally uses the Four Noble Truths as a tool, and depending on how one wishes to employ the tool – answers to different scientific questions can be revealed, being: The truth that there is a problem, the origin of the problem, this problem ceases, and the method/processes involved towards the solution/cessation of the investigated problem.

The higher or advanced levels of Buddhist Dhamma instruct the learner that there are Four Ultimate Realities: Nibbāna, Mental Factors, Consciousness and Form. Form is relevant here for scientific-materialists. There are four devices used to investigate form: characteristics, function, manifestation, proximate cause. Form or matter, as one of these ultimate or scientific areas for study, can be said to be a materiality or sensual-consequence under reaction/impact – generating a feeling, perception, volition, visual cognition – determined by the mind. Thus, there are: kinds of material phenomena; principles by which they are classified; their cause or means of origination; their organization into groups; and modes of occurrences. Form, then is some-

thing that can be deformed, broken, knocked around, and oppressed – undergoing and imposing alterations from the following circumstances: cold [icing causes erosion – geography, death of life], heat [fire turning organisms into organic/carbon-ash; and melting of material/rocks – volcanoes], hunger [lack of nutriment, plants wilt, death/undernourishment in beings], thirst [desert-environment, drought conditions, the need for water], insects [parasite/host relationships, human exploitation of the environment], water [erosion of river banks, deposits of minerals on soil during floods], wind [abrasion – sand-blasting particles against other objects], sunburn [radiation/oppressive solar heat can kill organisms], etc... all topics of scientific nature.

New Scientific Depiction of Buddhist Cosmology

Pertaining to contact [dependent origination] and the elements [sense-reception], as understood in Buddhism: “An element is defined as that which bears its own intrinsic nature. It cannot be split up or transformed into another. The elements are abstract qualities and as such are empty and void of substance, self... life. Except for Nibbāna, which is permanent and unconditioned, the rest of the elements are the ultimate constituents of all things which are said to be animate and inanimate... For when one has really grasped their true natures in a practical way for oneself, they will be realized as suffering and given up. Only then will Nibbāna be attained”³⁶

Modern sciences may diverge to some extent with this presentation of elements, certainly when quantum physics/mechanics or chemistry with new phases of matter is examined; but is it necessary to recollect in brief, modern states of matter: solids, liquids, gases, and plasma – and other lesser known states or phases with varying characteristics – taking up ‘space’. The ‘space’ in the cosmos, though, consists of some 4% of material with chemical properties, 23% determined as being

³⁶ U Nārada Mūla Paṭṭhāna Sasyadaw & Thein Nyun: *Discourse on Elements – Dhātu-Kathā* (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1999), p. xxiii

dark matter, and 72% as dark energy.³⁷ Apart from matter, there is anti-matter – now hard to discover, because of its expulsion. Mandatory now, is the traditional Buddhist view on material elements:

Additional Elements	
Classification of Matter:	visible and resisting, invisible and resisting, invisible and unresisting
Six [four] Elements:	<i>the earth, water, fire, air</i> , space-element, and the conscious-element
Elements in the World of Sense-Desire:	of sense-desires, the element of form, the formless element
More Elements:	element of form, the formless element and the element of cessation
	the low element, the middling element and the sublime element

Consider: “Quantum physics agrees that light has no intrinsic reality, because it is neither exclusively a wave nor a particle. Instead it can appear as either, depending on the circumstances. This does not mean that we don’t understand a good deal about the ways that light interacts with the world, or that the different properties of light aren’t real. ...monk’s robes look red and yellow because the atoms they contain absorb blue and green, but reflect yellow and red. The photons reflected by your robes enter our eyes with an energy and frequency that create the impression of seeing red and yellow.”³⁸ What we cannot physically perceive, we might attribute this to invisible-sublime formlessness.

³⁷ <http://map.gsfc.nasa.gov/news/index.html> - accessed on 28 September 2008

³⁸ Matthieu Ricard & Trinh Xuan Thuan: *The Quantum and the Lotus – A Journey to the Frontiers where Science and Buddhism Meet* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2001), p. 80

According to science, the smallest *quanta*³⁹ that cannot be split would be the theorized Higgs-boson, which is mass-less, but provides mass. Better known than theorized quanta are: the quarks and gluons which comprise the atomic nuclei, which is splittable. An element bearing [accepting, dealing, accommodating] its own [independent of others] characteristics; however, when due to unseen forces of attraction, this isolation is short-lived, and soon re-bonding occurs due to the instability. As abstract qualities, the 'atom' is only a concept – like an image/model, to help physicists observe quanta in their coherent and logical schemes that are locked in equations.⁴⁰ Depending on circumstances matter can be transformed into energy [the Sun transforms hydrogen into photons], and energy can be transformed into matter [particle accelerators]. A look in the mirror demonstrates light, rather than the mass of matter before it – and this may very well illustrate the concept of perception that a Buddhist could understand. That the overwhelming portion of an 'atom' is empty-space is often forgotten, and the suggestion that atoms are not 'things' is a concept that materialists fear – the comprehension of emptiness [suññatā] would then need further elaboration, but not here.⁴¹ When one has grasped the practical-true nature of the material-phenomena, then one can 'give up' the search for scientific solutions/abstractions and become liberated from suffering.

Furthermore: "Since only these elements 'really' exist, no solid, substantial things are to be found outside of them." This implies, human

³⁹ Lisa Randall's *Warped Passages – Unraveling the Universe's Hidden Dimensions* (New York: Penguin, 2006), p. 467: "a discrete unbreakable unit of a measurable quantity – the smallest unit of that quantity"

⁴⁰ Matthieu Ricard & Trinh Xuan Thuan: *The Quantum and the Lotus – A Journey to the Frontiers where Science and Buddhism Meet* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2001), p. 84

⁴¹ Matthieu Ricard & Trinh Xuan Thuan: *The Quantum and the Lotus – A Journey to the Frontiers where Science and Buddhism Meet* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2001), p. 98-99

minds should operate towards other concerns, possibly the alleviation of humanly suffering; again, because it is in the human realm, in the 'here and now' that the Dasabala emphasizes developing the Dhamma, to extinguish or escape the rounds of suffering, attaining Nibbāna. Recall that one of the Buddha's ten powers as the Dasabala is: understanding as it truly is the world with its many and different elements. Again – scientists have found around 25 different states of matter or elements.⁴² Many Buddhists are worried that science would turn the Buddha into a great teacher with only nine-powers tarnishing his image as being omniscient.

Knowing that reactions to stimuli [based from contact] potentially lead onward to suffering – those interested do not have to wait for the next life to practice dhamma, because everyone was taught from the Dasabala to perform now - so that we or anyone won't have any regrets!

Buddhist Cosmological Realms

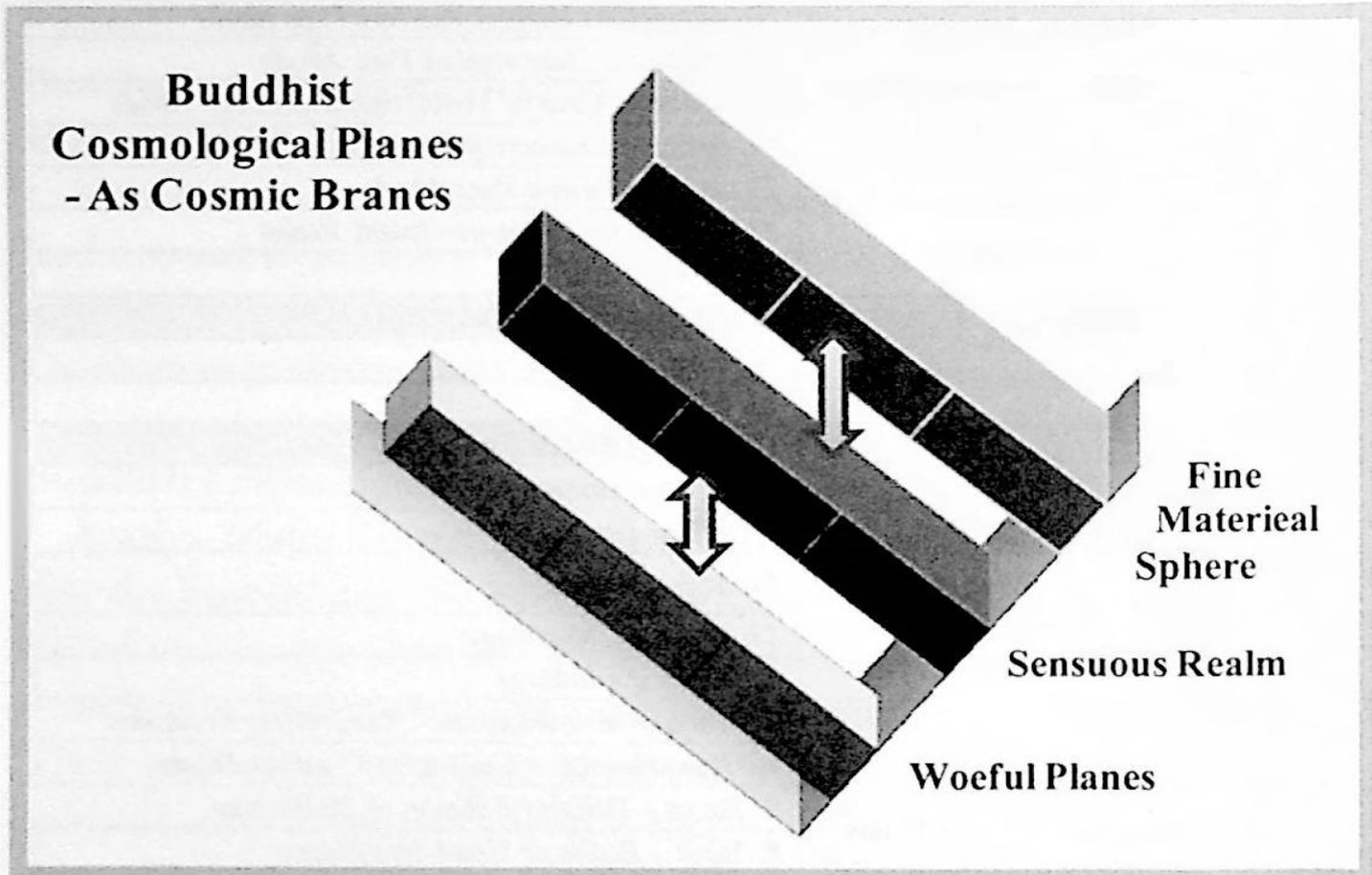
Ācariya Mahā Boowa Nāṇasampanno has written: "When we say that the heavens and the brahma worlds are arranged vertically in a series of realms, one shouldn't understand this in the gross material sense – such as, a house with many stories requiring the use of an elevator. These realms exist in a spiritual dimension and they are ascended in the spiritual sense by spiritual means: that is, by the heart which has developed this sort of capacity through the practice of virtue."⁴³ Consider now the effort one must undertake to get to the four immaterial sphere planes – and ultimately, liberation from systemized suffering:

