

7

Upādāna Parivaṭṭa Sutta

or, Be: Upādāna Paripavatta Sutta

The Discourse on the Full Cycles of Clinging | S 22.56

Theme: An examination of the 5 aggregates within this life

Translated by Piya Tan ©2003, 2015

1 The 5 aggregates

1.1 THE 2 MODELS OF THE 5 AGGREGATES

There are 2 ways of examining the 5 aggregates (*pañca-k,khandha*):¹ within the same life-time (synchronic or proximal model) and over a number of connected lives (diachronic or distal model).² Here, in the Upādāna Parivaṭṭa Sutta, we shall examine the 1st model for the aggregates, that is, the synchronic. **The Satta-ṭṭhāna Sutta** (S 22.57) gives the same synchronic model [3]. The other model, the diachronic, is found in **the (Upādāna) Samādhi Sutta** (S 22.5).³

1.2 WE ARE EACH A PROCESS

1.2.1 No “self”

1.2.1.1 We are all incomplete parts and processes. Our “individuality” or personhood is a mere process of mental states and physical events arising from *ignorance*, beginning from time immemorial and propelled indefinitely by *craving* into the future. The parts and processes that constitute us are called “**the 5 aggregates**” (*pañca-k,khandha*), that is, form (*rūpa*), feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), volitional formations or mental volitions (*saṅkhāra*) and consciousness (*viññāṇa*). These 5 groups do *not*, either singly or as a group (or in any way), constitute an independent unchanging entity (*attā*)—usually called “soul” or “self” —since any notion of a permanent entity is ultimately an illusion.

1.2.1.2 A proper understanding of the aggregates provides us with a view of *physical* and *mental* events—that is, of “everything” (*sabba*)⁴—that brings us closer to reality. In the first place, we have **the 6 internal sense-faculties**, that is, the 5 physical sense-organs (the eye, ear, nose, tongue and body) and the 6th sense, the mind (the “sensing” organ), which, simply put, makes sense of our experiences.

Then, there are **the 6 external sense-objects**: physical form, sound, smell, taste, touch and thoughts. Thoughts or “mind-objects” are also *external* sense-objects since they arise through or are affected by *contact* or “stimulus” with the external world (that is, by sense stimuli).

1.3 What experience is

1.3.1 Reflexive awareness

In the suttas and Buddhist texts, the external physical world is called **form** (*rūpa*).⁵ As conscious beings, we have a basic awareness or **consciousness** (*viññāṇa*) of ourselves and our surroundings (living

¹ For a detailed study of the 5 aggregates, see *Pañca-k,khandha*, SD 17.

² See S:B 1049 n30.

³ See SD 7.16.

⁴ See esp **Sabba S** (S 35.23), SD 7.1.

⁵ On the primary elements, both external (the world) and internal (our body), see **Mahā Rāhu’ovāda S** (M 62.8-12/1:421-423).

and non-living). Not only are we aware of ourselves or **reflexive consciousness**, but we are also aware of others: “a person,” “a colour,” “a fruit,” etc, depending on awareness (or lack of it), (mis)conceptions and preconceptions: this is sense-based **cognitive consciousness**.⁶ This is one of the key senses of “the conscious body” (*sa,viññāṇaka,kāya*)⁷ in early Buddhism.

1.3.2 Cognitive consciousness

1.3.2.1 According to early Buddhism, **consciousness** (*viññāṇa*) is how we “cognize” or “know” the world. According to **the Sabba Sutta** (S 35.23), our 6 sense-faculties—the 5 physical senses and the mind—are our only *means* of knowing; the 6 respective kinds of sense-objects are *all* that we can know.⁸

This is the “**all**” (*sabba*), that is, the “sense-bases” (*āyatana,sabba*) (SA 2:357,27-29). Technically, this refers to the “experiences” that arise in the 4 planes or grounds (*catu,bhūmaka,dhamma*, “the nature of the 4 planes), that is, the 3 mundane worlds (the sense-world, the form world and the formless world) and the supramundane plane (the 4 paths, their fruitions⁹ and nirvana).

1.3.2.2 The mind, in early Buddhism, is called in Pali, *citta, mano, viññāṇa*.¹⁰ In terms of “mental activity,” they are synonyms for “mind.” They are differentiated in terms of function, which depends on their contexts. Often *citta* means “thought,” *mano* “mind,” and *viññāṇa* “consciousness.” These terms are useful when we get down to describing the various aspects and functions of what we generally know as “the mind.”¹¹

The word *citta*, “thought,” is derived from the root √CIT, “to perceive, know, appear.” The Abhidhamma and Commentaries define *citta* in 3 ways: as agent, as instrument, and as activity.¹²

As **the agent**: it cognizes a mental object (*ārammaṇaṃ cintetīti cittaṃ*).¹³

As **the instrument**: the means by which the attendant mental factors cognize the object (*etena cintentīti cittaṃ*).¹⁴

As **an activity**: it is simply the process of cognizing the object (*cintana,mattaṃ cittaṃ*).¹⁵

From these definitions, especially the 3rd (in terms of mere activity), it is clear that *citta* (“thought”; broadly, “mind” or “consciousness”) is basically a process of cognizing or knowing an object. It is neither an agent nor some instrument that exists in itself apart from the cognizing. Such definitions clearly work to refute any idea of a permanent self or ego as the agent of cognition: there is only thinking, no thinker.¹⁶

⁶ Technically, “cognitive consciousness” is the broad modern term which includes reflexive consciousness. Indeed, we can study all human consciousness as being “reflexivity,” as self-awareness that arises from being aware of others. See F Peters, “Theories of consciousness as reflexivity,” *The Philosophical Forum*, 2013.

⁷ On *sa,viññāṇaka,kāya*, see SD 17.8a (12.3) SD 56.1 (4.3.2.2) n.

⁸ S 35.23/4:15 + SD 7.1 (5).

⁹ On the 4 paths (*magga*) and 4 fruitions (*phala*), see SD 15.10a (1.0). On the 8 individuals, see **Aṭṭha Puggala S 1** (A 8.59,2), SD 15.10a(1).

¹⁰ SD 56.4 (3.4.2.5). On “location” of min, SD 56.20 (2.2.2.4).

¹¹ See **Assutava S 1** (S 12.61,4+8, monkey simile), SD 20.2; **Assutava S 2** (S 12.61,4+7), SD 20.3; SD 56.4 (3.4.2.5); SD 56.20 (2.2.2.4); SD 17.8a (12), esp (12.5.4) summary.

¹² For explanations, see Abhs:BRS 27-31.

¹³ PmA 1.98; DhsA 63, 112.

¹⁴ Abhs:Be 74.

¹⁵ Abhs:Be 74.

¹⁶ Further on nonself, see **Anatta Lakkhaṇa S** (S 22.59), SD 1.2 (2); **Is there a soul?** SD 2.16; **Self and selves**, SD 26.9.

1.3.2.3 Here, we will briefly look at the etymologies of some key English words in Buddhist psychology—to know, to think, to cognize, the mind, and consciousness, and their Pali forms—for a some idea of how intimately they are related, especially in terms of the Indo-European family of languages, to which many Western European languages (like English) and South and Southeast Asians (like Pali) belong.¹⁷

to know (*vijānāti, pajānāti, parijānāti, abhijānāti*)¹⁸: from Middle English *known, knawen*, from Old English *cnāwen*, akin to Latin, *gnoscere, noscere*, to become acquainted with, to know (see under cognition), Greek *gignōskein*, to come to know, perceive, and Sanskrit/Pali *jānāti*, he knows.

gnosis (*ñāṇa*; Skt *jñāna*), immediate or direct knowledge of spiritual truth: Greek *gnosis*, literally, knowledge, from *gignōskein*, to come to know, perceive; akin to Sanskrit/Pali *jānāti*, he knows.

cognition (*m*) (*muta*, “the cognized”,¹⁹ verb: cognize, *munāti*²⁰), from Latin *cognition-*, *cognition*, from *cognitus* (past participle of *cognoscere*, to become acquainted with, know [from *co-* + *gnoscere, noscere* + *tio*]. More at “know.”

the mind (*citta, mano, viññāṇa*) [1.3.2.2]: Middle English *minden, mynden*, from *minde, mynde*, mind, memory. Akin to Latin *ment-, mens*, mind; Greek *menos*, spirit, intent, *mnathai*, to remember, *mimnēskein*, to remind; Sanskrit *manas* (P *mano*), mind, *manyate* (P *maññati*), he thinks (see under to think).

consciousness (*viññāṇa, saññā*)²¹: from Latin *consci-*; from *com-* + *sci-* (from *scire*, to know), from come “science,” from Latin *scientia*, ‘knowledge’.

to think (*maññati*, see under mind): Middle English, *thenken* (past *thoughte*, past participle *thought, ythought*), from Old English, *thencan* (past *thōte*, past participle *gethōte*)

1.3.3 The mind as consciousness works closely with feelings and perception, which are all actually aspects of the same mental process. When the mind is impinged by an external stimuli (sense-objects), we experience them as a pleasant, unpleasant or neutral **feeling** (*vedanā*). We then go on to sort these experiences in ways that are recognizable by us in terms of our **perception** (*saññā*) of “a friend (named Ānanda, etc),” “red,” “mango,” etc.²²

1.3.4 The *Buddhist Dictionary* provides a useful clarification on the nature of **the 5 aggregates** here:

Some writers on Buddhism who have not understood that the five Khandhas are just classificatory groupings, have conceived them as compact entities (“heaps,” “bundles”). Which actually, as stated above, the Groups never exist as such, ie they never occur in a simultaneous totality of all their constituents. Also those single constituents of a Group are present in any given body-and-mind process, are of an evanescent nature, and so also their varying combinations. Feeling, perception and mental formations are only different aspects and functions of a single unit of con-

¹⁷ For a comparison between Buddhist psychology (the 5 aggregates) and modern psychology: SD 56.22 (0.1.2).

