

Cetovimutti or Liberation of Mind:

A Study of the Buddha's Enlightenment according to the Sutta Piṭaka

Lars Ims



Master's Thesis in Sanskrit (SAN4590)

60 credits

Department of Culture Studies and Oriental Languages

Faculty of Humanities

UNIVERSITY OF OSLO

Autumn 2016

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www.duo.uio.no

Print: Reprosentralen, University of Oslo

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to the teachers at the University of Oslo who have shared their knowledge and given invaluable advice to me throughout the years: to my first teacher of Sanskrit, Professor Emeritus Georg von Simson, who graciously opened the door to me to the wondrous world of Indology, after having explained that it would not lead to employment; to the incomparable Professor Jens E. Braarvig, my former supervisor and an omniglot in the field of Buddhist philology, whose mind seems to be boundless in absorbing knowledge, and whose generosity in sharing it is equally limitless; to my brilliant supervisor Professor Ute Hüsken, who not only brought the dormant Sanskrit department at the University of Oslo back to life, but also enlivened it with her cheerfulness, warmth and enthusiasm. She has provided firm and fearless guidance and has challenged my arguments at every point. She has exposed and efficiently removed several *ditthis* or ‘faulty opinions’ in the process, for which I am deeply grateful. She also brought me back to solid ground when I was getting carried away by the loftiness of the Buddha’s words. I would also like to thank Trude Lind, programme advisor at the Department of Culture Studies and Oriental Languages, who went out of her way to make it possible for me to complete the Master’s programme. I would also like to express my gratefulness to Peter Glen for improving the text with his expert comments and corrections; to Alexander Engedal Gewalt for encouragement and help with Word; and to my philosopher friend Harald Kr. Schjelderup for sharing his knowledge about scientific method.

When I was returning home after a visit to my Guru, Swami Shyam, in the Himalayas in the spring of this year, his parting words to me were that ‘you must find the true mind’. The expression ‘true mind’ puzzled me. I realised after I had written this thesis that his words had been with me ever since, and that this thesis is in fact an attempt to describe the mind which has found truth in the form of something unchanging, which the Buddha called *amatā dhātu* (the immortal element), and which he described thus: the ‘true mind’ is free (*vimutta*), independent (*anissita*), without signs or characteristics (*animitta*), free from attributes (*anidassana*), deep (*gambhīra*), immeasurable (*appameyya*), uninfluenced (*anāsava*), loving (*metta*), clear (*pasanna*), luminous (*pabhassara*), pure (*suddha*), not leaning (*anata*), happy (*sukha*), unfluctuating (*asankuppa*), cool (*sītibhūta*), unattached (*anupādāna*) and peaceful (*santa*). The mind itself - after having followed the path of cultivation through meditation and mindfulness - has been immersed in *nibbāna* (*nibbānogaḍha*); it has become ‘*nibbāna*-ised’ (*nibbuta*).¹

¹ *Nibbuta* represents both Sanskrit *nivṛta* (covered up, extinguished, quenched) and *nirvṛta* (without movement, with motion finished) (PED p. 366).

Abstract

In the philosophy of the early Buddhism recorded in the five Nikāyas or collections of the Sutta Piṭaka of the Pali canon, the human being is considered to consist of five aggregates or personality factors (*khandas*): physical form (*rūpa*), sensation (*vedanā*), cognition (*saññā*), mental formations (*saṅkhāra*) and consciousness (*viññāṇa*). These are a source of *dukkha* or suffering as long as they are seen as one's self because of their changing nature. Existing alongside this formal analysis is, however, another description of the human psyche of a more informal or colloquial nature. It is described as consisting of *citta* (mind) and *paññā* (intellect). This thesis argues that while *citta* is the affective or emotional faculty or part of the human psyche, *paññā* is the cognitive or intellectual aspect.