⁴² www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/list_of_states_of_matter - accessed on 28 September 2008

⁴³ Ācariya Mahā Boowa Nāṇasampanno: *Venerable Ācariya Mun Bhūridatta Thera – A Spiritual Biography* (Baan Taad: Forest Dhamma Books, 2005), p. 125

Buddhist Cosmological Realms			
Plane	Buddhist Cosmological-Realm		
4 Immaterial Sphere Planes	31. <i>Neither Perception nor Non-perception</i>		
	30. <i>Nothingness</i>		
	29. <i>Infinite Consciousness</i>		
	28. <i>Infinite Space</i>		
16 Fine-material Sphere Planes	5 th Jhāna Plane [Abhidhamma System] [23-27 are Pure Abodes – for an Anāgāmi's later attainment of Nibbana] (<i>Suddhāvāsā</i>)	27. <i>Akanitthā: Highest/Peerless Pure Abode</i>	
		26. <i>Sudassī: Clear-sighted Pure Abode</i>	
		25. <i>Sudassā: Clearly Visible/Beautiful Pure Abode</i>	
		24. <i>Atappa: Unworried/Serene Pure Abode</i>	
		23. <i>Aviha: Durable Pure Abode</i>	
		22. <i>Unconscious/Non-percipient Realm</i>	
		21. <i>Great Reward</i>	
	Sukhupapattiyo – Three Happy Rebirths	4 th Jhāna Plane [<i>Lustrous Devas</i>]	20. <i>Steady Aura [Subhakiṃṃa]</i>
			19. <i>Infinite Aura</i>
			18. <i>Minor Aura</i>
		2 nd & 3 rd Jhāna Planes	17. <i>Radiant Luster [Ābhassarā]</i>
			16. <i>Infinite Luster</i>
			15. <i>Minor Luster</i>
	1 st Jhāna Plane – different in body but alike in perception	14. <i>Maha Brahma</i>	
		13. <i>Brahma's Ministers</i>	
		12. <i>Brahma's Retinue</i>	
11 Sense-Sphere Planes	Sensuous-Blissful Plane <i>[rebirth here due to generosity]</i>	11. <i>Paranimmitavasavattī – Controlling Creations</i>	
		10. <i>Nimmānaratī – Gods with Creation Power</i>	
		9. <i>Tusita – Delightful Realm of Bodhisatta</i>	
		8. <i>Yama – Realm of Great Happiness</i>	
		7. <i>Tavatimsa – Realm of 33 Gods [Indra]</i>	
	6. <i>Catummarajika – Four Great Kings</i>		
	5. <i>Human</i>		
	<i>Kinds of Gain: gain of relatives, wealth, health morality and right view – no beings arise in a happy state after death because of relatives, wealth and health, only reborn into such a state from gains in morality and right view</i>		
	<i>Kinds of Loss: loss of relatives, wealth, health, morality, right view – no beings pass into hell by losing relatives, wealth and health, only pass into hell from losing morality and right view</i>		
	Woeful Plane [apāya – state of loss]	4. <i>Asura [due to torments]</i>	
		3. <i>Peta [due to greed]</i>	
2. <i>Animal [due to negative kamma]</i>			
1. <i>Hell [due to evil deeds]</i>			

Therefore, please examine the following turn of interpretation: in the below graph-chart - the arrows [as stream-entry or back-sliding] act as bridges to the other planes, or 'branes' in modern astro-physics. The mind can travel to these planes via the correct vehicle. What vehicle moves one from one plane to another – any relationship to noble discipleship? Are there uncertain dimensions?⁴⁴



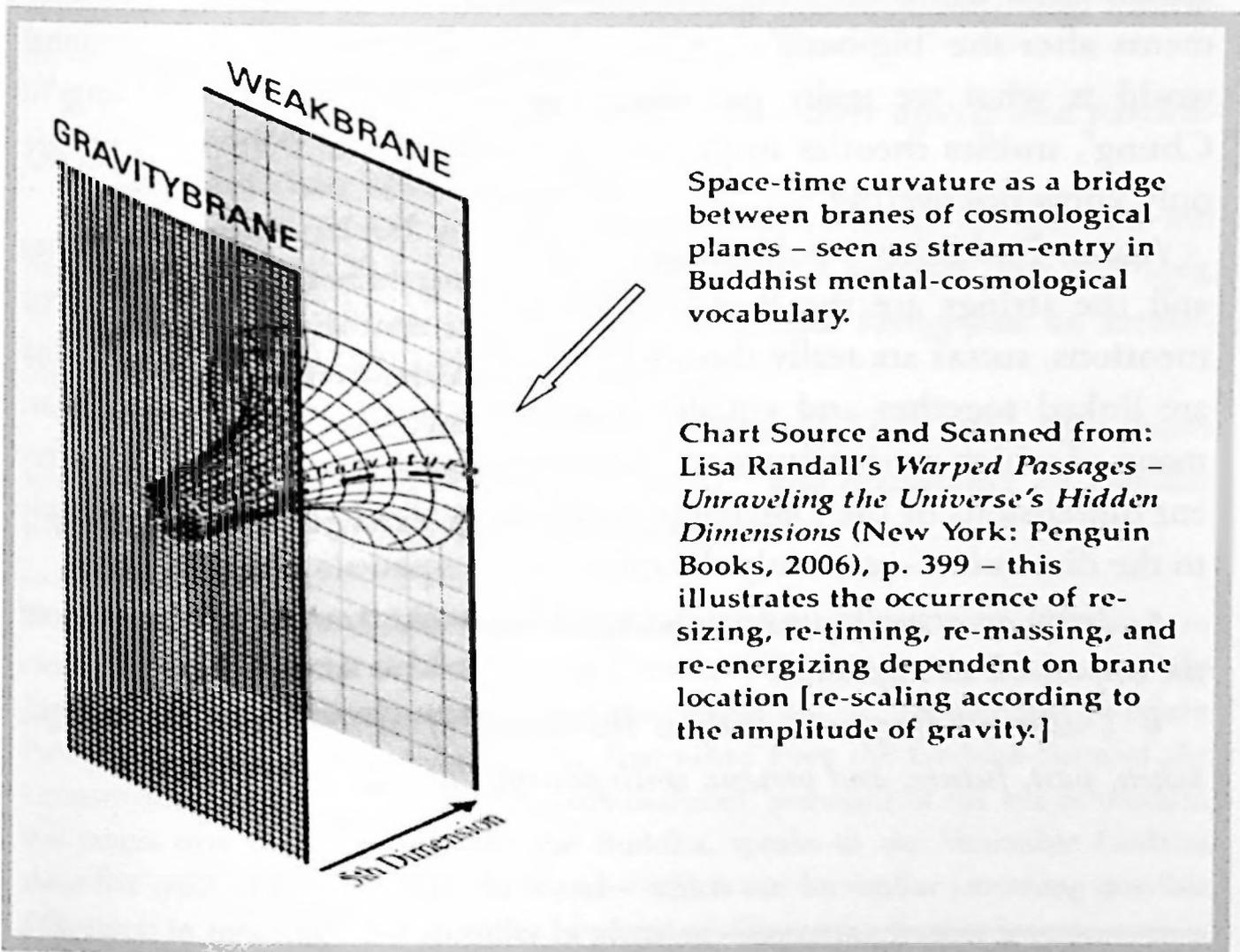
I would argue, that dimensions are speculative perspectives that one must participate with [scientific-examination], if someone is, inside or outside the dimension, their perspective/feeling should be different. However, Lisa Randall defines a dimension as: “an independent direction in space or time.”⁴⁵ I would suggest an internal/external dimension

⁴⁴ See the video series: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/elegant/program.html> - accessed on 5 October 2008

⁴⁵ Lisa Randall's *Warped Passages – Unraveling the Universe's Hidden Dimensions* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), p. 461

ATTRACTION AND REPULSION FROM A SCIENTIFIC BUDDHIST PERSPECTIVE

that is subjected to different forces, beyond distance in any direction and the time progressive/regressive in the situation – the answer is virtue. Something that the dictionaries are not figuring into their terms for dimension is ‘pressure’ [friction/stress/temperature could all be factors of this dimension] – either positive or negative, either inside or external to the situation – which might be another concept to consider for any sort of new dimension, which may not be seen, but could be felt – both to variances in degrees.