¹⁸ Note that these words share the stem *jānāti*, to know, from √JÑĀ, to know: *vi-jānāti, pa-jānāti, pari-jānāti, abhi-jānāti*. The **nouns** for these verbs are, respectively: *viññāna* (consciousness), *paññā* (wisdom), *pariññā* (full understanding), *abhijñā* (superknowledge). This is not an exhaustive list. For details on the words listed, and other related words, see SD 17.1b (1.3).

¹⁹ On *muta*, “thought, supposed, imagined,” see Geiger, *Pali Grammar*, 1943, 1994: §18; in phrase *dīṭṭha suta muta viññāta*, see SD 3.13 (5.2); SD 53.5.

²⁰ *Munati* (to know, think, ponder) is rare in the suttas, but more common in Comys: *yo munāti ubho loke munī tena pavuccati*, “Whoever knows both (bad and good) in the world is called a sage for that reason” (Dh 269).

²¹ On *saññā* as “consciousness,” see SD 18.8a (8.1).

²² M 1:138 f, 232 f; S 2:125, 249, 3:67 f. 88 f, 104, 105, 187 f. See Gethin 1986:43 f.

sciousness. They are to consciousness what redness, softness, sweetness etc, are to an apple and have as little separate existence as those qualities. (BDict: *khandha*)²³

1.3.5 Our experiences of the world²⁴ arouse *wishes, desires, delusions, fears, tendencies*, that is, volitional forces or **formations** (*saṅkhāra*). When we perceive a “friend,” we are likely to feel and show a favourable disposition to him or her. When we are hungry and perceive a “mango” or any food, we feel a desire to consume it. We are attracted to pleasant objects (we desire them), repulsed by unpleasant ones (we push them away), and simply disregard indifferent ones. How we recognize an object as being “pleasant” or “unpleasant” depends on our past experiences of them. When we have no such conditioning or, for some reason, we do not recall such past conditionings, we see the object as being “neither pleasant nor unpleasant.”²⁵

1.4 A MODEL FOR UNDERSTANDING EXISTENCE

1.4.1 No abiding entity

In reality, the aggregates are not separate entities, but aspects of on-going conscious phenomena: it is *a model* for describing, understanding and liberating a living being, especially a human being. **Ñāṇa-vīra** gives a very apt imagery for the 5 aggregates: a solid (*form*) pleasant (*feeling*) shady tree (*perception*) “for lying under” (*formations*) visible to me (*consciousness*).²⁶ In other words, the aggregates are dynamic moment-to-moment experiences that arise in us throughout our lives. They are ever changing and do not constitute any lasting state or permanent “self” or “soul.”

1.4.2 “Aggregates of clinging” and “aggregates”

1.4.2.1 Such experiences by way of the aggregates (in various compositions) occur in all beings, whether awakened or not.²⁷ As **unawakened beings**, rooted in **ignorance** (*avijjā*), we do not understand the true nature of existence, that it is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise; hence, we can never have any satisfactory experience: it is unsatisfactory; and there is no real or fixed “thingness” about it: there is no self or “selfness”.

Neither seeing nor understanding these **3 characteristics** (*ti,lakkhaṇa*)—of impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*) and nonself (*anattā*)—of existence, as unawakened beings, we wish to see it to be sometime *permanent, pleasurable* and *to own it* (have it for oneself or identify with it). Simply, this is what is called **craving** (*taṇhā*).

This ignorance is existentially *blind*; this craving is existentially *lame*—*blind* ignorance sits on the shoulders of *lame* craving, and goes wherever the latter takes him, running after the aggregates, trying to cling and grasp them. Hence, they are called “**aggregates of clinging**.”

²³ However, cf SD 17.1a (1.2.1).

²⁴ Here “world” (*loka*) refers to “formations” (*saṅkhāra,loka*). Commentarial literature speaks of the 3 worlds: (1) the world of formations (*saṅkhāra,loka*); the world of beings (*satta,loka*) and the physical world (of space-time) (*okāsa,loka*) (Vism 7.37/204 f; DA 1:173; MA 1:397). See **Rohitassa S** (S 2.26/1:61 f), SD 7.1 (1). Buddhism is neither idealism (the world exists only in the mind) nor materialism (only the material world exists), but teaches “realism” in the sense of understanding things as they really are (*yathā,bhūta*). On the relationship of our senses and the existence of the external world, see **Samiddhi S 4** (S 36.58/4:39 f).

²⁵ See Gethin 1998:135 f.

²⁶ 1987:70.

²⁷ Here “awakened beings” or adepts (*asekha*) refer to the Buddha and the arhats who are awakened like the Buddha and living out their last lives. The “unawakened beings” are the “learners” (*sekha*), that is, those saints of the path other than the adepts, and also other worldly beings.

1.4.2.2 Awakened beings, like the Buddha and the arhats, see and understand that we are nothing more than the 5 aggregates, and that these aggregates are subject to *impermanence, suffering and non-self*. They are ever changing, becoming other; hence, not really pleasurable; and they are never truly ours to have or to be, except in our imaginations. We do experience them, but as momentary states, like a movie projected onto our mind's screen: the film is *moving, yet not moving*.

Hence, awakened beings (the Buddha and the arhats) and “learners” or saints of the path (the stream-winners, the once-returners and non-returners), do not cling to these aggregates. As such, the aggregates of the awakened beings are simply called “**aggregates**” (*khandha*), since they *know* what they are, and *crave not* for them; hence, they cling not to them.

1.4.2.3 In the case of awakened beings, the experience of such aggregates only affects them “physically” or “bodily”—simply because they have a physical body of **the 4 elements** (earth, water, fire and wind). These elements are, by nature, unstable; hence, unsatisfactory to our mind. The elements do *not* cause suffering: it is our ignorance of the nature of reality and change that *sees* this as **unsatisfactory**. Hence, we suffer.

We, the unawakened, suffer **mentally** on account of the change and unsatisfactoriness of our **body**, our physical being. For awakened beings and learners—and when we see and understand the 3 characteristics [1.4.2.1]—only the body *suffers*, but not the mind. The minds of the awakened and the wise who see true reality are *not* affected by the experiences of *pain, pleasure or indifference*. Unawakened beings, on the other hand, are afflicted by both bodily pains and mental pains because of the aggregates of clinging.²⁸

2 The nature of the aggregates of clinging

On account of our understanding of the 5 aggregates [1.4.2], Buddhaghosa, the Indian commentator, describes **the aggregates of clinging** (*upādāna-k, khandha*) more fully as “the 5 groups of existence that form the objects of clinging.”²⁹ The suttas describe the nature of these aggregates even more comprehensively. **The (Dve) Khandha Sutta** (S 22.48), for example, defines the aggregates of clinging as follows:

And what, bhikshus, are the 5 aggregates of clinging?
Bhikshus, whatever kind of **form** there is,
whether past, future, or present,
internal or external,
gross or subtle,
inferior or superior,
far or near,³⁰

²⁸ See, for example, **Sall’atthena S** (S 36.6/4:207-210) & **Nakula, pitā S** (S 22.1/3:1-5).

²⁹ Vism 14.214 f/477 f.

³⁰ This “totality formula” classification of the aggregates is explained in detail in **Vibhaṅga** and briefly in **Visuddhi, magga**. Briefly they mean: “internal” = physical sense-organs; “external” = physical sense-objects; “gross” = that which impinges (physical internal and external senses, with touch = earth, fire, wind); “subtle” = that which does not impinge (mind, mind-objects, mind-consciousness, and water); “far” = subtle objects (“difficult to penetrate”); “near” = gross objects (“easy to penetrate”) (Vbh 1-13; Vism 14.73/450 f; Abhs 6.7). “Whether or not the details of the Vibhaṅga exposition are accepted as valid for the *nikāyas*, it seems clear that this formula is intended to indicate how each *khandha* is to be seen as a class of states, manifold in nature and displaying a considerable variety and also a certain hierarchy” (Gethin 1986:41). See Gethin 1986:40 f; Karunadasa 1967:38f; Boisvert 1995: 43-48. As regards the terms “internal” (*ajjhatta*) and “external” (*bahiddhā*), it should be noted that they have two

with mental influxes,³¹
subject to clinging.³²

this, bhikshus, is called the form aggregate of clinging.

Bhikshus, whatever kind of **feeling** there is, *whether past, present, future, or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near, with influxes, subject to clinging*: this, bhikshus, is called the feeling aggregate of clinging.

Bhikshus, whatever kind of **perception** there is, *whether past, present, future, or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near, with influxes, subject to clinging*: this, bhikshus, is called the perception aggregate of clinging.

Bhikshus, whatever kind of **formations** there are, *whether past, present, future, or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near, with influxes, subject to clinging*: this, bhikshus, is called the formations aggregate of clinging.

Bhikshus, whatever kind of **consciousness** there is, *whether past, present, future, or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near, with influxes, subject to clinging*: this, bhikshus, is called the consciousness aggregate of clinging.

These, bhikshus, are called the 5 aggregates of clinging. (S 22.48/3:47 f), SD 17.1

3 The 7 points

3.1 FULLY UNDERSTANDING THE AGGREGATES

3.1.1 The word **parivaṭṭa** in the sutta title refers to the “full cycles,” “turnings” or phases of each of the 5 aggregates around each of **the 4 noble truths**.³³ That is to say, the nature of each of the aggregates, its arising, its ending, and the path leading to its ending, are to be fully understood. These are the tetrad or 4 full cycles (*catu,parivaṭṭa*) of full knowledge (*pariññā*), forming the first portion of “the 7 points” (*satta-ṭ,ṭhāna*).

