Introduction

The (Avijjā) Paccaya Sutta is interesting in that it applies the model of “specific conditionality” to eleven pairs of proximate links, that is,

1. birth and decay-and-death,
2. existence and birth,
3. clinging and existence,
4. craving and clinging,
5. feeling and craving,
6. contact and feeling,
7. the six sense-bases and contact,
8. name-and-form and the six sense-bases,
9. consciousness and name-and-form,
10. volitional activities and consciousness, and
11. ignorance and volitional activities.

The pattern is that of “when A is, B is,” and conversely, “when A is not, B is not.” This means, theoretically at least, that the chain of dependent arising can be broken at any link. Breaking it at any of the link means that the whole chain is effectively broken, but this is not easy to do, because the chains are, so to speak, very strong.

However, in practical meditation, when we are distracted, we are often advised merely to note its impermanence or “rise and fall,” and not to get caught up in its “details.” Technically, this means that we only observe the “feeling” aspect of a mental event and stop there, that is, not going on into the “craving” stage. In this way, the mental hindrance is overcome. However, only with the uprooting of ignorance, that is, the attaining of true knowledge (that of fully understanding the four noble truths), are we really awakened and liberated.

1 S 12.20/2:25-27 & SD 39.5 (2.1).
2 S 12.27/2:421 = SD 39.12
3 S 12.20 @ SD 39.5 (1.1.2.4).
4 See Nimitta & vyañjana = SD 19.14.
5 See (Samuday’atthaṅgama) Loka S (S 12.44/2:71-73) = SD 7.5 & Dependent arising = SD 5.16 (18).
6 See Dhamma,cakka Pavattana @ SD 1.1 (6).
The Discourse on Conditions (Ignorance)
S 12.27/2:42 f

1 (The Blessed One was) staying at Sāvatthi.

The 12-link dependent arising (direct order)

2 Bhikshus,
   (1) with ignorance as condition, there are formations;
   (2) with formations as condition, there is consciousness;
   (3) with consciousness as condition, there is name-and-form;
   (4) with name-and-form as condition, there are the six sense-bases;
   (5) with the six sense-bases as condition, there is contact;
   (6) with contact as condition, there is feeling;
   (7) with feeling as condition, there is craving; 7
   (8) with craving as condition, there is clinging;
   (9) with clinging as condition, there is existence;
   (10) with existence as condition, there is birth;
   (11) with birth as condition there arise decay and death, sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain and despair.

   —Such is the arising of this whole mass of suffering.

The 12 links defined: their arising and ceasing

3 (1) And what, bhikshus, is decay-and-death? 8
DECAY. Ageing, decaying, broken teeth, grey hair, wrinkled skin, the dwindling away of one’s years, the weakness of the sense-faculties, in various beings, in various groups of beings, here and there. 9
This, bhikshus, is called decay.

DEATH. Falling away, passing away, breaking up, disappearance, death, dying, one’s time being up 10 [completion of one’s time], breaking up of the aggregates, discarding of the body, [uprooting of the life-faculty.] 11 in various beings, in various groups of beings, here and there. 12
This, bhikshus, is called death.

4 With the arising of birth, there is the arising of decay-and-death.
   With the ceasing of birth, there is the ceasing of decay-and-death.
   This very noble eightfold path is the way leading to the ceasing of decay-and-death,

7 In (Samuday’atthaṅgamā) Loka S (S 12.44), the dependent arising is shown to be broken here when “with the remainderless fading away and ending of that same craving comes cessation of clinging…” the rest of the chain breaks accordingly leading to the ending of “this whole mass of suffering.” (S 12.44/2.71-73)
8 This def is stock: Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S (D 22.18/2.304); Sakka Vibhaṅga S (M 141.12+13/3.249); (Paṭicca,samuppāda) Vibhaṅga S (S 12.2/2); (Avijjā) Paccaya S (S 2:42); Civa,vaṭṭhu S (S 2:57); Nc:Be 61; Pm 1:37; Vbh 99, 137.
9 Yaḥ tesaṁ tesaṁ sattānaṁ tamhi tamhi satta, nikāyī saṁ-hāni indriyānaṁ paripaṅko—ayaṁ vucaṭṭa'āvuso jarā.
10 Kāla,kiriyā, lit “having done one’s time”.
11 Jivit’indriyass’ upacchodo, found in Be; omitted here and in Sammā Diṭṭhi S (M 9.22/1:49).
12 Yaḥ tesaṁ tesaṁ sattānaṁ tamhi tamhi satta, nikāyī cuti cavanatā bhedo antaradhānāṁ maccu maraṇaṁ kāla,kiriyā khandhānaṁ bhedo kaḷeṭbaraṁ nikkhepo [Be: jivit’indriyass’ upacchodo]—idaṁ vucaṭṭa’āvuso maraṇaṁ.
that is to say, right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.

