

Aberrant view: defective knowing

An excerpt from SD 60.1e Delusion and Experience © Piya Tan, 2023b (forthcoming).

1.12.5.1 Aberrant views generally arise as a consequence of aberrant perception and aberrant mind. When we perceive something wrongly, we then view it wrongly. Similarly, when we think in deviant and errant ways, our views and beliefs are accordingly mistaken and false. When we wrongly perceive a rope as a snake, we may come to the conclusion that this particular location is teeming with snakes. The perception that it is “a snake” creates fear, the fear from being stung by it—or the fear of death, to be exact. This negative emotion defines our reaction as that of an aberrant mind.

Then, without investigating further, we believe this to be true and spread this view around so that others believe it too. This induces the arising of an aberrant view, false knowledge, which makes us easy victims of *greed, hate, delusion and fear*.¹ These are powerful emotions that are often used by the powerful who lack moral goodness or humanity whose primary goal is that of full control of the crowd, the country, even the world.

Religion, in the hands of the deluded and powerful, can easily be used to attract believers, supporters and virtual slaves because of their own greed (*lobha*) for happiness here and heaven hereafter which are promised them by those whom they believe in. Religion often conjures up a common tribal hate (*dosa*) against those who are different, or who do not accept one’s own religion and culture. Religion is used to justify the control, oppression, even extermination of these heathens, pagans and unbelievers. These are of course grand delusions (*moha*) officially nurtured and regularly fed to the masses. Fear (*bhaya*) is then evoked by way of eternal punishment or damnation for merely unbelieving or going against the religious elite or their teachings.

Not surprisingly then, religion has destroyed more innocent lives, even the young (in religious wars and in peace time), even their own kind (from the same culture) in the name of the Popes, priests, rulers and lords. Often the number of such deaths outnumber those of all the wars in their own times.²

1.12.5.2 Before the rise of modern education (including science) and responsible secular government, religion defined and dominated our world: lives were defined by scripture or the preacher’s fiat. They perceived the earth as extending out evenly, as it were, in a straight line, and when they stood on an open shore or a high hill on an island, they saw the horizon almost all around, they concluded that the earth was flat.

Early in our religious history, our ancestors believed that some external, natural and conscious forces controlled and managed nature around us, the weather, thunder, lightning, rain, floods, earthquakes, and volcanoes. As the sole monarch and emperor became the

¹ Respectively, these are *dosa*, *lobhâgati*, *dosâgati*, *mohâgati*, *bhayâgati*, collectively known as “the 4 biases” (*agati*) or motives or grounds (*thâna*): **Sigal’ovâda S** (D 31,5), SD 4.1; **Āgati S 1** (A 4.17), SD 89.7; **Saṅgaha Bala S** (A 9.5,6.4) n, SD 2.21; SD 31.12 (6.4.1.3); SD 53.5 (2.2.1.1).

² See SD 60.1c (15.1). Religious wars: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religious_war. Death toll of wars: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_wars_by_death_toll.

vogue, he saw himself as a reflection of the heavenly king: this was Almighty God, a more convenient and unifying belief than so many unruly gods.

With neither modern science nor awakened wisdom to guide these ancients, aberrant views defined their religion and worldview. God created a flat, earth-centred universe. God, they imagined breathed them their soul (the mind), which went to eternal heaven with faith, or to eternal hell with unfaith.

Here is an interesting comparative table of the beliefs of God-religion, modern science, and early Buddhist teachings:

<u>God religion</u>	<u>Science</u>	<u>Early Buddhism</u>
(1) God created the universe	the universe evolves	the universes evolves in cycles ³
(2) God created Man	humans evolved	humanity is a cultivated state ⁴
(3) the world was flat	the earth is a globe	(a flat disc in) a multiuniverse ⁵
(4) geocentric planetary system	the solar system and galaxies	numerous galactic systems ⁶
(5) the mind is from God	the mind is brain-centred	the mind is our body [1.12.3.9]
(6) afterlife: heaven or hell	this is our only life (materialism)	numerous rebirths, evolution

Modern science grows from centuries of observation, measuring, reasoning and updating. Where the Church is powerful, pioneer scientists risk ostracization, imprisonment, even being put to death (burnt at the stake) for speaking against the Bible. Religion is put together by the powerful with an ulterior motive. Nothing could be more different than between the scientific method and religious dogma. The scientific method is proven by its success; religious dogma is proven by its failure.

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³ SD 57.10 (1.5) The world and its cycles.

⁴ Evolution of life and humans, see **Aggañña S** (D 27,10-29), SD 2.19; On psychological evolution, see SD 57.10 (3).

⁵ SD 57.10 (1.5; 3.2.3.2).

⁶ SD 57.10 (2.2).