3.1.2 The last triad (gratification, danger and escape) are found in **the Assāda Sutta 1** (S 22.26)³⁴ and **the Mahā Dukkha-k,khandha Sutta** (M 13). The whole set of 7 points are found in the **the Satta-ṭ,ṭhāna Sutta** (S 22.57).³⁵

These “7 points” (*satta-ṭ,ṭhāna*) are necessary for the development of spiritual insight, that is, full comprehension (*pariññā*) of the following, namely:

applications: (1) the aggregates (*khandhā*) composing a particular “person” are “internal” to them and anything else is “external”; (2) the sense-organs are “internal” and their objects—which may include aspects of the person’s own body or mind, which are “internal” in the first sense—are “external.” Boisvert (1995: 43, 47), however overlooks these applications.

³¹ “Mental influxes,” *āsava*. The term *āsava* (lit “cankers”) comes from *ā-savati* “flows towards” (ie either “into” or “out” towards the observer). It has been variously translated as taints (“deadly taints,” RD), corruptions, intoxicants, biases, depravity, misery, evil (influence), or simply left untranslated. The Abhidhamma lists 4 *āsava*: those of (1) sense-desire (*kām’āsava*), (2) (desire for eternal) existence (*bhav’āsava*), (3) views (*diṭṭh’āsava*), (4) ignorance (*avijjāsava*) (D 16.2.4, Pm 1.442, 561, Dhs §§1096-1100, Vbh §937). These 4 are also known as “floods” (*ogha*) and “yokes” (*yoga*). The list of 3 influxes (omitting the influx of views) [43] is probably older and is found more frequently in the Suttas (D 33,1.10(20)/3:216; M 1:55, 3:41; A 3.59, 67, 6.63). The destruction of these *āsavas* is equivalent to arhatship. See BDict: *āsava*.

³² “That is tainted, that can be clung to,” *sāsavaṃ upādānīyaṃ*.

³³ SA Porāṇa Tīkā (S:B 1064 n80). See also S:B 1064 n81.

³⁴ S 22.26/3:27 f.

³⁵ S 22.57/3:61-65.

- (1) the nature of the 5 aggregates (*khandha*): form, feelings, perception, formations, consciousness;
- (2) their arising (*samudaya*) due to conditions;
- (3) their ending (*nirodha*) due to ending of conditions;
- (4) the way to their ceasing (*magga*) that is, the noble eightfold path;
- (5) the gratification (*assāda*) that is, pleasure derived from them;
- (6) the dangers (*ādīnava*) that is, suffering resulting from them; and
- (7) the escape from them (*nissaraṇa*) that is, abandoning the desire for the aggregates.

3.2 THE 5 AGGREGATES IN THIS LIFE ITSELF

3.2.1 A synchronic model

3.2.1.1 Both the **(Upādāna) Parivaṭṭa Sutta** (S 22.56) and the **Satta-ṭṭhāna Sutta** (S 22.57) present the aggregates in a synchronic (this life-time or present cycle) analysis of the aggregates into their components, so that we can better see and understand their key components of what constitutes our “conscious body” (*sa, viññāṇaka, kāya*).³⁶

(1) We are basically a **body-mind process**: our body is “form” and our mind comprises feelings, perception, formations and consciousness. Together, these are the 5 aggregates. **Form** (*rūpa*) here can be seen as either the 4 elements [1.4.2.3] or the 6 senses [1.2.1.2]. The other 4 “mental” aggregates are *not* separate entities (there are *no* entities in Buddhist teaching), but each of them is how we analyze the process that we are.

(2) **The Madhu, piṇḍika S** (M 18), for example, explains how we have an “experience”:³⁷ we can visualize this in the top part of “the feeling cycle” diagram of the 6 sense-faculties, that is, *the experience triangle*, centering on **consciousness**: hence, it can also be called “the consciousness triangle.” [Table 3.2.1.]

(3) In **the Indriya.bhāvanā Sutta** (M 152), for example, we have an analysis of our beings centred on **feeling** (*vedana*)—as depicted in the same “feeling cycle” diagram of the 6 sense-faculties just mentioned. [Table 3.2.1]

(4) A profound idea of how **perception** occurs is described in **the Mahā, nidāna Sutta** (D 15)—by way of what we today understand as apperception and conception.³⁸ A simple idea of this process can be seen in the same “feeling cycle” diagram [Table 3.2.1], depicting how the latent tendencies feed and are in turn fed by our reactions to what we perceive as pleasant, painful and neutral.

(5) The arising of karma—which centres on **formations** (*saṅkhārā*)—is described in **the (Kamma, vāda) Bhūmija Sutta** (), as occurring with bodily volition, verbal volition and mental volition (intentions expressed through body, speech and mind).³⁹ This process is depicted in the formations (*saṅkhārā*) cycle [Table 3.2.2].

³⁶ SD 17.8a (12.3); SD 56.1 (4.3.2.2) n.

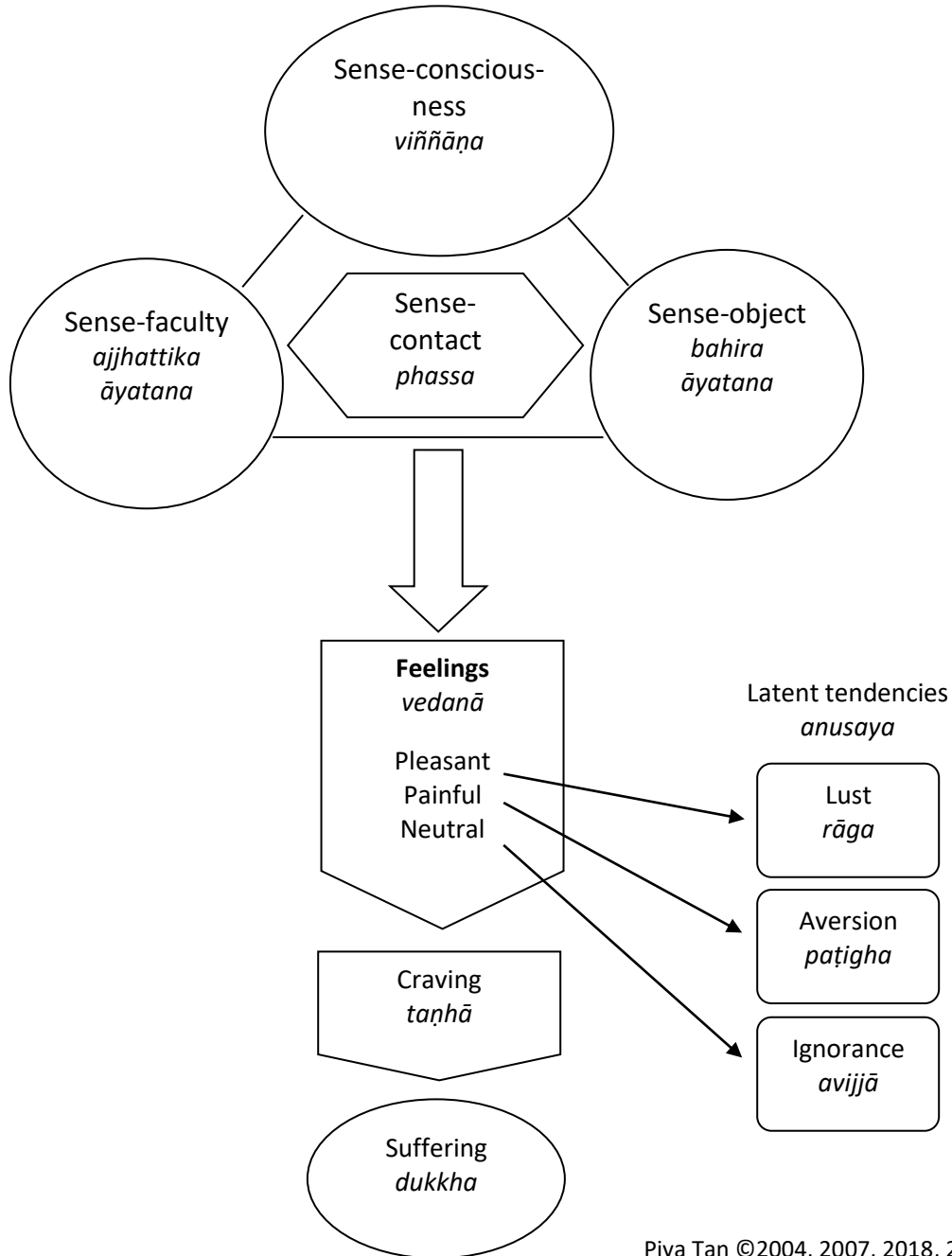
³⁷ M 18,16-17 (SD 6.14).

³⁸ See D 15,20/2:62 (SD 5.17); also SD 17.4 (2.2) apperceiving and conceiving.

³⁹ S 12.25,13-19 (SD 31.2).

Table 3.2.1 The feeling cycle

The experience triangle and the arising of suffering



For a diagram of the 6 sense-faculties, see **Indriya, bhāvanā Sutta** (M 152), SD 17.13 Table 3a. This table is also found as **Table 1.2.2** (SD 57.25).