5.1 (2) And what, bhikkhus, is birth?
The birth of various beings into the various orders of beings, their being born, descent into the womb, production, the arising of the aggregates, the obtaining of the sense-bases.\(^{13}\) This, bhikkhus, is called birth.

5.2 With the arising of existence, there is the arising of birth.
With the ceasing of existence, there is the ceasing of birth.

This very noble eightfold path is the way leading to the ceasing of birth, that is to say, right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.

6.1 (3) And what, bhikkhus, is existence?
Bhikkhus, there are these three kinds of existence: sense-sphere existence, form-sphere existence, formless-sphere existence.
This, bhikkhus, is called existence.\(^{14}\)

5.2 With the arising of clinging, there is the arising of existence.
With the ceasing of clinging, there is the ceasing of existence.

This very noble eightfold path is the way leading to the ceasing of existence, that is to say, right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.

7.1 (4) And what, bhikkhus, is clinging?
Bhikkhus, there are these four kinds of clinging: \(^{15}\) clinging to sensual pleasures, clinging to views, clinging to rituals and vows,\(^{16}\) clinging to the doctrine of a self.\(^{17}\)

This, bhikkhus, is called clinging.\(^{18}\)

7.2 With the arising of craving, there is the arising of clinging.
With the ceasing of craving, there is the ceasing of clinging.

This very noble eightfold path is the way leading to the ceasing of clinging, that is to say, right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.

\(^{13}\) As at (Paṭicca,samuppāda) Vibhaṅga S (S 12.2.4/2:3) = SD 5.15.

\(^{14}\) “Existence,” bhava: as at (Paṭicca,samuppāda) Vibhaṅga S (S 12.2.5/2:3) = SD 5.15, where see n.

\(^{15}\) For def of the 4 types of clinging (upādāna), see Dhs §§1214-17. In brief, clinging to sensual pleasures (kām’u-pādāna) is syn with sensual desire, sensual lust, sensual delight, sensual craving, etc. Clinging to views (diṭṭh’u-pādāna) is the taking up of any wrong view except those included in the third and fourth types of clinging. (See Dhs §1215, where the nihilist view is given as an example.)

\(^{16}\) “Clinging to rituals and vows,” sīla-b, bat’u-pādāna. Here sīla can mean “conduct, nature”: see eg the common phrase, iminā āhāsāla vā vatena vā tapena vā brahmācariyena vā devo vā bhavissāmi dev’aśūnataro vā (“by this precept or observance or asceticism or holy life, I will become a god or some lesser god”) (eg Ceto,khila S, M 16.-12/1:102). Here ritual refers to a ritualistic way of keeping the precepts or making our practice merely as a routine, “observance.” By vata is meant some kind of vow, aspiration, prayer, etc, that we do not or cannot really put into practice, or which is not really beneficial. Dhs §1222 says, “Clinging to rituals and vows is the view of recluses and brahmans outside the religion that purification is achieved by rituals and rules….” An example of such a view is “the dog ritual, dog vow” (kukkura,sīla kukkura,vata) described in Kukkura,vatika S (M 57.2/1:387) = SD 23.11. Cf S:B 726 mā.

\(^{17}\) “Clinging to a doctrine of a self” (atta,vād’u-pādāna) is defined by way of the 20 types of identity view (sakk-ya,diṭṭhi). See eg Upādāna Parittasanā S 1 (S 22.7/3:15-18).

\(^{18}\) As at (Paṭicca,samuppāda) Vibhaṅga S (S 12.2.6/2:3) = SD 5.15. Comy glosses upādāna as dalha-g,gahaṇa (“tight grasping”) (SA 2:14).

