

Dependent Origination: Seeing the Dharma

By: Gary Buck

Week Two: The Psychological Self

Experiential Homework Possibilities

Exploring the Roles You Inhabit – see below.

Working with Subjectivities – see below.

Suggested Reading

“Paticca-samuppada-vibhanga Sutta: Analysis of Dependent Co-arising” trans. Thanissaro Bhikkhu (Ajahn Geoff) is the abbot of Metta Forest Monastery near San Diego and a prolific writer and translator in the Theravadan tradition in the West. See attachment.

“Dependent Arising” Bhikkhu Bodhi. Bhikkhu Bodhi is probably the pre-eminent living English language scholar and translator of the Pali Suttas. Here are some of his thoughts on Dependent Origination. See attachment.

“Dependent Origination” by Christina Feldman. Christina is one of the three teachers who most inspired me to embark on my own exploration of Dependent Origination (the others were Christopher Titmuss and Ajahn Buddhadasa). See attachment.

“The Five Buddha Families” by Linda Lewis. Article about the Tibetan Buddhist personality typing system. See attachment.

Other Resources: For exploring the psychological self from the perspective of personality:

Books

Dependent Origination: The Buddhist Law of Conditionality, Ajahn Payutto, trans. Bruce Evans. <http://www.buddhanet.net/cmdsg/coarise.htm> This is an online version of the book that was passed out in class. However it's an earlier translation by different translator. I read this translation some years ago and remember it to be very good but don't remember it well enough to compare this translation to the one by Robin Moore. If you weren't able to get a copy of the Moore translation, at least this one is available to you. If you have the Moore version, it might be useful to compare their different translations for various parts of the text. I often find that comparing two translations of the same text helps my understanding of the subtler aspects of what's being translated.

Facets of Unity, Hameed Ali

The Spiritual Dimension of the Enneagram, Sandra Maitri

Character Styles, Stephen Johnson

Godesses in Every Woman, Jean Shinoda Bolen

Gods in Every Man, Jean Shinoda Bolen

Web Resources

Websites for the Meyers Briggs Test, which codifies Carl Jung's personality typing system.

<http://www.humanmetrics.com/cgi-win/jtypes2.asp>

http://www.personalitypathways.com/type_inventory.html

Remember that the readings and inquiries are optional. They're not required for participation in the course. The readings are designed to augment the talks by presenting more traditional views and alternative perspectives. The inquiry exercises will help you to connect experientially to the material I'm presenting and to find the areas of this teaching that are particularly intriguing and useful to you. Please feel free to adapt them as you see fit and to create your own experiential inquiries, as well.

Exploring the Roles We Inhabit

In some ways it may initially be easier to notice this progression of psychological selves in the people around us. Here's an example from the first time I gave this talk to Guy's senior student class while I was on staff as the Associate Director at SR.

Our office manager at that time was Debora Faust and I was her supervisor so I knew her quite well both in that role and as a friend. Debora was a staunch supporter of Spirit Rock and a dedicated administrative staff member. Debora passed away a few years ago of cancer. I think she would be delighted to be remembered in this way as part of a Dharma talk. I'd like to dedicate the second class to her memory. This sequence took place over the course of a few hours one Monday.

Debora had just returned from a weekend in the mountains bubbling over with the joy of life. She was a **friend** sharing her joy with me.

Later talking with drop-in visitor who wonders what SR is anyway/*enthusiastic supporter and promoter of SR,*

Then stopping by my office to offer a suggestion on how to improve the work flow in her role as *supervisee, responsible, proactive employee,*

Later overheard her changing the information on the voice mail about the upcoming weekend's schedule/*competent professional administrative assistant,*

Then she came to my office upset by a conflict with a co-worker/her *hurt and troubled inner child* came forth

Discussion of the situation, finding some distance, seeing her role in the conflict she became her/*stern judge, inner critic blaming herself for what she saw as an immature response.*

Further dialogue seeing the possibility of using this experience for growth and understanding, for insight/*mature practitioner of the dharma,*

Returning to her desk the phone rang. It's her daughter calling Instantly the role of *Mother* appears.

Inquiry 1: Pick someone who you are around frequently like a co-worker, spouse/partner, or other family member. Observe them for a period of 30 minutes or more. See how many different roles you can notice them inhabiting.