3.2.2 How the aggregates work

3.2.2.1 Let us now have a quick survey of the 5 aggregates. Later works, such as the Visuddhi, magga (by Buddhaghosa) and the Commentaries, give us various simple analyses of the aggregates. Briefly, the nature or function of each of the 5 aggregates can be summarized as follows:

Aggregate	Contents	Condition
form	<u>the 4 primary elements</u> and forms derived from them	food
feeling	<u>the 6 classes of feeling</u> : feeling born of contact through eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind	contact
perception	<u>the 6 classes of perception</u> : perception of form, sound, smell, taste, touch and mental states	
formations (volitional activities)	<u>the 6 classes of volition</u> : volition regarding form, sound, smell, taste, touch and mental states	
consciousness	<u>the 6 classes of consciousness</u> : eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, tongue-consciousness, body-consciousness, and mind-consciousness	name-and-form

(Based on Bodhi, S:B 841)

Table 3. The 5 aggregates according to the suttas, based on S 22.56 (SD 3.7) & S 22.57 (SD 29.2)⁴⁰

3.2.2.2 In even simpler terms, we can say that **form** (*rūpa*) is our physical body, comprising the 4 elements (earth, water, fire and wind) and the 5 senses (the eye, ear, nose, tongue and body). Since our body is conscious (we are alive), we feel. **Feeling** (*vedanā*) arises in the mind through **consciousness** (*viññāṇa*) arising in connection with each of the 5 senses. The mind, on its own, is capable of creating or conceiving its own mental reactions, and often does. Hence, we actually have a total of 6 senses or sense-bases (*saḷ-āyatana*).

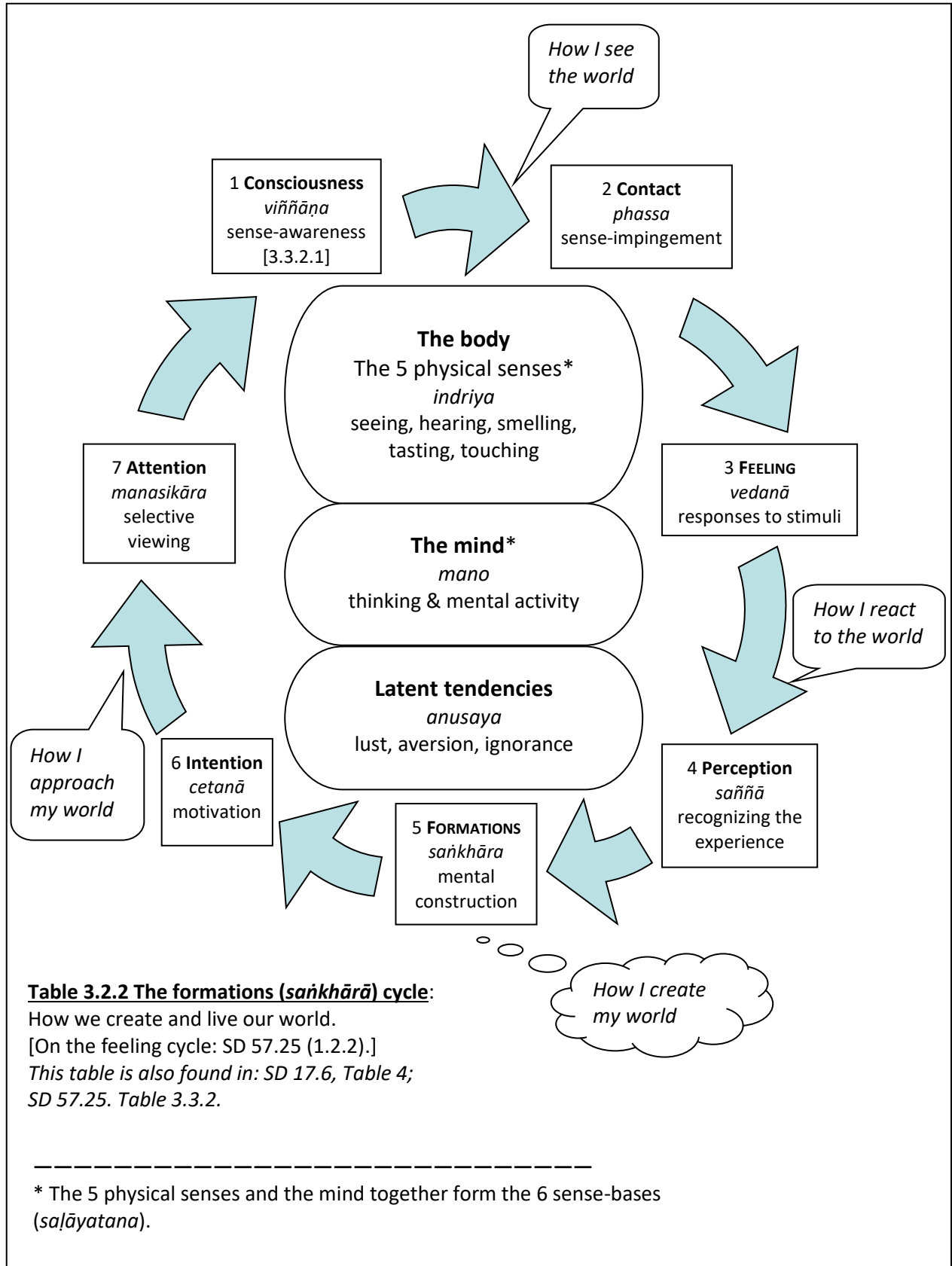
The mental or “internal” reactions of each of the 6 senses occur by how we perceive the sense-objects before us. We *recognize* these objects from past experiences, that is, or memories of them. Our **perceptions** (*saññā*), then, are rooted and motivated by our past conditionings. Yet, we are also capable of many perceptions or thoughts when we notice an object.

With enough wisdom (especially Dharma understanding and practice), we are likely to be able to restrain ourself or adjust our sense-reactions so that unwholesome **formations** (*saṅkhārā*), that is, karma, do not arise. With mindfulness, we will even be able to keep our mind wholesome (*kusala*) by cultivating love, ruth (compassion), joy and peace.

Basically, the aggregates function as “**name-and-form**” (*nāma, rūpa*)—such as in the dependent arising cycle (*paṭicca, samuppāda*)⁴¹—“name” here refers to our mind functioning as *feeling, perception, formations (volition), contact and attention*; and “form” is our physical body. How all this works together is summarized in the following diagram on the formations cycle [Table 3.2.2]:

⁴⁰ This Table is also at SD 17.1a (Table 3.2.5).

⁴¹ **Dependent arising**, SD 5.16.



4 “With influxes, subject to clinging”

4.1 THE ARHAT’S BODY IS “WORLDLY” BUT NOT HIS MIND

According to the Abhidhamma, all **physical forms** (*rūpā*) are classified as “with influxes, subject to clinging” (*sāsava upādānīya*), and so too the resultant (*vipāka*) and functional (*kiriya*) mental aggregates of the arhat (Dhs 1103, 1219). The only aggregates that are “without influxes, not subject to clinging” (*anāsava anupādānīya*) are the 4 mental aggregates (feelings, perception, formations and consciousness) occurring in the cognitive moments of the 4 supramundane paths and fruits (Dhs 1104, 1220). The reason for this is that *sāsava* and *upādānīya* do not mean “accompanied by influxes and by clinging” but “capable of being taken as objects of the influxes and of clinging.”

4.2 WE MAY SEE THE ARHAT’S BODY BUT NOT HIS MIND

In other words, even the arhat’s mundane aggregates can be taken as objects of the influxes and of clinging by *others* (DhsA 347).⁴² In his verses, the elder **Lakuṇṭhaka Bhaddiya**,⁴³ for example, declares:

- 469** Those people who have judged⁴⁴ me by appearance and who follow me by voice,⁴⁵
Overcome by desire and passion, they know me not.
- 470** The foolish one, surrounded by mental hindrances, neither knows the inside
Nor sees the outside—he is indeed misled by voice. (Tha 469-472 ¶ A 2:71)

In the case of **Vakkali**, he was physically attracted to the Buddha’s external form, and became a monk just so that he could gaze upon the Buddha’s physical beauty.⁴⁶

4.3 THE ARHAT’S AGGREGATES

The Saṃyutta Commentary says that while **the form aggregate** is of the sense-sphere, the other 4 aggregates are of the other 4 spheres (sense sphere, form sphere, formless sphere, supramundane). In simple terms, this means that the arhat’s body is still physical like ours, but his mind can encompass all the 3 worlds and nirvana, too.

In the case of the aggregates of clinging, stated in connection with the practice of insight, the form aggregate is of the sense sphere, while the others only pertain to the 3 worlds (sense sphere, form sphere, formless sphere) (SA 2:270).

5 Upādāna as fuel and fire

5.1 Richard Gombrich, in his well-acclaimed work, *How Buddhism Began*, points out the relationship between the Buddhist conception of *upādāna* (clinging) and its early Indian roots in **metaphors of fuel and fire**:

The word *upādāna* has both a concrete and an abstract meaning. In the abstract, it means attachment, grasping; in this sense it is much used in Buddhist dogmatics. Concretely, it means

⁴² See S:B 1058 n65 & Bodhi, “Aggregates and Clinging Aggregates,” 1976. See also Boisvert, 1995:29 f.

⁴³ For details, see “The Teacher or the Teaching?” in SD 3.14.6.

⁴⁴ “Have judged,” *pāmiṃsu*, lit “(they) measured.”

⁴⁵ “Who follow me by voice,” *ye ca ghosena anvagū*, alt tr “who follow me by my voice.”

⁴⁶ For Vakkali’s story, see DhA 25.11/4:118 f; cf **Vakkali S** (S 22.87/3:119-124).

that which fuels this process. The PED sv: “(lit that [material] substratum by means of which an active process is kept alive and going), fuel, supply, provision.” So when the context deals with fire it simply means fuel...