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8.1 (5) And what, bhikshus, is **craving**?
Bhikshus, there are these six classes of craving: craving for forms, craving for sounds, craving for smells, craving for tastes, craving for touches, craving for mind-objects. This is called **craving**. 19

8.2 With the arising of feeling, there is the arising of craving.
With the cessation of feeling, there is the cessation of craving.

This very noble eightfold path is the way leading to the cessation of craving, that is to say, right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.

9.1 (6) And what, bhikshus, is **feeling**?
Bhikshus, there are these six classes of feeling: feeling born of eye-contact, feeling born of ear-contact, feeling born of nose-contact, feeling born of tongue-contact, feeling born of body-contact, feeling born of mind-contact.
This, bhikshus, is called **feeling**. 20

9.2 With the arising of contact, there is the arising of feeling.
With the cessation of contact, there is the cessation of feeling.

This very noble eightfold path is the way leading to the cessation of feeling, that is to say, right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.

10.1 (7) And what, bhikshus, is **contact**?
Bhikshus, there are these six classes of contact: eye-contact, ear-contact, nose-contact, tongue-contact, body-contact, mind-contact.
This, bhikshus, is called **contact**. 21

10.2 With the arising of the six sense-bases, there is the arising of contact.
With the cessation of the six sense-bases, there is the cessation of contact.

This very noble eightfold path is the way leading to the cessation of contact, that is to say, right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.

11.1 (8) And what, bhikshus, are the **six sense-bases**?
Bhikshus, the eye-base, ear-base, nose-base, tongue-base, body-base, mind-base.
These, bhikshus, are called the **six sense-bases**. 22

11.2 With the arising of name-and-form, there is the arising of the six sense-bases.
With the cessation of name-and-form, there is the cessation of the six sense-bases.

This very noble eightfold path is the way leading to the cessation of the six sense-bases, that is to say, right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.

12.1 (9) And what, bhikshus, is **name-and-form**?
NAME. Bhikshus, feeling, perception, volition, contact, and attention: this is called **name**.
FORM. And the four great elements and the material form derived from the four great elements: 23 this is called **form**.

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19 As at (Paṭicca, samuppāda) Vibhaṅga S (S 12.2.7/2:3) = SD 5.15.
20 As at (Paṭicca, samuppāda) Vibhaṅga S (S 12.2.8/2:3) = SD 5.15, where see n.
21 As at (Paṭicca, samuppāda) Vibhaṅga S (S 12.2.9/2:3) = SD 5.15, where see n.
22 As at (Paṭicca, samuppāda) Vibhaṅga S (S 12.2.10/2:3) = SD 5.15, where see n.
23 Although the “derived forms” (upādā, rūpa, later Pali upādāya, rūpa) are mentioned here, their analysis first appears in the Abhidhamma Pitaka (Dhs 596; Tkp 3, qu at Vism 535; Tkp 89, 109; Vism 444), according to which there are 24 “derived forms,” namely: (1-5) the 5 sense-faculties (posāda, rūpa): seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching; (6-9) the 4 sense objects: form, sound, smell, taste (touch being identical with three of the great elements,

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Thus, bhikshus, this is name and this is form, and (together) they are called name-and-form.  

12.2 With the arising of consciousness, there is the arising of name-and-form.  
With the ceasing of consciousness, there is the ceasing of name-and-form.  

This very noble eightfold path is the way leading to the ceasing of name-and-form, that is to say, right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.

13.1 (10) And what, bhikshus, is consciousness?  
Bhikshus, there are these six classes of consciousness: eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, tongue-consciousness, body-consciousness, mind-consciousness.  
This, bhikshus, is called consciousness.

13.2 With the arising of volitional activities, there is the arising of consciousness.  
With the ceasing of volitional activities, there is the ceasing of consciousness.  

This very noble eightfold path is the way leading to the ceasing of consciousness, that is to say, right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.

14.1 (11) And what, bhikshus, are volitional activities?  
Bhikshus, there are these three kinds of volitional activities: the bodily formation, the verbal formation, the mental formation.  
These, bhikshus, are called volitional activities.

14.2 With the arising of ignorance, there is the arising of volitional activities.  
With the ceasing of ignorance, there is the ceasing of volitional activities.  