Scan of Randall's Branes

Along the space-time continuum, or the Buddhist “here and now” – the funnel to the higher plane/brane demonstrates a more *concentrative effort to get to the other plane*. Meditation, acts as a bridge to the other

realms, unseen through normal activities. According to Lisa Randall: "...branes can house particles and forces that string theorists didn't take into account when they originally developed string theory. Because of the many possibilities as to what types of branes exist and where they are situated in the higher dimensional space of string theory, there are conceivably many new ways to realize the standard model in string theory that no one had thought about before."⁴⁶ However and more recently, a new model of cosmology has suggested that the multi-dimensional world of strings [10+] might have existed in the past moments after the 'big-bang' – but after time the four force-dimensional world is what we really perceive – and this according to 'Ding-Yu Chung', unifies theories in physics – as past events that physicists are only now discovering.⁴⁷

Again, Buddhists would recognize the branes as meditational planes and the strings are the Buddhist "threads".⁴⁸ Literally, as the *Netti* mentions, *sutta*'s are really threads – the heard discourses of the Buddha are linked together and equally bound teachings to other dhammas, many of which are intertwined. Discourses can be seen then, as different dimensions of the *Dasabala*'s teachings – all of which seem relevant to the discussion – certainly the more one is scientifically aware:

- *Truly or actually understanding as it is, the possible as possible and the impossible as impossible*
- *Understanding as it truly is the results of actions (kammās) undertaken, past, future, and present, with possibilities and with causes*

⁴⁶ Lisa Randall's *Warped Passages – Unraveling the Universe's Hidden Dimensions* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), p. 322

⁴⁷ Ding-Yu Chung: *The Unified Theory of Physics – The Cosmic Organism Theory* – published electronically at: <http://www.scribd.com/doc/3820709/Genesis-Cosmology-the-unified-theory> - on 6 October 2008

⁴⁸ Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, *The Guide – Nettippakaranam* (London: Pali Text Society, 1997), p. xxxiii-xliii

- *Understanding as it truly is the ways leading to all destinations (all the states of existence and Nibbāna)*
- *Understanding as it truly is the world with its many and different elements*
- *Understanding as it truly is how beings have different inclinations*
- *Understanding as it truly is the disposition of the faculties of other beings, other persons*
- *Understanding as it truly is the defilement, the cleansing and the emergence in regard to the jhānas, liberations, concentrations, and attainments*
- *Recollecting His manifold past lives – with their aspects and particulars for recollection*
- *With the divine eye which is purified and surpasses the human, sees beings passing away and reappearing, inferior and superior, fair and ugly, fortunate and unfortunate... and understands how beings pass on according to their action/volition [kamma]...*
- *Realizing for Himself with direct knowledge, here and now enters upon and abides in the deliverance of mind⁴⁹ and deliverance by taintless wisdom through the destruction of the taints.*

⁴⁹ Additional research discovered, pertaining to ceto-vimutti, the following to consider, from: Bhikkhu Bodhi [ed. and trns.], *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha—A New Translation of the Samyutta-Nikāya*-Vol. II. (Somerville: Wisdom Publications, 2000), p. 1325-1326 – As determined from the Godatta-Sutta of the Cittasaṃyutta: The householder Citta [summarized], possessor of the eye of wisdom that ranges over the deep Word of the Buddha, speaks to the Venerable Godatta about five types of liberations of the mind – which can be similar [meaning possible differences] in meanings, but all differ in phrasing—illustrating further interpretations of liberation or deliverance of the mind:

1. *Appamāṇā-cetovimutti: The measureless liberation [Arahantship] of the mind [by the brahma-viharas – called measureless because of their measureless radiation towards countless beings; the path and fruits because they remove defilements, the cause of measurement]*

Lust is a maker of measurement

Hatred is a maker of measurement

Equipped with the tools to scientifically investigate and know all phenomena – the Buddha, as the Dasabala, could assist modern seekers of wisdom through his powers, or power to thread together wise teachings.

Within the *Saṅgīti Sutta*, the old cosmological order can still be found, along with the possibility of rebirth – a concept still attractive to many Buddhists. In cosmological science, if a star implodes and the gasses are ejected, eventually some of these particles will re-accumulate and form another star, billions of years later. Rebirth is indeed possible, extinction is equally possible – the possibility to scientifically never-return is certainly true. Therefore, to perceive that the many as-

Delusion is a maker of measurement

2. *Akiñcaññā-cetovimutti*: The liberation of the mind [Arahantship] by nothingness [by transcending the base of the infinity of consciousness, and the path and fruits - aware that 'there is nothing', because there is no 'something']

Lust is a something

Hatred is a something

Delusion is a something

3. *Suññatā-cetovimutti*: The liberation [Arahantship] of the mind by emptiness [Empty is this of self or of what belongs to self; concentration based on insight into the selfless nature of phenomena, and the supramundane paths and fruits]

Empty of lust

Empty of hatred

Empty of delusion

4. *Animittā-cetovimutti*: The signless liberation [Arahantship] of the mind [with non-attention to all signs one enters and dwells in the signless concentration of mind; insight – because it removes the signs of permanence, happiness and seld; the four formless attainments because the sign of form is absent in them; and the four paths and fruits, because the defilements as makers of signs, are absent]

Lust is a maker of signs

Hatred is a maker of signs

Delusion is a maker of signs...

5. *Akuppā-cetomutti*: The unshakable liberation of mind [consisting in the fruition of Arahantship] – is declared chief among them – empty of lust, hatred, delusion.

semblies of people and devas: Khattuyas, Brahmins, householders, ascetics, devas of the realm of the Four Great Kings, of the Thirty-Three Gods, of maras, of Brahmas [continually produce and dwell in happiness⁵⁰], Radiant Devas [those immersed or overflowing with happiness⁵¹], and the Lustrous Devas - are all susceptible to the effects of kamma, as are those suffering in the lower realms - is quite, astronomically, correct. Essentially concerning humans, there are eight kinds of rebirth possible, due to generosity: to be reborn rich, or into the various heavenly realms - when the mental aspirations or intentions of a moral person are effective through purity and liberation from passion of a moral person not an immoral person - or, as one freed from passion not still swayed by passion.

When people die, as non-arahants, the *Saṅgīti Sutta* mentions the following post-mortem rebirth realms or destinies: hell, animal rebirth, the realm of hungry ghosts, humankind, and into the deva world. Accordingly, hell realms are merely painful bodily sensations - as found in the *Samyutta-Nikāya*⁵² - or better yet, as a hydrogen particle cycling around as part of the Sun. There are three kinds of rebirth in the Sense-Sphere Plane, depending on if people still grip desirously to what is presented to them, if they desire their own creations, or rejoice in or have power over the creations of others - then rebirth into these heavenly realms is possible. Modern physics asks if there are any boundary conditions between the planes, in which physics calls 'branes'. Currently, and subjected to revision, the claim would be that the Buddhist meditative 'hindrances' are boundary conditions inhibiting one to traverse into a different cosmological or mental plane.

⁵⁰ Maurice Walshe: *The Long Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Dīgha-Nikāya* (Boston: Wisdom Publications 1995), p. 485

⁵¹ Maurice Walshe: *The Long Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Dīgha-Nikāya* (Boston: Wisdom Publications 1995)

⁵² Bhikkhu Bodhi [ed. and trns.], *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha - A New Translation of the Samyutta-Nikāya* - Vol. II. (Somerville: Wisdom Publications, 2000), p. 1262

When the new consciousness links to a being, the following stations or abodes of conscious beings become possibilities [or crave for the World of Sense-Desire, of Form, in the Formless World] – based on accumulated kamma: beings different in body and different in perception, different in body and alike in perception, alike in body and different in perception, alike in body and alike in perception, Realm of Unconscious Beings, Realm of Neither-Perception-Nor-Non-Perception, beings who have attained to the Sphere of Infinite Space, beings who have attained to the Sphere of Infinite-Consciousness, beings who have attained to the Sphere of No-Thingness. With the preceding occurrence, a new continuum of the life-faculty begins. The consciousness in these realms continues to evolve into new personalities under different circumstances.

Great stress is placed on producing intentional, positive kamma in the human realm [here and now], because it is here that humanity has the most opportune occasion to be reborn in heavenly states – these heavenly states that are so often obtained during meditation. If human minds abiding lowly in pain, greed, hatred and delusions – low rebirth can be expected. The meditator, striving in wholesome efforts, will be rewarded in the lokuttara realms.

Indeed, there is a tall order of Buddhist cosmological realms – as the above chart demonstrates. In order to explain this Buddhist concept of lokuttara, its opposing-partner as a starting point is 'lokiya.' However, again: all things 'lokiya' are of this world – in the human realm, and all other things are then outer-world or 'lokuttara' – imaginable only in our consciousness [and thus, reachable in our minds!]. In Thailand, morning and evening monastic chanting emphasizes the 'here and now' – or the human realm, as the location for maneuvering into another realm. Before humans undertake meditational practice or kammic endeavors, it is suggested that humans master the six-sense bases, as the foundation for other attainment opportunities.

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**AN APPLICATION OF BUDDHIST TEACHINGS
TO ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES IN CAPITALIST SOCIETY**

Watchara Ngamchitcharoen



This paper intends to present the findings of the research on “*Application of Buddhist Teachings to Economic Activities in Capitalist Society: A Case Study*”. The objectives of the research are to show how Buddhist teachings can be applied to economic activities, to compare them with capitalist principles and methodology, and to arrive at a conclusion whether or not they are in conflict with capitalism.

I. Principles and Methodology of Capitalism

First, it is important to understand the meaning and nature of capitalism:

1. Meaning and nature of capitalism

In general “capitalism” is an economic system as well as political economics. In other words, “capitalism” sometimes means an economic system in which capital constitutes an important means of production, or it could mean an economic doctrine or school of thought led by Adam Smith (1723-1790). However, there are some problems with the word “capitalism”. The current capitalist economic system does not really correspond to Smith’s idea. It is, rather, a combination of capitalism and socialism, characterized by monopoly and exploita-

tion. Some Thai academics consider “capitalism” a system in which capitalists own all factors of production and benefit from the practice more than any other group of people. In addition, the economists of this school of thought prefer to call it “liberalism” advocating liberal economy or free market and do not consider capital as an important factor of production. Thinkers like Adam Smith never use the word “capitalism” to describe their economic system. The first persons to use and popularize the words “capital” and “capitalism” are Carl Marx (1818-1883), a German socialist thinker, and Max Weber (1864-1920), a German sociologist and political economist.

Marx refers to capitalism as a mode of production that came into being as history changed its course. In this mode of production capital is an important factor of production just as slaves were in the time when slavery was a common practice and just as property was in feudalism. In light of Marxian philosophy “capitalism” is a mode of production or an economic system with capital as a major factor of production. Essentially the means of production are controlled by capitalists who hire workers to produce goods and services that will bring even greater benefits or profits, leading to what Marx calls “surplus value”, labor oppression, exploitation, and monopoly.