In my opinion, it is clear that the term *khandha* too was a part of the fire metaphor.

(Gombrich 1996:67)⁴⁷

Gombrich goes on to discuss the historical problem related to **the Bhāra Sutta** (S 22.22), where the aggregates are said to be a burden (*bhārā pañca-k,khandhā*) to be put down.⁴⁸ The metaphor is historically more correct and spiritually more urgent when *upādāna-k,khandha* is translated as “the aggregates that are fuelled” or “the aggregates that are on fire.” It is *a burden* for the early brahmins to daily collect fuel (wood, herbs, etc) to feed the sacred fire (Gombrich 1996:67). Moreover, the flaming burden of fuel that one carries around has to be immediately “put down” and “put out.”⁴⁹

5.2 This usage—*upādāna* as “fuel”—is found in the term, ***anupādā,nibbāna***, “the nirvana without clinging” or “fuel-free nirvana.” Here, *anupādā* is mostly used before nouns, like a substantive in a compound, while *an-upādāya* is preferred before finite verb forms.⁵⁰

6 A brief analysis of the 5 aggregates⁵¹

6.1 FORM (*rūpa*)

“Form” [3, 7] refers to the 4 great elements, both internal (as the body) and external (as another’s body and as nature)—see eg **the Mahā Rāhul’ovāda Sutta** (M 62) and **the (Upādāna) Parivaṭṭa Sutta** (S 22.56).⁵² The Pali term *nāma* is rendered as “name,” which should not be taken literally. “*Nāma* is an assemblage of mental factors involved in cognition: feeling, perception, volition, contact and attention (*vedanā, saññā, cetanā, phassa, manasikāra*, S 12.2).⁵³ They are called “name” because they contribute to the process of cognition by which objects are subsumed under the conceptual designations” (S:B 48).

In other words, while *nāma* is centred on the mind (*citta*) and *rūpa* is centred on the 4 primary elements, notes Harvey, “there is no dualism of a mental ‘substance’ versus a physical ‘substance’: both *nāma* and *rūpa* each refer to clusters of changing, interacting processes.”⁵⁴

It should be noted in the Nikāyas⁵⁵ that *nāma,rūpa* does not include *viññāṇa* (consciousness), which is actually its condition, and the two are mutually dependent, like two sheaves of reeds leaning against the other, as stated in **the (Nala,kalapiya Sutta** (S 12.67) and **the Mahā Nidāna Sutta** (M 12).⁵⁶

⁴⁷ Fire as a metaphor is also discussed by Gombrich 1987a:16-20.

⁴⁸ S 22.22/3:25 f @ SD 17.14.

⁴⁹ Similarly, in **(Khandha) Āditta S** (S 22.61/3:71) the aggregates are said to be on fire. Cf **Āditta,pariyāya S** (S 35.28/4:19 f) where the 6 sense-organs, and their respective sense-objects, sense-consciousnesses, sense-contacts, feelings arising from the contacts are all burning with the fire of greed, hate, delusion and suffering. See SD 1.3 & Hamilton 2000:81, 101.

⁵⁰ CPD; cf M 3:227,25 with 227,26. See **Paṭhama Kosala S** (A 10.29,17/5:65), SD 16.15.

⁵¹ For a more detailed analysis of each aggregate, see SD 17.

⁵² M 62,8-12 (SD 3.11); S 22.56.7/3:59 (SD 3.7). On the 4 primary elements, see §7n.

⁵³ S 12.2.12/2:3.

⁵⁴ Harvey 1993:11 digital ed.

⁵⁵ The 4 Nikāyas are (1) Dīgha Nikāya (collection of long discourses), (2) Majjhima Nikāya (collection of middle-length discourses), (3) Saṃyutta Nikāya (the connected discourses), and (4) Aṅguttara Nikāya (the numerical discourses).

⁵⁶ S 12.67/2:114 (SD 83.11); M 12,21-22/2:63 (SD 49.1). See S:B 48.

6.2 FEELING (*vedanā*)

Feeling, according to Boisvert (1995:53), is more than mere “bare awareness’ or ‘anoetic sentience’ [sensing without knowing]” [Jayatilleke 1963:436], since it has some specific content: pleasure, pain, neutral feeling; and that *vedanā* is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition, for the arising of craving (the following link in the dependent arising cycle).⁵⁷

Furthermore, **the Kiṭāgiri Sutta** (M 70) speaks of 2 kinds of feelings: those of the householder (that conduce to unwholesome states), and those of the renunciant (that conduce to wholesome states).⁵⁸ Hence, feelings not only have emotive and affective tones, but also ethical and psychological significance.

6.3 PERCEPTION

6.3.1 In certain contexts, **perception** (*saññā*) may be rendered as “recognition” (Boisvert 1995:77 f), which, however, connotes that it is always a form of correct knowledge (when one “recognizes” someone or something, it means one has no doubt about this). Peter Harvey notes that:

Saññā certainly is a form of classificatory, labelling, interpreting activity, but it includes both correct labelling (‘recognition’) and incorrect labelling (misinterpretation). For this reason, I prefer the more neutral ‘cognition.’ The more usual ‘perception’ is certainly too broad, as it covers the combined activity of *saññā* and *viññāṇa*, and in any case hardly covers *saññā* of a mental object. (Harvey 1996:94)

6.3.2 G Bateson, in his well known work, *Mind and Nature* (1979) points out that “Perception operates only on difference. All receipt of information is necessarily the receipt of new of *difference*.” (1979:31). He goes on to compare the cognitive process to a simple electric switch:

the switch, considered as a part of an electric circuit, *does not exist* when it is in the on position. From the point of view of the circuit, it is not different from the conducting wire which leads to it and the wire which leads away from it. It is merely “more conductor.” Conversely, but similarly, when the switch is off, it does not exist from the point of view of the circuit. It is nothing but a gap between two conductors which themselves exist only as conductors when the switch is on.

In other words, the switch is *not* except at the moments of its change of setting, and the concept “switch” has thus a special relation to *time*. It is related to the notion “change” rather than to the notion “object.” (Bateson 1979:108 f)

In other words, the switch is only what it does: it only exists at the time of switching. Otherwise, it is no different from the rest of the circuit. “Hence,” concludes Waldron, “even to speak of perception is necessarily to speak of events—and this is to speak in terms of dependent origination.” (Waldron 2002: 144).

6.4 FORMATIONS (*saṅkhāra*)

“**Formation**” (*saṅkhārā*) literally means “constructing, construction.”⁵⁹ Due to its polysemy, *saṅkhāra* is perhaps the most difficult early Buddhist term. Boisvert identifies 5 meanings of *saṅkhāra*: (1) as

⁵⁷ On necessary and sufficient conditions, see SD 5.11 (5).

⁵⁸ M 70,6-7/1:475. See Boisvert 1995:74-76 for the Sutta passage with Comy.

⁵⁹ S 22.78/3:87 (SD 42.10). See also BDict: *saṅkhāra*.

saṅkhata; (2) as a *paccaya*; (3) as *āyu,saṅkhāra*; (4) as part of *sa,saṅkhāra* and *asaṅkhāra*, and (5) as a *khandha*, (1995:91-112), explained as follows:

(1) *Saṅkhāra* as ***saṅkhata*** (S 3:87), ie conditioned phenomena, refers to all the universe; nirvana, however, is *asaṅkhata* (unconditioned). A conditioned phenomenon produces other conditioned phenomena in conjunction with *viññāṇa, vedanā, saññā* and *rūpa*. In this narrower sense, it is identical to (5).

(2) While (1) is the “passive” conditioned state, *saṅkhāra*, as a ***paccaya*** (condition) or *nidāna* (link) (as well as (5) *khandha*), is the active “producing” or “generating” conditioner (S 2:5; Vbh 144, 173).⁶⁰

(3) ***Āyu,saṅkhāra*** (D 2:99, 108; A 4:312; Kvu 2:559) is the same as *bhāva,saṅkhāra*, ie as “fuel” to rebirth or the *bhava* link in dependent arising (2).

(4) ***Sa,saṅkhāra*** (with *saṅkhāra*) and ***asaṅkhāra*** (without *saṅkhāra*) are used in connection with *parinibbāyī* (S 5:70; A 1:233): a *sa,saṅkhāra parinibbāyī* is one who attains nirvana “with effort,” who eradicates the mental fetters through striving (Pug 17); an *asaṅkhāra parinibbāyī* is one who attains nirvana “without effort,” such as Bāhiya Dārucīriya who understands the truth instantaneously (A 1:24; U 1:10; DhA 2:209 ff).

(5) *Saṅkhāra* as a ***khandha*** (aggregate) (Vbh 72, 89) is an activity restricted to the mental realm, and refers to both karma as cause (*cetanā*) and as effect (*phala*), as exemplified by the cooking simile: one prepares the ingredients and cooks them (active), but the cooking takes its own effect (passive).

We might add category (6) a general usage of the term *saṅkhāra*, for example, as the 3 kinds of **actions or karma-formations**: bodily (*kāya,saṅkhāra*) (M 118,24/3:83), verbal (*vacī,saṅkhāra*) (M 118,25/-3:84) and mental (*citta,saṅkhāra* or *mano,saṅkhāra*),⁶¹ and the 3 **volitional formations** (*abhisāṅkhāra*): meritorious formation (*puññābhisaṅkhāra*), demeritorious formation (*apuññābhisaṅkhāra*) and imperturbable formation (*āneñjābhisaṅkhāra*).⁶² Meritorious formations occur in the sense-sphere and the form sphere; demeritorious formations occur only in the sense-sphere; and the imperturbable formations occur in the formless sphere.