In a core description of his Enlightenment, the Buddha describes his liberating experience as *cetovimutti* (mind liberation). This thesis analyzes in part 1 how the mind is understood in early Buddhism and what relationship this mind has to the essential concept of *dukkha*. Part 2 about the Path (*magga*) consists of a detailed study of the process of cultivation of the human psyche, where it is turned towards *amata* (the immortal), the earliest description of *nibbāna*. The mind is cultivated through meditation (*samādhi*), described as a series of gradually subtler stages of mental concentration until it is pacified (*samatha*) and is rid of desire for enjoyment (*kāma*) and continued existence (*bhava*). The intellect is cultivated through mindfulness (*sati*) until it is liberated from ignorance (*avijjā*) and opinions (*diṭṭhi*) and through its newfound insight (*vipassanā*) sees reality as it is (*yathābhuta-dassana*) and clearly comprehends the four Noble Truths. When the mind and intellect are thus completely cultivated or purified, *nibbāna* occurs. This twofold liberation (*ubhatobhāgavimutti*) is a complete transformation of the human being into the early Buddhist ideal of the Arhat, whose *nibbāna*-ised mind is described in part 3.

This thesis shows the interplay between the formal and the informal models or voices of early Buddhism, leading in particular to a reappraisal of the meaning and role of *paññā* (Sanskrit *prajñā*) in the realisation of *nibbāna*. *Paññā* is conventionally understood as 'wisdom' or 'liberating insight', but this thesis argues that it must primarily be understood as a purely intellectual faculty. The enigma of *paññā* in the philosophy of early Buddhism is that it can be both a cause of bondage or *saṃsāra* when it is affected by ignorance (*sāsava*), and a cause of liberation or *nibbāna* when it is uninfluenced by ignorance (*anāsava*). It has, furthermore, the complex dual role of being both that which *liberates*, and that which is being *liberated*.

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Introduction

This thesis is a study of the Buddha's enlightenment as it is described in the Sutta Piṭaka. My desire was to go into as much detail as possible: what exactly was taking place in his mind during the enlightenment, and in what way was he different afterwards?

This endeavour started off as a monographic study of 'mind liberation', in which the concept of *paññā* plays the central part. But my endeavour was frustrated by the fact that the way the concept was used in certain textual contexts did not make sense semantically on the basis of the current or consensual understanding of *paññā* as only 'wisdom' or 'liberating insight'. To explain the discrepancies, I hypothesized that *citta* and *paññā* were somehow similar entities, that they were ontologically on equal footing, and could be treated as a *pair* of psychological 'entities', or *the* pair which together make up the human psyche. This hypothesis seemed to be born out by certain texts that seemed to treat them as a pair, yet opposed by the fact that *paññā* is usually taken to mean a particular kind of cognition – the highest kind of liberating insight – and therefore could not be paired or compared with a general term like *citta*. To resolve this tension I formed an *ad hoc* hypothesis about *paññā* having (at least) two meanings, as 'intellect' and '(supreme) insight'. My arguments and findings in relation to this hypothesis constitute a major part of this thesis.

I have often reflected upon Gadamer's thoughts about how the original intentions of the author(s) of a text is not accessible to us because of the intervention of history. Reading a *sutta* does not entail actually understanding the original meaning, but that my understanding metaphorically expressed as a horizon, shaped by a long history of interpretation and reinterpration, is fusing with the horizon of understanding the text represents. The outcome is - in the expression of Gadamer - 'a fusion of horizons', which says as much about how I understand my own existence as what the subject of the study is. That is what the 'ontological turn' in hermeneutics is about:

In Spinoza, Ast, and Schleiermacher, the hermeneutic circle was conceived in terms of the mutual relationship between the text as a whole and its individual parts, or in terms of the relation between text and tradition. With Heidegger, however, the hermeneutic circle refers to something completely different: the interplay between our self-understanding and our understanding the world. The hermeneutic circle is no longer

perceived as a helpful philological tool, but entails an existential task with which each of us is confronted.²