Marxist capitalism therefore focuses on real economy whereas liberal economists, hitherto believed to be the advocates of Adam Smith, pay attention to the economy with free private enterprise competing freely in the market without monopoly. It can be said, therefore, that capitalism in the liberalist viewpoint is different from real capitalism. According to Chatthip Nartsupha, economic liberalism is different from real capitalism which he calls “the capitalist system”.

Chatthip Nartsupha explains that the liberalist model consists of a large number of small free economic units vying with one another in the imaginary world (as opposed to the real world). The economic system of Western Europe since the democratic revolution has been dominated by monopoly. Capital is in the hands of the few. It is the

capitalist system or bourgeoisie, not liberalism. Liberalism, therefore, is not the same as capitalism. In economic liberalism business units are small and compete freely. Capitalism, on the other hand, sees capital concentrated in the hands of a small number of capitalists who monopolize the economy. The capitalists use liberalism as a pretext for their action, which true liberals ardently oppose. For liberals like Bentham or those from the neo-classical school, economic liberalism means a system that allows for competition and no monopoly and in which the economic units are small and powerless. On the other hand, when capitalists refer to liberalism, they mean laissez-faire with no government intervention in a market economy, free pursuit of profits and monopoly, and possession of disproportionate income and property. Although proponents of the neo-classical school like Adam Smith recommend that the State restrict its economic roles, they do not mean that monopoly should be tolerated. Smith hopes to see full competition in the market, for the practice will act as mechanism against monopoly and capital concentration. Utilitarian neo-liberals recommend greater State intervention in the economic activities than neo-classical liberals to set a framework for true competition and prevent monopoly as well as capital concentration (Chatthip Nartsupha, 2006, 122-123).

Yet, many academics have regarded such liberal concepts as capitalist. Admittedly, liberalism and real capitalism share a number of notions including private property ownership. In this light the researcher wishes to call such liberalism capitalist as well. The difference lies in the fact that capitalism that Marx attacks is an economic system or doctrine known by such names as “monopoly capitalism”, “crony capitalism” or “mean capitalism” as opposed to “liberal capitalism”. The latter is more idealistic and, therefore, more difficult to practice.

When academics talk about capitalism (or liberalism), they make a liberty-based distinction between traditional or classical liberalism on the one hand and new or neo-classical liberalism on the other. The economists often refer to the former as classical economics and the lat-

ter as neo-classical economics. Neo-classical economics is the current mainstream. For the purpose of this research, "capitalism" is used in the general sense of the word.

Therefore, although this research does not disregard historical capitalism, it wants to focus on the philosophy of capitalism or liberalism.

2. Principles of capitalism

Capitalism or liberalism is characterized by the following concepts:

1. Individualism and liberalism: Importance is attached to individual persons, companies or other business units. Individualism accounts for the right to own property, an integral part of capitalism. Individualism makes the individual the focus of capitalism, with the good of individuals as its ultimate goal. Each individual is different. An individualist enters into society to further his or her own interests or demands the right to serve his or her own interests. Self-interest guarantees that society as a whole will benefit.

Individualism promotes the exercise of one's right and liberty. Such liberalism goes well with Adam Smith's *laissez-faire* principle. (It must be noted that it is not the same as mean capitalism that has often been the target of attack.) The *laissez-faire* principle opposes the State's interference in individual economic enterprises and is presently extended to include the State not engaged in commerce or production in competition with the private sector. In other words, there is minimal government interference (Preecha Changkwanyuen, 2002, 4)

Although individualism forms the basis of liberalism, proponents of classical liberalism or libertarianism such as Smith and Hayek hold different views from thinkers of modern liberalism or reform liberalism. This is especially true with the role of the government. The former believe that the government should not interfere with economic activities and private enterprises, while the latter advocate the government's role in welfare services such as health, housing and education as well as in the management or at least in the regulation of economy (Heywood,

1998, 26).

2. **Mechanism:** Mechanism views society as a huge machine composed of parts or units in the form of human beings interacting or counteracting with one another driven by the will. The human will is a force or mechanism not designed to do common good but to bring about overall social harmony (Suntharaporn Techapalokul, 1991, 10-11).

3. **Egoism and rational thinking:** Egoism argues that a person is by nature selfish and greedy, acting only in self-interest. To the capitalist, greed or selfishness is not necessarily bad on the grounds that man is an economic and rational being who can reasonably choose to produce or consume anything with a view to achieving maximum utility. Likewise, a company seeks maximum profits based on the demand and supply under free market competition mechanisms, resulting in an equilibrium whereby goods are produced in the quantity and at prices beneficial to everybody (Witayakorn Chiengkul, 1999, 67).

4. **Utilitarianism, materialism, and consumerism:** As capitalism is influenced by utilitarianism, capitalist economists maintain that economic achievements and pursuits of maximum wealth are determined by the individual's decision-making activities (Suntharaporn Techapalokul, 1991, 10).

Neo-classical economists view that utilities are "pleasures" or "preferences", probably including tastes or desires intrinsic in human nature. Utilities are basic to an economic paradigm, shaping philosophical substance, modes of analysis, and contents of the neo-classical paradigm (Suntharaporn Techapalokul, 1991, 10).

All this has moved capitalism closer to materialism, with its emphasis almost exclusively on rights, liberty and such physical interests as profits and capital. In other words, capitalism seeks wealth exclusively. Evidently, most classic and neo-classical economists view all things, including humans, as "resources" or "capital" as part of the economic system. In this regard, human status is equivalent to commodity and

property. However, some economists or thinkers maintain that in economic terms human beings are more than just wealth, giving rise to humanistic economics (Apichai Phanthasen, 2001, 280). In addition, there are other neo-classical economic schools such as welfare economics and normative economics that attach importance to society and morality as well as economic activities in a different way from positive economics. Positive economics tends to focus on facts to the exclusion of values.

In the capitalist mode of thinking producers strive to achieve maximum profits from their production. This is possible only when consumers buy or use the greatest number of their commodities or services. In this way capitalism shares certain aspects of consumerism with focus on consumption and expenditure.

5. **Welfare economics with its optimality and balance:** Welfare economics analyzes situations in which an individual or society derives greatest pleasure from production, consumption and exchange of commodities and services. In its view, the optimal situation is one in which demand and supply are equally balanced. Such balance of demand and supply brings greatest utilities to the producers and consumers alike; it is called "general equilibrium".

3. Capitalist methodology

There is not much difference between the old and new schools of capitalism. The methodology is characterized by the following:

1. **Free competition:** The economic system in which self-interests can bring about collective interests must be based on perfect competition in a free market with price mechanisms as a tool. Free competition as seen by the neo-classical capitalist thinkers is perfect competition, a fundamental methodology of capitalism.

2. **Profit-oriented investment:** In the capitalist view, when an individual enjoys the ownership of property he can make an investment in the production of goods and services and sell them for greatest possible

profits under the free competition system above. Profit-motivated capital and investments are another important methodology of capitalism.

3. **Mechanistic administration and management:** The mechanistic administration and management of a business organization or company is a capitalist methodology based on mechanism. Economists or businesspersons often adopt a mechanistic approach to the running of business, reflecting Adam Smith's view on the division of labor.

4. **Use of market mechanisms or free market:** A free market is one of the most efficient tools of income or resource distribution. Adam Smith views that a free market can lead to more public good than does Hobbes' all-powerful sovereign state. Such a sovereign power is a visible "hand" (Beauchamp and Bowie, 1993, 19). In other words, a free market is an invisible hand that can do more for society than such visible hands as state sovereignty in the guise of monarchy or dictatorship.

5. **Consumption encouragement and savings:** Attempts to encourage as much consumption as possible is a business marketing strategy to secure greatest possible profits, resulting in advertisement and production of goods and services designed to stimulate even greater consumption. However, savings are another important strategy. Without savings for investment, business operators will not have enough capital to further invest in the production of goods and services.

6. **Government assistance and support for economic activities:** In the view of classical liberal capitalism, the government should have little or no role in private business enterprise, nor should it compete with the private sector. It should focus on other functions such as national defense.

On the contrary, proponents of modern liberalism such as Keynes, argue that the government should play a greater role in the running of economy including private business. For instance, not only should it help enable the marketing system to function freely, but it should also exercise market control through tax mechanisms in order to prevent

any structural distortion.

II. Capitalist views on morality

Liberal capitalist thinkers hold different views on morality. However, on the whole many recognize the important relationship of morality to capitalism. A big number of economic academics today also attach importance to the morality issue.

1. Belief that morality is associated with capitalism

The proponents of this view maintain that morality is associated with or can go along with capitalism and morality plays an important role in business success. Although most neo-classical economists do not share the classical economic view that morality is associated with capitalism, some like Alfred Marshall hold that economic activities have something to do with morality. This view is shared by modern economic academics. The belief that morality is associated with or can go along with capitalism is characterized by the following aspects:

1. **Selfishness is related to moral values:** Although Adam Smith views selfishness as part of human nature, it is not necessarily evil. Selfishness or self-interests can motivate people to pay more attention to luck and success of others, leading to such virtues as benevolence.

2. **Selfishness leads to collective good:** Here, selfishness is not evil or in conflict with morality. In Adam Smith's view, selfishness that leads to others' interests can go well together with utilitarianism that favors the collective good.

3. **Self-interest is different from selfishness:** Hayek defends the morality of self-interests on the grounds that there is confusion about self-interest and selfishness because of the limits of human knowledge. He argues that much aversion to individualism is caused by confusion in the 18th century writing in the way self-love and self-interest, to cite just an example, are used. In essence, they do not denote a sense of narrow egoism. Rather, the real meaning of the words lies in the un-

deniable fact that an individual's knowledge is limited; what he knows is confined to a narrow cycle of the world that revolves around him (Hayek, 1980, 14, quoted in Shand, 1990, 74). Bound by limited knowledge, the individual can only think or act on the basis of self or self-interest. For all the good intentions, his efforts are inevitably limited from birth by what he knows.