These 3 volitional formations are actually identical with the *saṅkhāra* link of **dependent arising**. There is also the “volitional formations of **striving**” (*padhāna,saṅkhāra*), a designation for energy that accomplishes the fourfold functions of **right striving** (*samma-p, padhāna*), applied to the “**4 paths to spiritual power**” (*iddhi,pāda*): desire or will power, energy, mind, investigation (S 51.13/5:268 f).

6.5 CONSCIOUSNESS

6.5.1 *Viññāṇa* has been variously translated as “bare sensation” or “pure consciousness,” but Boisvert (1995) argues that far from being “bare sensations devoid of any content” (1995:117), it is “probably the faculty needed for the cognition of pure percept, of sensation and of conceptualisation as well” (118). Consciousness here is best understood in reference to the idea of ***citta,vīthi*** or “the mind-process,” “found fully developed in the commentaries, in skeletal form in the Paṭṭhāna, and even alluded to in seed form in the Suttas.” (Harvey 1996:95)

In this, what is known by “eye-*viññāṇa*” is less than what is known eg by following “mind-*viññāṇa*” performing the function of “determining.” The first is visual awareness which discerns the presence of a visual object, and also discerns its basic components, labelled by accompanying

⁶⁰ See (Paṭicca,samuppāda) Vibhaṅga S (S 12.2.12), SD 5.10.

⁶¹ M 1:301; S 12.2/2:3, 12.25.3/2:39 f, 41.6/4:293.

⁶² D 3:217; S 12.51/2:82; Pm 2:206; Vbh 135.

saññā. The second is discernment operating at a more abstract level, in unison with accompanying *saññā* labelling the aspects so made out. (Harvey 1996:95)

6.5.2 The key concept of the mind-process theory is the *bhav'aṅga*, which literally translates as “existence-factor” and is often rendered as “life-continuum” or “the subconscious” (that is, the rebirth-consciousness). It is “the resting state of consciousness which occurs uninterrupted in dreamless sleep, and which is momentarily reverted to in waking consciousness between each act of processing a sense-object.” (Harvey 1996:95).

There is an allusion to the *bhavaṅga* in a passage in **the Mahā Hatthi, padôpama Sutta** (M 28):

... when the eye is intact⁶³ and external forms come into range and there is an appropriate engagement [of attention] (*tajjo samannāhāro hoti*),⁶⁴ then there is the occurrence of the appropriate class of consciousness. (M 28,27/1:190), SD 6.16

The above passage describes how consciousness (*viññāṇa*) and its accompaniments arise when there is an intact sense-organ, an appropriate sense-object within range, and appropriate attention (*samannāhāra*). This is, in fact, a reference to *bhavaṅga* as “a mind ready-to-act (though it is replaced by the more active *cittas* which follow it in the ‘process of *cittas*’.” (Harvey 1996:95).⁶⁵

7 Sequence of the 5 aggregates

7.1 At least one scholar, Boisvert (1995), has tried to explain the traditional sequence of the 5 aggregates. He sees this as mirroring the order of the links (*nidāna*) of dependent arising, as reflected in this diagram (based on his Table 12 in 1995:142):

<u>links of the <i>paṭicca,samuppāda</i></u> ⁶⁶		<u>corresponding aggregates</u>	
(1) <i>avijjā</i>	(ignorance)		
(2) <i>saṅkhārā</i>	(formations)		
(3) <i>viññāṇa</i>	(consciousness)	<i>viññāṇa</i>	} rebirth
(4) <i>nāma,rūpa</i>	(name-and-form)	the 5 aggregates	
(5) <i>sa'āyatana</i>	(the sixfold sense-base)	<i>rūpa</i>	
(6) <i>phassa</i>	(contact or sense-stimuli)	<i>vedanā</i>	
(7) <i>vedanā</i>	(feeling)	<i>vedanā</i>	
	←-----	<i>saññā</i>	} karma
(8) <i>taṇhā</i>	(craving)	<i>saṅkhāra</i>	
(9) <i>upādāna</i>	(clinging)	<i>saṅkhāra</i>	
(10) <i>bhava</i>	(existence)	<i>saṅkhāra</i>	} present life ⁶⁷
(11) <i>jāti</i>	(birth)		
(12) <i>jarā,maraṇa</i>	(decay-and-death)		
	<i>soka,parideva,dukkha,-</i> <i>domanass'upāyasā</i>	(sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain and despair)	

⁶³ “Intact,” *aparibhinna*, lit “unhurt, unbroken,” ie undamaged and functioning.

⁶⁴ “Engagement (of attention)” (*samannāhāra*) here is syn with *manasikāra*, “attention” (M 1:445; Vbh 321). See Harvey 1996:95.

⁶⁵ Further see SD 49.2 (4.5.6).

⁶⁶ On the 12 links, see SD 5.16 (4.1).

⁶⁷ On “the present life,” “rebirth” and “karma,” see SD 5.16 (Table 8a).

In his review of Boisvert’s work, Peter Harvey (1996) comments that

A key point here is his idea that *viññāṇa*, as the first *khandha*, completes a circle by going on to condition the first *khandha* by allowing the arising of sensory contact (*phassa*). In general, this is acceptable, though one could argue ... that *bhava*, at least in part, includes the operation of *viññāṇa*. One can, in any case, explain the logic of the *khandha* ordering as follows:

<u>Conditioning sequence in perceptual process</u>	<u>khandha</u>
Dependent upon eye and visual form:	
arises eye- <i>viññāṇa</i> ;	<i>rūpa</i>
the meeting of the 3 is <i>phassa</i> ;	
from <i>phassa</i> arises <i>vedanā</i> ;	<i>vedanā</i>
<i>saññā</i> then processes the visual object;	<i>saññā</i>
the <i>saṅkhāras</i> respond to it;	<i>saṅkhāra</i>
mind- <i>viññāṇa</i> takes in the fully labelled and responded-to object	<i>viññāṇa</i>

7.2 In his review of Boisvert’s analysis, Harvey comments that while it is true in some commentarial passages that the *nāma, rūpa nidāna* are equivalent to all 5 aggregates [Boisvert 1995:129]:

it is not true in the Suttas, where *rūpa* in it is equivalent to the *rūpakkhandha*, and *nāma* is “*vedanā, saññā, phassa, manasikāra*” (S 2:3 f): more or less equivalent to *vedanā, saññā* and *saṅkhāra khandhas* ...

Boisvert is right to see *saññā* as implied as operating between the *vedanā* and *taṇhā nidānas* [Boisvert 1995:136-142], though one can also see (unwholesome) *saññā* as equivalent to spiritual ignorance (*avijjā*), the first of the twelve *nidānas*. This can be seen from Sn 732,⁶⁸ which says “all *saṅkhāras* are calmed from the stopping of *saññā*,” ie the second *nidāna* is transcended by the transcending of the first. (Harvey 1996: 96)

8 Related suttas

8.1 The central teaching of this Sutta is a stock meditation formula on the 5 aggregates found in the two **Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas** (D 22,14/3:301 f = M 10,38/1:61) and in several places in **the Saṃyutta Nikāya** (S 12.21, 12.23, 22.78, 22.89, 22.101). Here, and in **the Satta-ṭṭhāna Sutta** (S 22.57/3:61-65) the aggregates are examined from the standpoint of *synchronic* (“a point in time” or proximal) conditionality (ie, within a single life-time). The arising (*samudaya*) and passing away (*atthaṅgama*) of the aggregates are explained from the perspective of *diachronic* (“across time” or distal) conditionality (ie, over many lives) in **the Samādhi Sutta** (S 22.5/3:13-15).⁶⁹

8.2 The 5 aggregates—although form (*rūpa*) is not directly mentioned—are discussed in some detail in **the Mahā Vedalla Sutta** (M 43/1:292-298) and **the Cūḷa Vedalla Sutta** (M 44/1:299-305). This sutta (S 22.56) should also be studied with **the Khandha Saṃyutta** (S 22/3:1-278). Other suttas related to the 5 aggregates can be found in the footnotes of the translation.

For a more detailed study of the individual aggregates, see SD 17.

⁶⁸ *Sabba,saṅkhāra.samathā saññānaṃ uparodhā.*

⁶⁹ See S:B 743 n58, 1065 n81 & also in the Sutta Discovery series. Cf **Parivimāṃsana S** (S 12.51/2:80-84), where dependent arising (*paṭicca,samuppāda*) is presented synchronically (within a single lifetime).

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Upādāna Parivaṭṭa Sutta

The Discourse on the Full Cycles of Clinging

S 22.56

[3:58]

- 1 At Sāvattthī...
- 2 There (the Blessed One) said:

The 5 aggregates of clinging

3 Bhikshus, there are these **5 aggregates of clinging**. What are the five?

They are as follows:

the <u>form</u>	aggregate of clinging; [59]	<i>rūp'upādāna-k,khandha</i>
the <u>feeling</u>	aggregate of clinging;	<i>vedan'upādāna-k,khandha</i>
the <u>perception</u>	aggregate of clinging;	<i>saññ'upādāna-k,khandha</i>
the <u>mental formations</u>	aggregate of clinging;	<i>saṅkhār'upādāna-k,khandha</i>
the <u>consciousness</u>	aggregate of clinging.	<i>viññāṇ'upādāna-k,khandha</i>

4 Bhikshus, as long as I did not directly know these 5 aggregates of clinging in (their) 4 full cycles⁷⁰ as they really are,

I did not claim to have awakened to the incomparable full awakening in this world with its gods, its Māras, and its Brahmās, this generation with its recluses and brahmins, its rulers⁷¹ and people.