In the case of a text like the Tipiṭaka, the issue of the "true meaning of the text" is complicated further by the fact that the texts of the Tipiṭaka "lived" for approximately the first five hundred years in the form of oral transmission. We may assume that 'horizons were fusing' considerably even before the texts found their supposedly final, written form: I have observed in the course of my studies that not even single texts or *suttas* necessarily are 'coherent' or 'consistent', but seem to be collations containing heterogenous elements. There seems to be many different voices in this massive body of text – a text containing some 10.000 *suttas* or teachings of varying lengths, a lot of which is repetitive. Expressions, phrases and whole segments or pericopes are being reworked and recycled *en masse*; it seems at times that the Sutta Piṭaka is a morphing textual *saṃsāra* characterized by *punabbhava* or 'repeated existence'. At the same time, some *suttas* seem to have a single author or redactor, as one can detect a more or less discernible intention which involves every part of the text in a certain common purpose. Scholars who use parts of these more homogenous texts as arguments for a certain wider theoretical position, concerning the text as a whole risk missing this larger heterogenous context, unable to separate different horizons of understanding and individual threads of thought hidden in the textual material; deaf to the dialogue – and sometimes separate monologues – that is to be found in the text.

I seem to detect two major and significantly different voices in the *suttas* which I may call the formal voice of philosophical analysis, and the informal voice of colloquial language. The 'formal voice', for instance refers to the human psyche as *viññāṇa* or 'consciousness', which is a part of the systematic models of early Buddhism, while the latter refers to it as *citta* or 'mind' (or as *citta* and *paññā*), which is ubiquitous in the canonical texts while referring to the human psyche or self, yet not part of any formal model. To understand how these different voices are interwoven and play together is both challenging and rewarding. Here the philosophical discipline of discourse analysis can be helpful.

I have used the online, searchable databases at <https://suttacentral.net> and www.tipitaka.org which both contain the entire Pali canon. The different numbering systems can be confusing. I have chosen to follow the numbering system of the Pali Text Society

² Ramberg, Bjørn; Gjesdal, Kristin (2014): 'Hermeneutics', The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), available at URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2014/entries/hermeneutics>, accessed 10/11/2016.

(PTS) as most scholars do. Sutta Central (<https://suttacentral.net>) also follows the PTS *sutta* numbering with a few exceptions.³ The advantage of databases such as Sutta Central is that they are searchable and also have parallel translations into many languages. I have limited my study to the five Nikāyas or collections of the Sutta Piṭaka (Basket of Sermons), which are considered by the tradition to contain the Buddha's words (*buddha-vacana*). I have avoided the commentarial tradition of the Abhidhamma. Some scholars omit the Khuddaka Nikāya because it obviously contains late and/or spurious, paracanonical or commentarial materials, but I have raised no text critical issues in this study, and have studied the texts *prima facie*.

What was initially meant to be a study of the meaning of mind (*citta*) and the mind's liberation (*cetovimutti*) as an essential description of Gotama's enlightenment gradually evolved into a study of the nature of *paññā* and its role in this enlightenment. It seems that this study may have answered some questions about *citta* and how it reaches *nibbāna* through meditation, but it has also raised a new set of questions about *paññā*. *Paññā* is a part of the mind, or the mind and *paññā* are both parts of consciousness. Is *paññā* a faculty or a function? Is it a passive observer of or an active agent in the liberation process? How can it be both something that liberates (from the *āsavas* or defilements) and something that is liberated from them? If *paññā* causes or leads to *nibbāna*, what happens after it has fulfilled its purpose? According to early Buddhism, only *nibbāna* is eternal and unchanging; everything else is changing and will eventually perish. Unless *paññā* is in fact the 'awareness' or 'self-reflectiveness' of *nibbāna* or *nibbāna* understood as 'wisdom' or 'insight' (the way *nibbāna* is understood as a 'state' (*pada*), 'dimension' (*āyatana*) or 'element' (*dhātu*) in the Nikāyas), it will also eventually perish. I hope this thesis will be a useful contribution to the understanding of the complex nature and role of *paññā* in early Buddhism.

³ https://suttacentral.net/sutta_numbering

Part 1: *Citta*

1.1 Introduction

This thesis is a study of the concept of *cetovimutti* (mind liberation), which seems to be the essence of Gotama's enlightenment. Liberation of the mind is the description of his *bodhi* or enlightenment in the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta (Sermon Setting in Motion the Wheel of Teaching).