4. Morality is important to business or is a component of the economy: Several economic and business management thinkers recognize the importance of morality on economy or view that it is an essential component of business.

2. Belief that morality has nothing to do with capitalism

The proponents of this notion argue that capitalism or business has nothing to do with morality or needs not involve morality for the following reasons:

1. A business relationship is a means to an end, not an end in itself: A business relationship or exchange in a free market is a means to an end, not an end in itself, and has nothing to do with morality. Nor is self-interest the objective of a business relationship, just as a knife is a tool that by itself is neither good nor bad depending on the user's intention. It can be used to cut vegetables or to harm others. Being good or bad depends more on the objective of the use. Thus, a business relationship or exchange in the market has nothing to do with morality.

2. Business has nothing to do with morality as it has its own rules to follow just like a game: This approach views business as a kind of game with its own rules that have nothing to do with the moral rules that govern society.

3. Economics has nothing to do with moral decisions: Economics is a science. As a science it must be objective, empirical, and value-free. It does not involve thinking or deciding what should or should not be done on a moral or ethical standpoint.

4. Business needs not be moral because it is a war in which everyone has to fight for survival: This notion is rather rare and not well-received, as it views business as having nothing to do with morality and therefore having no moral concerns. One of the academics who share such a viewpoint is James H. Michelman whose thinking is influenced by economic Darwinism.

III. Capitalist concepts in relation to religion and spirituality

“Religion” and “spiritually” here in this research are used in the general meaning of the words embracing beliefs, values, and practices concerning the unknown or supernatural, as well as other human values beyond such materialistic concerns as property or wealth. There are divergent views among capitalist thinkers on the relationship between capitalism and religion and spirituality as follows:

1. Belief that religion is related to capitalism

Religion is related to capitalism, or capitalism can go well with religion. There are quite a few approaches here.

1. Protestant ethic promotes the growth of capitalism: According to Max Weber and some economists, the Protestant ethic, sometimes called “work ethic”, teaches that a life marked by discipline, thrift and devotion to hard work and money-making is a correct and desirable one. Such teachings form a powerful basis for development of capitalism or creation of modern capitalist psyche.

2. Capitalism goes along with Christianity: According to this approach, capitalist free market economy goes along with Christian teachings or theology. There is no serious conflict between the two.

2. Belief that religion has nothing to do with capitalism

This approach argues that capitalism has nothing to do with religion or cannot go together with religion, especially Christianity. Some thinkers maintain that the Bible preaches against greed and selfishness.

R. H. Tawney concludes that the modern way of life whose value is the complete opposite of Christian teachings is to set a pursuit of material wealth as the highest target of human efforts. There is no way to compromise Christian values with capitalist ideology on wealth. Tawney cites Keynes' view in support of his argument, saying that modern capitalism has nothing to do with religion whatsoever. Capitalists are merely a group of (property) owners and seekers (Shand, 1990, 77).

3. Belief that capitalism has something to do with spirituality
There are a few interesting approaches.

1. **Humanistic economics attaches importance to human values:** Born in the eighteenth century, humanistic economics focuses on human needs on the assumption that the right approach to economy should be concerned with human development, not profits or other external materialistic motives.

2. **Spirituality is the foundation of sustainable of economy:** One of the present dynamic trends of thought is that sustainable economy or sustainable capitalism will lead to sustainable society and that the essential ingredient to such sustainability is the kind of spirituality that embraces long-term visions, long-term thinking, social responsibility, and human values.

3. **Morality, religion and spirituality form part of economic enterprise:** At present a number of companies have applied moral, religious and spiritual principles to their workplace. For instance, in North America, Xerox Corporation and Motorola provide training on meditation practice to their employees. Exxon includes spirituality into its executive training programs, while the Bank of Montreal develops training material of spirituality for its 36,000 employees at all levels.

IV. Principles and methodology of Buddhist economics

This section touches upon a number of selected Buddhist principles and explains how they form the basis of the principles and methodol-

ogy of Buddhist economics.

1. Buddhist economics:

There are a large number of Buddhist teachings or concepts, called “Buddha Dharma”, that touch upon economy or can be applied to economic activities. However, Buddhism does not have a systematic approach to economics in the way that do the Western economic systems. Nor does it offer any clear preference one way or another. People tend to think that Buddhism does not have any economic model. It has only “principles” that can be applied to all economies. This is in line with the approach adopted by the Buddha who does not support or reject any kind of government or State in a clear-cut manner. His principles can be applied to all governments. However, if one is to present Buddhist economic principles in comparison with the Western model, the researcher thinks that one could call it a “mixed economic system” similar to the way real capitalism is being practiced. Like capitalism, Buddhism recognizes the ownership of property by individuals and their liberty to use such property as they see fit. At the same time it recognizes the necessity of the economic role of the State; one may call the approach “statism”. Such thinking, in combination with morality and human values, may be called “Dharma-based economics” or any other name depending on what one wants to emphasize. For instance, if the system relies on wisdom (*Paññā*) as a major factor of production, one may call it a “*Paññā*-based approach” as suggested by Apichai Phanthasen (Apichai Phanthasen, 2001, 436). If the system focuses on doing charitable deeds (*Puñña*) or reducing worldly desires, it might be called a “*Puñña*-approach” as suggested by the Santi-Asoke group (Samma Sambhutta Sawok, 1988, 19). If the emphasis is put on sufficiency similar to that recommended by His Majesty King Bhumibol’s Sufficiency Economy Philosophy, the system might be called “sufficiency economy”. Therefore, Buddhism-based economics may be called by different names including “Buddhist economics”, “Dharma-

based economics”, “*Puñña*-based economics”, or “sufficiency economy”, depending on the point of focus.

Here are some of the main characteristics of Buddhism-based or Buddhist economics:

1. **Possession of private wealth:** In Buddhist economics individuals or groups of individuals can own private wealth as long as its acquisition is justly and morally done. The ownership of private property is evident in “*Pañcasīla*” or the Five Precepts, especially the second precept “*Adinnādānā*” which states that taking the property of someone else without his/her consent is a moral violation and a sinful act.

2. **Freedom to do business:** Private property can be used to conduct an honest work to support oneself and to perform good deeds in society in accordance with the Buddhist principles. In the Buddha’s time a large number of Buddhist lay-followers, both male and female, were traders or wealthy citizens living an honest life and financially supporting the Buddhist cause, e.g. Millionaire Anāthapindika.

3. **Cooperation in doing business for the good of self and others:** Buddhist livelihoods focus on cooperation and mutual support in the manner similar to the practice of community economy or cooperatives. Buddhist economics is not really capitalist. Although competition is allowed, it is not a cut-throat competition designed to take the utmost advantage for self. Rather, the competition takes the form of producing quality goods and services for the benefits of the consumers rather than taking away customers and destroying competitors. The objective of Buddhism is to develop the quality of life for self, physically, spiritually and morally, not to seek greatest possible benefits in the capitalist manner.

4. **Observance of moral principles with due regard to all sectors concerned:** In various Buddhist scriptures one will find many traders and wealthy citizens engaged in transaction or exchange of goods and services. This shows that Buddhism accepts the market or transaction system as long as it is morally correct. In an exchange of goods and

services, any methodology will do as long as it is morally conducted, does not involve fraud or exploitation, and takes into consideration all factors concerned. Such practice constitutes the holism of Buddhism underlying long-term thinking with no adverse effects on other people and the environment. Production that causes damage to natural resources or ecology as well as other adverse social impacts is, therefore, not acceptable to Buddhism. In the light of such practices, Buddhist economics will lead to sustainable economy, a topic currently receiving considerable attention. It is part of sustainable economic and social development focusing on the long-term quality of life of the people and avoiding destroying natural resources or the environment. An example of the practice is organic farming (Witayakorn Chiengkul, 1999, 22).

5. **Economic practice based on the middle path and sufficiency principles.** The Buddhist economics follows the principle of the middle path. Nothing is done to the extreme; the focus is on simplicity, sufficiency, and balance. For example, excessive investment beyond a person's capacity is discouraged. Investment must be manageable, and consumption kept within the bounds of reason, both financially and physically, with all the values kept in check in line with the Middle Path concept. This approach is based on sufficiency and balance. It involves the value of having enough (the principle of contentment) and knowing when to suffice (the principle of moderation). This is in line with His Majesty King Bhumibol's Sufficiency Economy Philosophy. Thus, one could call Buddhist economics "sufficiency economics".

6. **The State's duty to support and facilitate economic activities:** The State or government can intervene in the economic activities of the individuals as long as it does not exploit or force the people to comply with its orders without good reasons. In addition to keeping law and order, a legitimate state needs to give a helping hand when an unjust issue occurs or when the public faces an economic crisis.

Thus, Buddhist economics may be practiced by a democratic gov-

ernment or an authoritarian state including absolute monarchy if it allows the people freedom to do economic activities to a certain degree. In this connection, Buddhist economy can be applied equally to capitalism and to other systems including socialism if the government or its ruler allows its people sufficient freedom to conduct economic activities. This may take the form of mixed economics like present-day capitalism.

2. Buddhist economic principles

Buddhist economic principles may be explained in the manner used to describe capitalism above.

1. General principles:

(1) **Holism:** Some thinkers maintain that Buddhism is collectivist in its approach similar to socialism with some differences (Preecha Changkwan-yuen, 2002, 41). In the researcher's view, it may seem that Buddhism in some ways respects the wish of the majority as it is only natural to do so. However, in general or metaphysically, according to the Buddhist principle of Dependent Origination (*Patīccasamuppāda*), all things depend on each other or relate to each other in an unbroken chain. Individualism is not a means to a collective end, and the end or society is not just an illusion for certain groups of individuals. Judging from the importance attached to individualism and statism described above, one can see that all parts are important and related. It is not possible to say once and for all whether the parts are more important than the sum or the other way round. Likewise, the natural environment is related to humanity. Buddhism attaches no less importance to the environment than to man. In the Buddhist code of monastic discipline (*Vinaya* code) there are rules forbidding monks to do certain acts toward nature such as trees and rivers. Therefore, it is not conclusive that Buddhism is all for majority rule. In this light the author would rather use "holism" in its place. Admittedly, this word has been used by some thinkers to refer to a collective approach; however, it also cov-

ers several meanings (Weera Somboon, 2007, 6-7). In Buddhism, all things relate to one another and depend on one another. Likewise, people depend on each other as well as on the environment or nature. They are interdependent in order to survive. Likewise, economic activities are part of human acts and do not exist in isolation. They too relate to other activities; their impacts are felt by other spheres. In general, any economic, social and political events are inter-related and mutually affect one another. They have repercussions all over the world. In this way knowledge and expertise in all fields are inter-related.