This very noble eightfold path is the way leading to the ceasing of volitional activities, that is to say, right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.

The noble eightfold path and dependent arising  
15 Bhikshus, when a noble disciple understands condition [conditionality] in this way, understands condition, that is, arising, understands condition, that is, ceasing, understands condition, that is, the way leading to the ending,  
16 this, bhikshus, is called a noble disciples who,

viz earth, fire and air; (10) femininity (ithatta/ith 'indriya); (11) masculinity (purisatta/puris 'indriya); (12) physical base of the mind (hadaya,vatthu); (13) physical life (rūpa,jīvītā); (14) material quality of food (āhāra,rūpa); (15) the space element (ākāsa,dhātu); (16) bodily intimation (kāya,viññāti); (17) verbal intimation (vaci,viññāti); (18) physical agility (rūpasa lahitū); (19) physical elasticity (rūpasa mudutū), (20) physical adaptability (rūpasa kammañātā); (21) physical growth (rūpasa upacaya); (22) physical continuity (rūpasa santati); (23) decay (rūpasa jaratā) and (24) impermanence (rūpasa aniccatā) (Dhs 127; Vism 443; Abhs:SR 159; Abhs:BRS 6.2-5/235-242).

The Abhidhammattha,sāṅgaha lists 28 “material phenomena” by adding the 4 great elements (earth, water, fire, air) to the head of the list. See BDict: Khandha & also A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma (Abhs:BRS 6.2-5).

For a useful discussion, see Harvey 1993:3-5 (digital ed); also Karunadasa 1967:38 f & Boisvert 1995:37-42.

24 As at (Paṭicca,sañūpappā) Vibhaṅga S (S 12.2.11/2:3 f) = SD 5.15, where see n.
25 As at (Paṭicca,sañūpappā) Vibhaṅga S (S 12.2.12/2:4) = SD 5.15, where see n.
26 “Volitional activities,” saṅkhārā. As the 2nd factor of dependent arising, as here, saṅkhārā are the karmically active volitions (“volitional activities”) responsible, in conjunction with ignorance and craving, for the producing rebirth and binding one to the wheel of existence (eg Saṅkhār ‘upapatti S, M 120). This kind of saṅkhārā gives an active synthetic explanation of how an individual existence arises, while as an aggregate (khandha), they apply in a passive analytical way. For details, see (Paṭicca,sañūpappā) Vibhaṅga S (S 12.2.13/2:4) = SD 5.15 n.
27 As at (Paṭicca,sañūpappā) Vibhaṅga S (S 12.2.13/2:4) = SD 5.15, where see n.
as such, is accomplished in view, as such, is accomplished in vision, as such, is one who has arrived at this true Dharma, as such, sees this true Dharma, as such, is accomplished in the learner’s knowledge, as such, is accomplished in the learner’s true knowledge as such, is one who has entered the Dharma stream, as such, is a noble one who has penetrative wisdom, as such, stands right before nirvana’s door,

dīṭṭhi,sapmanno iti ’pi, dassana,sampanno iti ’pi, āgata imaṁ saddhammaṁ iti ’pi, passati imaṁ saddhammaṁ iti ’pi, sekkhena ṇāṇena samannāgato iti ’pi, sekkhāya vijjāya samannāgato iti ’pi, dhamma,sotaṁ samāpanno iti ’pi, ariyo nibbedhika,pañño iti ’pi, amata, dvāraṁ ²⁸ āhacca tiṭṭhati iti ’pīti.

— evaṁ —

120430; 120501; 120514; 120521; 120601; 120605a

²⁸ This enigmatic phrase appears at Cūḷa Gopālaka S (M 34.12/1:227,11*); Aṭṭhaka,nagara S (M 52.15/1:353,2 +7); (Avijjā) Paccaya S (S 12.27.15/2:43,22); Bhikkhu S (S 12.28.37/2:45,8); Nāna,vatthu S (S 12.33.21/2:58,24, 36/59,30); Ariya,sāvaka S 2 (S 12.49.11/2:80,11). It is poss that Aṭṭhaka,nagara S = Amata,dvāra S (A 5:346): CPD 1:389. Qu at AA 2:1.