Inquiry 2: Pay attention to your own shifting roles for a day. Make a list of the main roles you embody throughout your typical day. Set an intention to notice and label as best you can each shift from one role to another. Or as you go about your day, stop from time

to time to check in with yourself to see which of your roles you are embodying in that moment. You might check to see if you can notice if there are differences in the way your body feels depending on which role you're playing in a given moment.

Inquiry 3: As you go about your day, see if you can especially notice those moments when you shift from one of your repertoire of roles to another. What is that catalyzes each shift?

Parade of Changing Subjectivities

As we go about our days, we experience ourselves as a series of changing subjectivities, depending on the circumstances of the moment. The dynamics of the fluid arising and passing away of various version of our psychological selves follow the pattern of the links of Dependent Origination. This description shows the progression of the links from sense doors through birth in this process.

The other morning I was in my bathroom shaving when a sexually charged image arose in my mind. Where it came from or why it arose at that particular moment I have no idea, but there it was. And it was certainly pleasant (feeling tone) and attractive and I wanted it to continue (craving). My mind locked onto it (grasping) and a fantasy began to evolve as I took on my particular identity/subjectivity (becoming leading to birth) in relation to this image that had just suddenly sprung to mind.

And then just as mysteriously and unexpectedly another thought, a moment of recognition, arose. "Look what just happened" (sense experience at the mind sense door) and I began to review the previous sequence in the light of dependent origination, the pleasure of discovery (feeling tone), attachment to it (craving leading to grasping), identification (becoming leading to birth) and all of a sudden I'm in this "Dharma teacher" role/subjectivity, trying to figure out how I can fit this very experience with this sexual fantasy into this very Dharma talk that I'm giving right now (further mental activity under the umbrella of this "Dharma teacher" subjectivity.)

Then abruptly I'm back in the present moment, looking in the mirror at my hair (new sensory experience). By this time I've long finished shaving and am brushing my hair. I see in the mirror that I'm having a bad hair day (new visual sensory experience with unpleasant feeling tone). It turns out that even if you're bald you can have a bad hair day. And here comes another identification (aversion leading to grasping then becoming and birth). Out of my repertoire of possible identities comes the vain me. "It's not staying in place so well. How am I going to look today? What will people think? Maybe I need a haircut..." (mental activity under the umbrella of this new vain subjectivity.)

Then there arises a mildly unpleasant physical sensation, a stuffiness in my nose (new sensory experience at the body sense door, a tactile sensation not a smell), and in a flash, the vain self is gone. I just am my body and this body is uncomfortable (feeling tone). Wanting this sensation to go away (aversive craving leading to grasping then becoming and birth), I reach for a tissue to blow my nose.

Just then another one of those "look at what just happened" thoughts arises (new sensory experience at the mind sense door), and again the pleasure (feeling tone) of reflecting on the dependent arising of this series of psychological selves. By now you're getting the picture. I've again latched onto "Dharma teacher" mode (desirous craving leading to grasping then becoming and birth), and am on my way to my desk to write all this down before I forget it (further activity under the umbrella of this "Dharma teacher" subjectivity). As I'm typing, my wife walks in to see what I'm up to (new visual sensory

experience, etc.) and the role of "husband" springs into action. After a brief conversation, she leaves and I slip back into "Dharma teacher," until I notice the nearby clock (visual sensory input). The realization that it's gotten late is a bit unpleasant (feeling tone) and from my aversion (craving, then grasping hold of it) the role of "therapist" is born. "I've got to get to work." As I hurry to the door, another thought pops up (mind sense door) and I remember to kiss my wife. "Husband" emerges again and after a quick kiss I'm back to being "the therapist", trying to get to work on time.

Practice 1: It can be helpful to play with giving some of your most challenging subjectivities creative names. Then set the intention to notice these subjectivities whenever they arise by the name you have given it. You could think of your list as your "Top Five Hit Parade" of challenging subjectivities.

Here an example of what my Top Five challenging subjectivities might be named:

The "Moneyworrywort" subjectivity
The "Glass Half Empty" subjectivity
The "It's All on My Shoulders" subjectivity
The "Perfectionist" subjectivity
The "Worst Case Scenario" subjectivity

What are yours?

Practice 2: It's quite difficult to track this process link by link in as much detail as depicted above while it's actually happening because it happens so fast. But from time to time you might stop to reflect on the particular subjectivity you're experiencing in the moment to see if you can remember the sensory experience that triggered it and the feeling tone and craving that eventually led to your birth as this particular sense of self.