(2) **Human nature: man cares for self as well as for others:** In Buddhist terms, a “common man” is governed by a number of desires, good and bad. These desires include care for self and others at various degrees. Depending on the level of self-development, some are less selfish and more moral than others. A common man must possess both good and bad desires. In *Abhidamma*, a common man has wholesome as well as unwholesome thoughts. As he develops to become a holy person, moral thoughts increase in greater numbers. When he attains the highest level and becomes an *arahant*, he will have only functional consciousness and a supramundane state of existence.

(3) **Liberalism: Man has the right to life and property, and liberty to act accordingly:** Although there is no direct allusion to rights in Buddhism and the issue remains academically controversial, the notion of rights goes well with the Buddhist thinking. Buddhism has a similar approach to rights in that it recognizes the ownership of life and property. Its advocacy on self-control through moral precepts (*Sīla*) is tantamount to granting rights to others. Similarly, the notion of liberty goes well with the Buddhist approach although Buddhism focuses on nirvana (*Nibbāna*), freedom from the control of desires. This may be completely different from the Western notion of liberty governed by a set of desires. In addition, Buddhism recognizes the right to physical liberty. It recognizes a person’s ability to choose and support the legitimacy of his choice in accordance with his wish. In its teaching on

karma and rejection of the nation of castes, a person can choose his status and livelihood of his own accord. There is no coercion involved. A person who decides to be a merchant or a thief does so by choice. Thus, it can be said that Buddhism recognizes the notions of rights to life and property and liberty to act accordingly in a manner similar to the Western model except for some minor details.

2. **Moral and spiritual principles:** Besides advocating some general economic principles, Buddhism is “spiritual” in nature. In conducting economic activities, consideration must also be given to moral and spiritual principles in two ways:

(1) **Adherence to morality and social assistance:** There are a large number of Buddhist teachings, such as Right Livelihood, Abstention from Immoral Business, karma, and Ways of Making Merit. In particular, the sections on giving (*Dāna*) and precepts (*Sīla*) teach Buddhist followers how to conduct activities based on moral principles without harming or exploiting others. The teachings on Six Directions (*Disā*), Five Religious Offerings (*Bali*), and *Saṅgahavatthu* deal with doing good for others and society in the Buddhist manner. Economic activities must be conducted on moral grounds and for social good.

(2) **Spiritual objectives:** Besides morality and ethics, spirituality or spiritual values and inter-personal relationships constitute major Buddhist economic principles. Buddhism attaches importance to spirituality and human values above materialistic gains. Achieving maximum profits is not the target of Buddhist economics. What is more important is the spiritual dimension, embracing meritorious act, spiritual liberation and other moral issues including loving kindness and compassion. Helping people and society thus is one of the major principles, leading to the development of quality of life or spiritual development.

3. **Methodology of Buddhist economics:** The methodology that accompanies the principles of Buddhist economics can be summarized as follows:

(1) **Cooperation, sharing and mutual assistance:** One of the pri-

mary methodologies for doing business in Buddhist economy is to cooperate and share the work or other economic activities without turning its back on competition. Most Venerable P.A. Payutto explains that “in economic terms people say that it is human nature to compete, but Buddhism says that it is human nature to compete and cooperate” (P.A. Payutto, 2000a, 102-103).

(2) **Action taken within the framework of morality and social service:** As Buddhist economics is essentially based on morality, any economic activity must be undertaken within the moral framework. No unethical or improper code of conduct is allowed. All action must be socially acceptable at least to a certain degree. It must have no serious social impact. Morality or legitimacy must govern all economic action. This is in line with the current trend of “good governance” or “corporate governance” in management or decision making.

(3) **Work driven and motivated by spiritual values:** With spirituality as one of the objectives of Buddhist economics, the Buddhist methodology is driven by spiritual values rather than monetary or material gains or wealth. Morality, development of the quality of life, and human worth are forces that motivate economic activities in a more peaceful and sustainable manner.

(4) **Adoption of the middle-path approach focusing on simplicity, sufficiency and balance:** All economic activities must not be too rigid, lax, or greedy. One must know what constitutes the right balance. For example, a balanced diet is an example of the middle path approach in line with the Buddhist teachings of the Middle Path, Contentment and Moderation.

(5) **Exercise of wisdom, knowledge, reason and prudence:** For the Middle Path approach to be effective, one must also exercise wisdom, knowledge, reason and prudence. Moderation is a result of careful reflection backed up by wisdom, knowledge, and reason. The Buddha himself often talks about moderation in conjunction with the restraint of the senses. The later deals with care in the sensory perception as de-

scribed in *Sukhavihārasutta* (*Khuddakanikāya Itivuttaka*, 25/29/376). Moderation and sense restraint also relate to other dharma principles, including wisdom, mindfulness, and the state of a person with great learning. The examples can be found in the Buddhist teachings on 15 conducts (the 15 *Carāṇa*) or on “the way of a constant learner” (*Sekha-Patipadā*) in *Sekha-Patipadā-Sutta* (*Majjhimanikāya Majjhimaṇṇā-saka* 13/23-26/25-30). In other words, the teachings and guidelines for action lend force to each other.

(6) **Economy and savings:** Economy and savings are inherently part of the above mentioned methodology. Sufficiency, moderation and wise consumption will result in prudent and money-worth spending. This is what is meant by economy, leading to savings and increase in wealth. All this is made possible by surplus money. To put it in another way, when one saves, one spends carefully, knowing what to spend and what to save. Those who can save must know what to spend and what to keep. Economy and savings thus accompany each other.

(7) **Self-reliance:** All the methodologies mentioned above show that Buddhist economics focuses mainly on self-reliance. All economic activities depend to a large extent on the people who exercise moderation and possess knowledge. It can therefore be said that Buddhist economy places an emphasis on “self-reliance”.

(8) **State participation:** In a number of *sutta*, such as *Aggañña-sutta* and *Kūṭadanta-sutta*, mentioned is made of the role of the state or the administration to help facilitate the economic activities of its subjects to ensure quality and efficiency.

V. Comparison between capitalism and Buddhism

1. **Principles:** There are some similarities and differences.

1. **Individualism and mechanism in capitalism versus holism in Buddhism:** Capitalist individualism attaches importance to individualists and rejects the existence of what is known as “society” or

“collectivism”. It also supports mechanism in which things are treated separately without real inter-connectedness. This notion may initially seem to be in conflict with the Buddhist view in which all parts are important, socially and collectively, and are inter-connected. The conflict is not serious despite their inherent differences. Holism as advocated by Buddhism attaches no less importance to individualists than do individualism and mechanism.

2. **Liberalism in capitalism versus Buddhism:** Buddhism does not directly advocate liberalism in the same way as capitalism. It also focuses more on duty than on rights and liberty. Nevertheless, the Buddhist notion of duty encourages people not to violate the rights and liberty of others. Such violation goes against the notion of duty, something that a person should do. In other words it is “not one’s duty” to violate the rights and liberty of others. A dutiful person has no right to commit such acts.

3. **Selfishness and reasonableness in capitalism and Buddhism:** Capitalism maintains that it is human nature to be selfish or favor self-interest within the bounds of reason in such a way that it is possible for people to conduct economic activities together. This is not in serious conflict with Buddhism. Adam Smith recognizes in man such virtues of compassion and care for others, while Buddhism accepts a capitalist view of man’s fundamental selfishness. While Buddhism admits that man loves self more than others (see the Buddha’s sayings in *Piyatara-sutta (Khuddakanikāya Itivuttaka, 25/41/254)*), it mentions that man can love others as well. Sometimes people are tied down by self-interest or self-love, as in parental love for their children; yet, they can evolve to a level at which others’ interests can take precedence over self-interest and put an end to selfishness at the same time.

4. **Utilitarianism, materialism, and consumerism in capitalism versus Buddhism:** While capitalism focuses on materialistic utilitarianism and consumerism, Buddhism’s attention is on the mind, morality, and spiritual values. Nevertheless, the two systems are not in serious con-

flict. Recognizing the importance of materialism and necessity of consumerism, Buddhism complements the approach by giving a value-added dimension to the pursuit of wealth and materialistic consumption

5. **Optimality and balance in capitalism versus Buddhism:** Welfare economics seeks the optimal situation in which every party or everyone concerned will receive the maximum satisfaction from the distribution of resources and income. Within this conceptual framework capitalism attaches importance to optimality whereby no one will be adversely affected leading to a balance between demand and supply. In a sense, this is similar to the concept of the Middle Path and balance advocated by Buddhism against economic extremes that would harm self and others;

6. **Religion, morality and spirituality in capitalism and Buddhism:** As having discussed above, we find that many capitalists, including economic thinkers and modern business management, are aware of the importance of religion, morality and spirituality in economic affairs. Likewise, Buddhism has contributed to economy through a number of Buddhist businesspersons.

2. Comparison between capitalist and Buddhist methodologies

1. **Competition in capitalism and Buddhism:** According to P.A. Payutto, Buddhism maintains that it is human nature to compete as well as to cooperate (P.A. Payutto, 2000a, 102-103). In other words, Buddhism acknowledges legitimate or moral ways to compete and cooperate. Emphasis, however, is on cooperation as an ideal method to pursue, as it leads to stable economy and mutual friendship. In ideal capitalism free competition is also legitimate.