5 But, bhikshus, when I have directly known *the 5 aggregates of clinging in (their) 4 full cycles as they really are,*

I claim to have awakened to the incomparable full awakening in this world with its gods, its Māras, and its Brahmās, this generation with its recluses and brahmins, its rulers and people.

6 What are **the 4 full cycles**?

- | | | | |
|--|----------------|---------------|----------------------------------|
| (1) I directly knew <u>form</u> , | its arising, | its ending, | the way leading to its ending. |
| (2) I directly knew <u>feeling</u> , | its arising, | its ending, | the way leading to its ending. |
| (3) I directly knew <u>perception</u> , | its arising, | its ending, | the way leading to its ending. |
| (4) I directly knew <u>volitional formations</u> , | their arising, | their ending, | the way leading to their ending. |
| (5) I directly knew <u>consciousness</u> , | its arising, | its ending, | the way leading to its ending. |

⁷⁰ That is, each of the aggregates in terms of the 4 noble truths [6].

⁷¹ *deva*, here in the sense of “devas by convention” (*sammati,deva*), ie, kings. The other 2 types of *deva* are “gods by rebirth” (*upapatti,deva*) and “gods by purification” (*visuddhi,deva*), i.e. the buddhas, pratyeka bBuddhas and arhats. (Nc 307; KhpA 123).

(1) Form⁷²

7 And what, bhikshus, is **form**?

The 4 great elements⁷³ and forms derived⁷⁴ from the 4 great elements—this, bhikshus, is called “form.”

With the arising of **food**,⁷⁵ there is the arising of form.

⁷² Each of the sections on the 5 aggregates follow the framework of the threefold essential teaching (*saddhamma*) (VA 225; AA 5:33), viz, theory (*pariyatti, dhamma*) [7], practice (*paṭipatti, dhamma*) [8] and realization (*paṭivedha, dhamma*) of the true teaching [9].

⁷³ “The 4 great elements,” (*cattāro mahā, bhūtā*). **Mahā Rāhu’ovāda S** (M 11.8-11, with §12 on “space”) (SD 3.11) and **Mahā Hatthi, pādōpama S** (M 28.6) (SD 6.16) define them as follows: (1) **earth** or the “solid element” (*paṭhavī, dhātu*), ie solidity or “extension.” Whatever in one’s own body there is of karmically acquired hardness or firmness, such as head-hair, body-hair, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, sinews, bones, marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, diaphragm, spleen, lungs, stomach, bowels, mesentery, excrement and so on—this is called one’s own solid element. (2) **Water** or the “fluid element” (*āpo, dhātu*), ie fluidity or cohesiveness. Whatever in one’s own body there is of karmically acquired liquidity or fluidity, such as bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, skin-grease, saliva, nasal mucus, synovial fluid, urine, and so on—this is called one’s own fluid element. (3) **Fire** or the “heating element” (*tejo, dhātu*), ie heat, incl decay. Whatever in one’s own body there is of karmically acquired heat or warmth, such as that whereby one is heated, consumed, scorched, whereby that which has been eaten, drunk, chewed, or tasted, is fully digested, and so on—this is called one’s own heating element. (4) **Wind** (or air) or the “vibrating (air) element” (*vāyo, dhātu*), ie motion and pressure. Whatever in one’s own body there is of karmically acquired wind or air, such as the upward-going and downward-going winds, the winds of stomach and intestines, the wind permeating all the limbs, the in-breath and out-breath, and so on—this is called one’s own vibrating element. In each case, it may be internal (one’s own) or external, and in either case, they are both merely the (earth, water, fire, or wind) element. And one should understand each according to reality and right wisdom, “This does not belong to me; this I am not; this is not my self.” (M 28,6-22/1:185-189). See Intro (6.1).

⁷⁴ Although the “derived (or derivative) forms” (*upādāya rūpā*) are mentioned here, their analysis first appears in *Abhidhamma* (Dhs 596, 980; Tikap 3, qu at *Vism* 535; Tikap 89, 109; *Vism* 444), according to which there are **24 “derived forms”**: the 5 sense-faculties (*pasāda, rūpa*): seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, body; the 4 sense-objects: form, sound, smell, taste (touch being identical with 3 of the great elements, viz earth, fire and air); femininity (*itth’indriya*); masculinity (*puris’indriya*); physical base of the mind (*hadaya, vatthu*); bodily intimation (*kāya, viññatti*), verbal intimation (*vacī, viññatti*); physical life (*rūpa, jīvita*); the space element (*ākāsa, dhātu*), physical agility (*rupassa lahutā*), physical elasticity (*rūpassa mudutā*), physical adaptability (*rūpassa kammaññatā*), physical growth (*rūpassa upacaya*); physical continuity (*rūpassa santati*); decay (*jarā*), impermanence (*aniccatā*) and food (*āhāra*). 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. See SD 56.17 (1.3.2.2) n on “subtle.”

⁷⁵ **The 4 kinds of food or nutriment** (*āhāra*): solid food, contact (sense-stimuli), volition, consciousness (D 3:228; M 1:48, 1:261; S 2:13, 48, 98-105; Vbh 401). Comys: They are so called because they nourish (*aharanti*) their own effects. Although there are other conditions for beings, these 4 alone are called “food” because they serve as *special conditions* for the personal life-continuity (*ajjhatika, santatiyā visesa, paccayattā*) (MA 1:209; SA 2:26; DhsA 153). Edible food (*kabaliṅkāra āhāra*) is a special condition for the physical body of those beings who subsist on edible food. In the mental body, contact is the special condition for feeling, mental volition for consciousness, and consciousness for name-and-form. **The products of food** (what it nourishes): (1) Edible food put into the mouth produces the groups of form with nutritive essence as the 8th (*oja’atṭhamaka, rūpāni*, an *Abhidhamma* term for the simplest cluster of material states); (2) contact as food (*phass’āhāra*) produces the 3 kinds of feeling [pleasurable, painful, neutral]; (3) mental volition as food (*mano, sañcetanāhāra*) produces the 3 kinds of existence [sense-world, form-world, formless world]; and (4) consciousness as food (*viññāṇ’āhāra*) produces name-and-form (*nāma, rūpa*) at rebirth (MA 1:207 ff; SA 2:22-27; KhA 75 ff). See also *Vism* 11.1-3/341. In (**Nīvaraṇa Bojjaṅga**) **Āhāra S** (S 46.61/5:102-107), **Abhisanda Ss** (S 55.31-33/5:391-392) & (**Āhāra**) **Avijjā S** (A 10.61/5:113-116), *āhāra* is used in a

With the ending of *food*, there is the ending of form.

This **noble eightfold path**⁷⁶ is truly the way to the ending of form, that is to say:

- (1) right view,
- (2) right thought,
- (3) right speech,
- (4) right action,
- (5) right livelihood,
- (6) right effort,
- (7) right mindfulness,
- (8) right concentration.

- 8 Bhikshus, those ascetics or brahmins,
having directly known form,
having directly known the arising of form,
having directly known the ending of form,
having directly known the way to the ending of form,

practise it for the sake of **revulsion** towards *form*, for its fading away, for its ending—they are **well practised**.⁷⁷

Those who are well practised gain a firm footing in this Dharma-Vinaya [Teaching and Discipline].⁷⁸

9 And, bhikshus, those ascetics or brahmins, *having directly known form, its arising, its ending and the way to its ending*, practise it for the sake of revulsion towards form, for its fading away, for its ending—they are freed by non-clinging, they are well freed.⁷⁹

Those who are well freed are the consummate ones, for whom there is **no round**⁸⁰ to describe them.

(2) Feeling

10 And what, bhikshus, is **feeling**?

There are these **6 classes [60]** of feeling:⁸¹

broader sense of “special condition” without reference to the 4 kinds of food. On craving as their source: S:B 731 n19.

⁷⁶ For canonical defs of the limbs of the noble eightfold path, see eg **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** (D 22,21/2:312).

⁷⁷ *Ye hi keci bhikkhave samaṇā vā brahmaṇā vā evaṃ rūpaṃ abhiññāya evaṃ rūpa, samudayam abhiññāya evaṃ rūpa, nirodham abhiññāya evaṃ rūpa, nirodha, gāminim paṭipadam abhiññāya rūpassa nibbidāya virāgāya nirodhāya paṭipannā te supaṭipannā.*

⁷⁸ *Ye supaṭipannā te imasmim dhamma, vinaye gādhanti.* This sentence refers to the “learners” or “trainees” (*sekha*) who have directly known the four noble truths and are working towards nirvana, the ultimate cessation of the aggregates. The arhats are “non-learners” or “adepts” (*asekha*) since they have completed their training.

⁷⁹ *Anupādā vimuttā te suvimuttā:* see SD 50.13 (2.5.1).

⁸⁰ This para refers to the adepts (*asekha*), the arhats. Comy: They are well freed (*suvimutta*) by the liberation of the fruit of arhathood; consummate (*kevalina*), complete, having done all their duties. There is no round for describing them (*vaṭṭam tesam n’atthi paññāpanāya*) [also at S 4:391]: there is no remaining round (of rebirths) for the description of them. Or else, “round” means “basis” (*karaṇa*); so there is no basis for description. On *kevalina*, see S:B 446 n446. On the Arhat as beyond description, see **Aññatra Bhikkhu S 1** (S 22.35/3:35 f) & S:B 1053 n47. See also D 2:63 f.