2. **Profit-oriented investment in capitalism and Buddhism:** There is nothing morally wrong about profit-oriented investment whether in the capitalist or Buddhism framework. It is only natural that when a person invests, he expects a profit in return so that his business and

livelihood could continue. In Buddhism there is a mention of trade and profit in several places. For example, in *Kūtadanta-sutta* the Buddha advises a prince to grant funding to those who are keen on doing business. A pursuit of maximum profits, if honestly acquired, is not morally wrong. This is acceptable to Buddhism. Although it does not put maximum profits as its real target, it does not deny such a pursuit as long as the practice is morally conducted. That is to say, a pursuit of profits must observe certain propriety. For instance, no dishonest means is employed. Profiteering is discouraged. Advantage must not be taken over others or society. Profits must be fairly distributed to other co-producers and society. This implies that profit-making is not an end in itself but a means to further distribution for collective good (Preecha Changkwan, 2002, 51).

3. Mechanistic administration and management in capitalism versus Buddhism: Mechanistic administration and management in capitalism is based on the notions of individualism and mechanism as mentioned above. The conflict between such an approach and a holistic cooperative practice in Buddhism is not really very serious, thus making it possible to integrate Buddhist methods into the capitalist practice.

4. Market-driven consumerism and savings in capitalism versus Buddhism: The exercise of marketing mechanisms, including pricing in the exchange or distribution of goods and services is acceptable to Buddhism if it is legitimately and morally conducted, without any dishonest and exploitative practice. Buddhism recognizes the notion of exchange. Market-driven consumerism, as part of the marketing mechanism, is acceptable to Buddhism as long as it is honest and legitimate. With regard to savings, this is something that Buddhism always promotes, the difference being in the goal and motivation advocated by capitalism and Buddhism.

5. Government role and function in capitalism and Buddhism: The *laissez-faire* as advocated by traditional capitalism about govern-

ment non-interference in the running of business of the private sector is in conflict with Buddhism. Buddhism argues that the State or government should assist the private sector in the running of business. However, the new generation of capitalists views that the State should play a role in the running of the private business. This approach is not in conflict with Buddhism. So, as a whole, there is little conflict between Buddhism and capitalism.

VI. Application of Buddhism to economic activities

In the present capitalist setting a large number of Buddhist businesspersons have applied Buddhist principles to their economic activities. Many have given interviews and written articles and books about their practice, e.g. Paron Isarasena na Ayudhya, former Managing Director of the Siam Cement Group, Danai Chanchaochai, CEO, DC Consultants and Marketing Communications, Wisit Chaisuwan, Managing Director, ESTEL Co. Ltd, Pavichaya Sriwanwat, Managing Director, Bucky Fabric Co. Ltd., Somdet Supradit-apon, President, S.N. Sportswear Com Ltd., Watcharamongkol Benchathachat, President, Bathroom Design Co. Ltd., and Chantana Wattanarom, Vice CEO for Marketing, Volvo Cars (Thailand) Co. Ltd. The ways that these Buddhist business executives have incorporated Buddhist principles in their businesses could be summarized as follows:

1. Reason for applying Buddhism to business

Thai Buddhist entrepreneurs who use Buddhism as a basis for their business usually practice the faith in their daily lives. They see that Buddhism is applicable and can turn business into a successful venture. The benefits and satisfaction thereof are greater than those brought about by capitalism-driven profits.

2. Principle for applying Buddhism to business

According to a number of Thai business executives, the application of Business to business is based on the following principles:

1. A number of Buddhist teachings can be selected to suit different

roles, functions, or missions: Buddhist entrepreneurs will choose certain Buddhist teachings for different tasks. For instance, in financial management, they can choose the principle of contentment or knowing when to stop, the principle of balance and sufficiency, as well as the principle governing the division of money (*Bhogavibhāga*). *Bhogavibhāga* teaches how to divide the earnings into expenditure and savings. In personnel management, there are principles on the Four Prejudices (*Agati*), the Four Sublime States of the Mind (*Brahamavihāra*), the Four Virtues for Group Integration and Leadership (*Saṅgahavatthu*), and the Ten Virtues of a Ruler (*Rājadhama*). All these principles are about how to offer help to co-workers and employees and how to treat them without prejudice or unfairness. Some Buddhist business people may put these principles into practice without knowing the names of the principles, because they have not studied Buddhism in great depth or they apply the principles automatically. Paron Isarasena na Ayudhya once said that he never analyzed how he followed the religious principles; his work ethic follows the same principle of how he lives his life, i.e. “do your duty at the best of your ability” (Paron Isarasena na Ayudhya, 2007, 48-49).

2. An effective application of Buddhism requires a substantial amount of practice and internalization: The real practitioners often have to undergo a long period of self-improvement and practice of the dharma until the internalization or a profound understanding of the dharma occurs. Once reaching that stage, they can readily put the religious principles to good use and will have a natural tendency to do so. In other words, they apply Buddhist teachings automatically.

3. The notion of capitalism is adjusted to fit in with the Buddhist framework: Certain aspects of capitalism need to be modified or toned down to fit in with the Buddhist economics, for instance, a pursuit of maximum profits or a tendency to mechanically treat the workforce merely as a resource in capitalism.

4. Buddhist teachings can be applied, modified or expanded to fit

in with the model of running a business alongside the Western model: Such application, modification or expansion will make it easier to integrate Buddhism into business or mission. The approach to be adopted is “the Middle Path”. Teachings will not be treated rigidly in a traditional idealistic mold of thought; care is also taken for them not to be too lax or distorted. In addition, some useful Western notions in line with Buddhism can be applied.

5. Buddhist teachings can be gradually integrated into business: The application of Buddhist principles is such that no-one is coerced or hard-pressed to follow. Coercion will cause resentment and a feeling of discomfort. When the application is done too quickly, co-workers will not understand its implication or outcome. A gradual approach will enable the workforce to better adjust themselves and appreciate the benefits of Buddhist principles. The more they practice, the better the results. Inspiration and motivation will follow suit. The introduction of Buddhist teachings into business settings takes time. The worker should not be rushed into the practice.

6. Workers should be allowed to have direct experience: One of the principles that facilitate the successful application of Buddhism to business is to create a scenario allowing the workforce to apply Buddhist principles as often as possible until the practice becomes natural to them.

7. The law of cause and effect (the Karmic law) is used to persuade and inspire the workforce to apply Buddhist principles at work: The cultivation in the workers about the law of karma will contribute to the desire to apply Buddhist teachings to their work. They feel that good deeds will reap good results. This applies equally to the management. As Buddhists, business executives and owners believe in the karmic law and are more willing to practice the dharma. Such application can be seen in people like Wisit Chaisuwan who has a strong belief in karma and runs his business on the teachings of karma (Wisit Chaisuwan, in an interview, 23 September 2008).

3. The application of Buddhism to various aspects of business

Under this section, the researcher presents the thinking of Thai businesspeople to illustrate how they apply Buddhist teachings to their business.

1. **General organizational principles or philosophy:** Buddhism forms part of the general organizational principle or philosophy of Thai business as follows:

(1) **Consideration is given to every stakeholder:** This constitutes one of the most fundamental organizational principles. Consideration is extended to all stakeholders, including local people. The business is stakeholder-oriented in line with the Buddhist principle of Dependent Origination (*Paticcasamuppāda*) governing the chain of causes and effects. It rejects a capitalist culture of business that regards shareholders as the most important group of people. The people-centered approach is in line with the principle of Dependent Origination (*Paticcasamuppāda*) and with other Buddhist tenets including giving (*Dāna*), loving kindness (*Mettā*), as well as doing good for self (*Attadattha*) and for others (*Parattha*).

(2) **Business is conducted within the moral and ethical framework with spiritual values as guiding principles:** Buddhist moral values and teachings provide an important organizational framework. Buddhist businesspeople invariably pay attention to them when conducting their business. All activities follow the moral and ethical principles. Hence, Buddhist businesspeople are moral, compassionate and honest. They conduct their business with transparency. No dishonest or fraudulent act is committed. They do not take unfair advantage of others and do not hurt or harm other fellow beings.

(3) **Buddhist businesspeople accept change and learn something new all the time:** They recognize that nothing is constant. Everything is in a state of flux. They are prepared physically and mentally for any change that may occur. They constantly learn how to problem-solve

and make adjustments accordingly. This is another philosophical milestone of Buddhism, especially the notion of impermanence (*Aniccatā*) and tenets on wisdom, knowledge, and education. Recognizing the impermanence of things, constant change, and importance of constant learning will enable the company or organization to survive any business adversity and prosper on a sustainable manner.

2. Goals: Buddhist businesspersons base their business goals or aims on Buddhist teachings:

(1) Goods and services produced with quality and beneficial to consumers, society and environment: All Buddhist businesspeople have similar goals in producing goods and services. The products must be of high quality and reasonable in price. The producers do not take advantage of consumers or deceive them. Their products are beneficial to consumers, society and the environment or at least do no cause them any harm. Such goals revolve around such concepts as honesty loving kindness, and compassion.

(2) Work intended for the benefits of others as well as for Buddhism: Buddhist-based business is directly aimed toward the good of others. It is not concerned only with production of quality goods and services. There is a selfless aspect to doing good deeds for others, something that Danai Chanchaochai called "public mind".

(3) Self-development: It is the view of many Buddhist-educated businesspeople that work is a form of dharma practice or self-training to develop the quality of life or heighten their moral virtues. The ultimate aim is their spirituality. These people see that they attain happiness while at work and need not wait for materialistic gains. They are not afraid of the consequences.

(4) Doing charitable deeds (*Puñña*) as a profit in itself: Doing charitable (*Puñña*) or wholesome (*Kusala*) deeds is one of the goals of practicing Buddhists. The act of *Puñña* will bring about good and felicitous outcomes, enabling the doer to reach nirvana, the state in which there is no more suffering but true happiness, the Summum Bo-

num of Buddhism. Thus *Puññā*, rather than materialistic profit, is the aim of Buddhist businesspeople.

(5) Development of quality people: Another Buddhist business goal is to develop quality people, both within the company and the public at large.

3. Ways to achieve the goals: To conduct their business with great efficiency, Buddhist businesspeople adopt the following practices:

(1) Exercising mindfulness (*Sati*), wisdom (*Paññā*), perseverance (*Viriya*) or the Four Bases of Accomplishment (the Four *Iddhipāda*): Some of the most important Buddhist tenets for doing business are mindfulness (*Sati*), wisdom (*Paññā*), and perseverance (*Viriya*). They provide a correct, stable and efficient way of doing business, as well as laying the groundwork for other Buddhist principles.

(2) Working within the framework of the Five Precepts (*Pañcasīla*) and the Five Ennobling Virtues (*Pañcadhamma*): *Pañcasīla* work in tandem with *Pañcadhamma* and form the basis of Buddhist business undertaking. *Pañcasīla* are basic principles for everyday life in all its aspects. Practicing *Pañcasīla* also means doing all the accompanying virtues of *Pañcadhamma*.

(3) Working economically and paying attention to details and speed: The teachings on economy, attention to work details and no backlog give rise to what is called "a livelihood free from complications", one of the 38 blessings (*Maṅgala*). Such tenets when practiced lead to work efficiency.

4) Management: Good management, whether personnel or financial, is key to business success based on a number of Buddhist principles.

(1) Management with the Four *Brahmavihāra*, the Four *Saṅgahavattṭhu*, and *Agatī*: The Four *Brahmavihāra*, consisting of loving kindness (*Mettā*), compassion (*Karuṇā*), sympathetic joy (*Muditā*) and equanimity (*Upekkhā*), are religious teachings for adults, including managers, administrators and rulers. They are used as a rule by all

Buddhist businesspeople. Usually they go together with another set of tenets called the Four *Saṅgahavatthu*, designed to win the hearts of others. The latter consist of giving (*Dāna*), speaking kind words (*Piyavācā*), doing good deeds to others (*Atthacariyā*), and conducting oneself properly in all circumstances; however, they are not as often referred to as the Four *Brahamavihāra*. In addition, the correct application of the *Brahamavihāra* and *Saṅgahavatthu* must be made in conjunction with the *Agati* principle in which care is taken against prejudice caused by love, enmity or delusion.

(2) Management in full knowledge of reality: In the carrying-out of management, good as well as bad things can occur. It is important to take cognizance of the situations and try to improve upon them. This is in line with the teaching on *tathatā* (such is the reality) that tells us to accept that all things in nature follow the rule of cause and effect. They are not always under our control.

(3) Karma-based management: The law of karma constitutes a principle of justice in Buddhism. It motivates people to work with moral justice and is a keystone of fair and just management. A worker is rewarded according to his performance. In management terms, a problematic management shows that a bad karma or mistake has been committed; one needs to come up with a different set of karma to resolve the issue.

(4) Management with less focus on self and more on others: Buddhism teaches us to attach less importance to self including our status and all things that have something to do with ourselves. The practice will bring us less suffering and is a management technique.

(5) Management by the principle of Four Noble Truths (the Four *Ariyasacca*): Not only can the Four Noble Truths be used to free us from suffering and provide us with a problem-solving approach, but they can also be applied to the management and solution to personnel problems.

(6) Management with a combination of Buddhist principles and

other modern management methods: Buddhism needs not be the only management tool. Other modern Western non-Buddhist management models can also be applied alongside for greater efficiency.

5. **Personnel development:** Buddhist businesspeople often apply Buddhist teachings to personnel development through a number of religious trainings, especially insight meditation and development. These programs are intended to enhance spiritual or moral development of the workers, leading to greater work efficiency.

6. **Organizational culture:** There are a number of practices based on Buddhist teachings that go to form various organizational cultures.

(1) **Culture of mindfulness:** Mindfulness is crucial to work. Care is taken to do things properly and avoid making unnecessary mistakes. This will enhance work efficiency. The Buddha has attached great importance to mindfulness or non-negligence (*Appamāda*). He urges the people to perform their duties with mindfulness (*Dīghanikāya Mahāvagga*, 10/218/166). Many Buddhist businesspeople pay attention to the issue of mindfulness, such as Danai Chanchaochai (in an interview on 20 November 2008).

(2) **Culture of giving:** Giving is one of the most fundamental Buddhist teachings contributing to winning over the heart of people and fostering greater friendship. It is, therefore, a crucial part of doing business. If giving is made an integral part of the organizational culture, greater work efficiency will be insured. Thus, it is adopted by many Buddhist businesses.

(3) **Culture of collaboration:** Buddhist businesspeople often adopt a collaborative approach to work commonly called “team work”. Such collaboration is similar to the teaching on unity (*Sāmaggi*) and mutual assistance (*Saṅgahavatthu*) based on the notion of Dependent Origination (*Paticcasamuppāda*) whereby all things relate to one another. The compliance with this law of nature will bring fruitful results.

(4) **Culture of learning:** Knowledge is important to all aspects of life. In business, businesspeople or executives must possess enough

knowledge to carry out their tasks. Knowledge is something the Buddha values highly. There are many teachings on this issue, such as Great Learning (*Bāhusacca*), one of 38 blessings in life (*Maṅgala*).

7. **Production:** Buddhist-based production of goods and services makes sure that the products are of good quality and at a reasonable price. No party is taken advantage of. No fraudulence is involved. No harm is done to other people, society and the environment. This is in line with a number of religious teachings such as honesty, the Five Precepts (*Pañcasīla*), the Five Ennobling Virtues (*Pañcadhamma*), and Dependent Origination (*Paticca-samuppāda*). Besides, the practice of such dharma as the Six Directions (*Disā*) will bring about more effective production.

8. **Marketing:** In competitive marketing and distribution of goods and services, as well as in creating a consumer demand, Buddhist businesspeople will take into account friendly co-existence and mutual reliance as defined in the notion of Dependent Origination (*Paticca-samuppāda*). They also pay equal attention to resources and the environment.

4. Principles and methodology of applying Buddhism to business

From the discussion above, one can conclude that there are five aspects to the application of Buddhism to business:

1. Buddhism provides a moral and ethical basis for doing business without causing harm to self, others, society and the environment. Buddhist business operates within the framework of Right Livelihood (*Sammā-ājīva*) and the Five Ennobling Virtues (*Pañcadhamma*), making sure that no harm is done to resources and the environment.

2. Buddhism helps to promote business ethics, creating a good working condition and relationship among the workers and with outside organizations. Fairness and effectiveness go hand in hand. A practice of *Brahamavihāra*, *Saṅgahavatthu*, and *Agati* will help to win the support of all parties concerned.

3. The Buddhist concept of truth (*Sacca*) helps to set the organization policy, operation and development. It emphasizes the recognition of change as the basis for continuous improvement.

4. The Buddhist methodology helps to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the business performance, for instance, the application of the Four Noble Truths (*Ariyasacca*).

5. Buddhist ideal or life goal can help set business goals. For instance, doing charitable deeds (*Puñña*) is more profitable than accumulating assets, and work is a practice in dharma or self-development.

The application of Buddhist principles and methodology to business, therefore, can be seen in the setting of the business goals, framework, and operation. They go well together.

VII. Possibility of applying Buddhism to capitalist society

The above discussion shows to a large extent the possibility of applying Buddhism to capitalist economy. The following is the summary.

1. Capitalist in its ideal or pure form is not in conflict with Buddhist teachings on economy. One can integrate the two systems with some small changes or adjustments. For example, the capitalist pursuit of maximum benefits could be toned down to a pursuit of legitimate gains and incorporate the Buddhist goal of the development of the quality of life for self and others. In this way, economic activities will embrace worldly and moral dimensions. Both materialistic and spiritual considerations are, thus, taken care of, leading to sustainable economy and development.

2. The current capitalist economy is not in its pure form but consists of mixed elements. Buddhism is not in conflict with such mixed capitalism either. In general, mixed capitalism cares for morality. Its notion of just administration and State's involvement in the private business sector goes well with the Buddhist viewpoint. Admittedly, some economic practices are evil, mean and corrupt, but they are committed by only some people or corporate entities. If economic and political

authorities want to resolve such issues, Buddhism will be able to contribute to the effort. The issues in question are usually due to short-sighted selfishness. Buddhism can help point out the long-term benefits of doing business on moral and ethical grounds.

3. There is evidence that many organizations and corporations worldwide attach importance to morality and not exclusively to profit, testifying to the fact that Buddhism can be applied to business. Although these companies do not act out of the Buddhist faith, their actions are similar in spirit to Buddhist teachings. For instance, corporate social responsibility corresponds to Buddhist teachings on loving kindness (*Mettā*), compassion (*Karuṇā*), and giving (*Dāna*).

4. There is evidence that many corporations and Buddhist entrepreneurs have applied Buddhist principles to their businesses. This is a significant indication that Buddhism can apply to business or economic undertaking.

5. The fact that Thai society has adopted His Majesty King Bhumibol's Sufficiency Economy Philosophy shows that Buddhism and sufficiency economy are in unison. The sufficiency economy philosophy clearly bears witness to Buddhist influence. In other words, Buddhist economics can also be called sufficiency economics.

6. Buddhism touches upon many economic dimensions, including production, marketing, distribution and consumption. There are a great variety of teachings that can be applied. In a sense, a Buddhist can exercise Buddhist principles to his daily economic activities one way or another. Some activities are not too complicated. For example, in consumption, a Buddhist can apply the tenets on sufficiency, true and false values, and savings. The more he does, the greater benefits will go to self and society at large.

So, it is possible and feasible that Buddhism can be applied to modern capitalist economy. The extent of the application depends on a number of conditions, such as the ability of the executives and the nature of work.

VIII. Conclusion

From the above discussion it can be argued that Buddhism is not in serious conflict with capitalism or liberalism. They are in fact quite compatible, especially if capitalism is not practiced to the extreme, for example, if it does not preach excessive greed. Admittedly, there are some differences. There are also similarities, and it is possible to tone down several aspects of capitalism. Many Buddhist businesspersons have shown that it is possible to apply Buddhist teachings to economic enterprises in the present capitalist society.

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