⁸¹ “**Feelings**” (*vedanā*) are complex states of mind, not simply “pure” feelings or emotions. They arise through contact with external sense-objects, viz: the seen, the heard, the sensed (smelling, tasting, touching), and the known (*diṭṭha suta muta viññāta*, D 3:134 = Nc276 = It 121; D 3:232; Sn 1080, 1122). According to the Abhidhamma, all feelings may, according to their nature, be classified into 5 kinds: bodily pleasant feeling (*sukha = kāyikā*

Feeling born of eye-contact	(visual feeling).
Feeling born of ear-contact	(aural feeling).
Feeling born of nose-contact	(olfactive feeling).
Feeling born of tongue-contact	(gustative feeling).
Feeling born of body-contact	(tactile feeling).
Feeling born of mind-contact	(mental feeling).

This, bhikshus, is called “feeling.”

With the arising of **contact**,⁸² there is the arising of feeling.

With the ending of *contact*, there is the ending of feeling.

This **noble eightfold path** is truly the way to the ending of feeling, that is to say:

- (1) right view, (2) right thought,
- (3) right speech, (4) right action, (5) right livelihood,
- (6) right effort, (7) right mindfulness, (8) right concentration.

11 Bhikshus, those ascetics or brahmins,

- having directly known feeling,
- having directly known the arising of feeling,
- having directly known the ending of feeling,
- having directly known the way to the ending of feeling,

practise it for the sake of revulsion towards feeling, for its fading away, for its ending—they are well practised.

12 And, bhikshus those ascetics or brahmins, *having directly known feeling, its arising, its ending and the way to its ending*, practise for the sake of revulsion towards feeling, for its fading away, for its ending—they are freed by non-clinging, they are well freed.⁸³

Those who are well freed are the consummate ones, for whom there is no round to describe them.

(3) Perception

13 And what, bhikshus, is **perception**?

There are these **6 classes** of perception:⁸⁴

- the perception of form.
- the perception of sound.
- the perception of smell.
- the perception of taste.
- the perception of touch.

sukhā vedanā), bodily painful feeling (*dukkha = kāyikā dukkhā vedanā*); mentally pleasant feeling (*somanassa = cetasikā sukhā vedanā*); indifferent feeling (*upekkhā = adukkham-asukhā vedanā*). See (6.2).

⁸² “**Contact**,” *phassa*, ie, the meeting of the sense-object and consciousness by way of a sense-faculty. When this occurs, the other mental factors arise, especially feeling, perception and volition. All experienceable phenomena occur only at the sense-doors (eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind): this is the “all” (*sabba*) (**Sabba S**, S 35.23), SD 7.1. **Bodhi**: “It is significant that while contact is the proximate condition for feeling, perception, and volitional formations [*saṅkhāra*], name-and-form in its entirety is the proximate condition for consciousness. This ties up with the idea, as stated in [**Hālidakāni S 1** (S 22.3), SD 10.12], that the other four aggregates are the ‘home’ of consciousness. See too in this connection [**Nagara S**, S 12.65 (SD 14.2)] and [**Naḷa, kalāpiya S**, S 12.67 (SD 83.11)].” (S:B 1065 n86)

⁸³ *Anupādā vimuttā te suvimuttā*]§9] + n.

⁸⁴ See n on “consciousness” [19] below & also Intro (6.3).

the perception of mind-object.

This, bhikshus, is called “perception.”

With the arising of *contact*, there is the arising of perception.

With the ending of *contact*, there is the ending of perception.

This **noble eightfold path** is truly the way to the ending of perception, that is to say:

- (1) right view, (2) right thought,
 (3) right speech, (4) right action, (5) right livelihood,
 (6) right effort, (7) right mindfulness, (8) right concentration.

14 Bhikshus, those ascetics or brahmins,

having directly known perception,

having directly known the arising of perception,

having directly known the ending of perception,

having directly known the way to the ending of perception,

practise it for the sake of revulsion towards perception, for its fading away, for its ending—they are well practised.

Those who are well practised gain a firm footing in this Dharma and Vinaya.

15 And, bhikshus those ascetics or brahmins, *having directly known perception, its arising, its ending and the way to its ending*, practise for the sake of revulsion towards perception, for its fading away, for its ending—they are freed by non-clinging, they are well freed.⁸⁵

Those who are well freed are the consummate ones, for whom there is no round to describe them.

(4) Volitional formations

16 And what, bhikshus, are **volitional formations**?

There are these **6 classes** of volition:⁸⁶

Volition ⁸⁷ regarding form.	(visual volition).
Volition regarding sound.	(aural volition).
Volition regarding smell.	(olfactive volition).
Volition regarding taste.	(gustative volition).
Volition regarding touch.	(tactile volition).
Volition regarding mind-object.	(mental volition).

This, bhikshus, is called “volitional formations.”

With the arising of **contact**, there is the arising of volitional formations.

With the ending of *contact*, there is the ending of volitional formations.

This **noble eightfold path** is truly the way to the ending of volitional formations, that is to say:

- (1) right view, (2) right thought,
 (3) right speech, (4) right action, (5) right livelihood,
 (6) right effort, (7) right mindfulness, (8) right concentration.

⁸⁵ *Anupādā vimuttā te suvimuttā*]§9] + n.

⁸⁶ “**Classes of volition**,” *cetanā,kāya*. “The fact that there is a difference between the name of the aggregate (*saṅkhāra-k,khandha*) and the term of definition (*sañcetanā*) suggests that this aggregate has a wider compass than the others. In the Abhidhamma Piṭaka and the commentaries, the *saṅkhāra-k,khandha* is treated as an ‘umbrella category’ for classifying all mental factors other than feeling and perception. Volition is mentioned only as the most important factor in this aggregate, not as its exclusive constituent.” (S:B 1065 n84)

⁸⁷ “Volition,” *sañcetanā*.

17 Bhikshus, those ascetics or brahmins,

having directly known	volitional formations,
having directly known	the arising of volitional formations,
having directly known	the ending of volitional formations,
having directly known	the way to the ending of volitional formations,

practise it for the sake of revulsion towards volitional formations, for their fading away, for their ending—they are well practised.

Those who are well practised gain a firm footing in this Dharma and Vinaya.

18 And, bhikshus those ascetics or brahmins, *having directly known volitional formations, their arising, their ending and the way to their ending*, practise for the sake of revulsion towards volitional formations, for their fading away, for their ending—they are freed by non-clinging, they are well freed.⁸⁸

Those who are well liberated are the consummate ones, for whom there is no round to describe them.

(5) Consciousness

19 And what, bhikshus, is **consciousness**?

There are these **6 classes of consciousness**:⁸⁹

Eye-consciousness.	(visual awareness,	sense of seeing)	<i>cakkhu,viññāṇa</i>
Ear-consciousness.	(aural awareness,	sense of hearing)	<i>sota,viññāṇa</i>
Nose-consciousness.	(olfactory awareness,	sense of smelling)	<i>ghana,viññāṇa</i>
⁹⁰ Tongue-consciousness.	(gustatory awareness,	sense of tasting)	<i>jivhā,viññāṇa</i>
Body-consciousness.	(tactile awareness,	sense of touch)	<i>kāya,viññāṇa</i>
Mind-consciousness.	(cognitive awareness,	sense of mentation)	<i>mano,viññāṇa</i>

This, bhikshus, is called “consciousness.”⁹¹

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

With the ending of name-and-form, there is the ending of *consciousness*.

This **noble eightfold path** is truly the way to the ending of consciousness, that is to say:

- (1) right view, (2) right thought,
- (3) right speech, (4) right action, (5) right livelihood,
- (6) right effort, (7) right mindfulness, (8) right concentration.

20 Bhikshus, those ascetics or brahmins,

having directly known	consciousness,
having directly known	the arising of consciousness,

⁸⁸ *Anupādā vimuttā te suvimuttā*]\$9] + n.

⁸⁹ “**Classes of consciousness**,” *viññāṇa,kāya*. Consciousness (*viññāṇa*) here is the general awareness that a particular sense-organ has a sense-object, and an awareness of parts of the object. **Perception** (*saññā*) is more outward-oriented, and gives an interpretation of *what* is known by the sense-organ. In the full perceptual process directed to a visual object, for example, an eye-based consciousness is followed by a mind-based one (*mano,-viññāṇa*), with a sequence of cognitions interpreting the same object as it is discerned at progressively higher levels. In simple terms, it can be said that *viññāṇā* “splits” (*vi-*) any sense-object that impinges on the sense-doors, deciding whether it is a visual object, a sound, a smell, a taste or a touch. See Intro (6.5).

⁹⁰ Here “existential consciousness,” ie, the consciousness of this life is meant: see SD 17.8a (6.1).

⁹¹ “It is significant that while contact is the proximate condition for feeling, perception, and volitional formations [*saṅkhāra*], name-and-form in its entirety is the proximate condition for consciousness. This ties up with the idea, as stated in [**Hālidakāni S 1** (S 22.3/3:9 f)], that the other four aggregates are the ‘home’ of consciousness. See too in this connection [**Nagara S**, S 12.65/2:104-106] and [**Naḷa,kalāpiya S**, S 12.67/2:112-115].” (S:B 1065 n86)

having directly known the ending of consciousness,
having directly known the way to the ending of consciousness,
practise it for the sake of revulsion towards consciousness, for its fading away, for its ending—they are well practised.

Those who are well practised gain a firm footing in this Dharma and Vinaya.

21 And, bhikshus those ascetics or brahmins, *having directly known consciousness, its arising, its ending and the way to its ending*, practise for the sake of revulsion towards consciousness, for its fading away, for its ending—they are freed by non-clinging, they are well freed.⁹²

Those who are well freed are the consummate ones, for whom there is no round to describe them.⁹³

— evaṃ —

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⁹² *Anupādā vimuttā te suvimuttā* [§9] + n.

⁹³ On this line, see **S 68*** n, **Sarā S** (SD 50.13(3)).