In early Buddhism, the ordinary man is called *puthujjana*, a term referring to anyone who is still caught in *saṃsāra* by the ten *samyojanas* (bondages),⁴ and who has not entered *ariya magga* (the noble path) and reached any of the four stages of spiritual development.⁵ An elaborate description of the *puthujjana* is found in the Samanupassanā Sutta (S.iii.46),⁶ where he or she is described as someone who thinks 'I am' (Harvey 1995 40). The 'instructed noble disciple', on the other hand, has '...given up ignorance, and gained knowledge. For him, who has abandoned ignorance and gained knowledge, "I am" does not occur' (...*sutavato ariyasāvaka*ssa *avijjā pahīyati, vijjā uppajjati. Tassa avijjāvirāgā vijjuppādā 'asmī'tipissa na hoti*).

Gotama observed his own personal life - and the lives of others - and came to the conclusion that the human experience is unsatisfactory or painful, because it is marred by *jarāmaraṇa* (old age and death). It is *dukkha* or suffering.⁷ This subjective experience was

⁴ These are: 1. Belief in a self (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*). 2. Doubt or uncertainty (*vicikicchā*). 3. Attachment to rites and rituals (*sīlabbata-parāmāsa*). 4. Sensual desire (*kāmacchando*). 5. Ill will (*vyāpādo* or *byāpādo*). 6. Lust for material existence (*rūparāgo*). 7. Lust for immaterial existence, lust for rebirth in a formless realm (*arūparāgo*). 8. Conceit (*māno*). 9. Restlessness (*uddhacca*). 10. Ignorance (*avijjā*).

⁵ These four classes of aspirants are: stream-enterer (*srotapanna*), once-returner (*sakadāgamī*), non-returner (*anāgamī*) and the arhat. There are longer lists of aspirants in the Nikāyas as well.

⁶ *'Iti ayañceva samanupassanā 'asmī'ti cassa avigataṃ hoti. 'Asmī'ti kho pana, bhikkhave, avigate pañcannaṃ indriyānaṃ avakkanti hoti—cakkhundriyassa sotindriyassa ghānindriyassa jivhindriyassa kāyindriyassa. Atthi, bhikkhave, mano, atthi dhammā, atthi avijjādhātu. Avijjāsamphassajena, bhikkhave, vedayitena phuṭṭhassa assutavato puthujjanassa 'asmī'tipissa hoti; 'ayamahamasmī'tipissa hoti; 'bhavissan'tipissa hoti; 'na bhavissan'tipissa hoti; 'rūpī bhavissan'tipissa hoti; 'arūpī bhavissan'tipissa hoti; 'saññī bhavissan'tipissa hoti; 'asaññī bhavissan'tipissa hoti; 'nevasaññī-nāsaññī bhavissan'tipissa hoti.*

*Tiṭṭhanti kho pana bhikkhave, tattheva pañcindriyāni, ahettha sutavato ariyasāvaka*ssa *avijjā pahīyati, vijjā uppajjati, tassa avijjāvirāgā vijjuppādā asmī'tipissa na hoti. Ayamahamasmī'tipissa na hoti, bhavissanti'pissa na hoti, na bhavissanti'pissa na hoti, saññī bhavissanti'pissa na hoti, asaññī bhavissanti'pissa na hoti, nevasaññīnāsaññī bhavissanti'pissa na hotīi.'*

⁷ A classic elaboration of the conditions of *dukkha* is found in the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta: 'Now this, monks, is the noble truth of *dukkha*: birth (*jāti*) is *dukkha*, aging is *dukkha*, death is *dukkha*; sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair are *dukkha*; association with the unbeloved is *dukkha*; separation from the loved is *dukkha*; not getting what is wanted is *dukkha*. In short, the five clinging-aggregates are *dukkha*.' (Pali text: '*Idaṃ kho pana, bhikkhave, dukkhaṃ ariya-saccaṃ: jāti-pi dukkhā, jarā-pi dukkhā (byādhi-pi dukkho) maraṇam-pi dukkhaṃ, a-p-piyehi sampayogo dukkho, piyehivippayogo dukkho, yampicchaṃ na labhati tam-pi dukkhaṃ; saṃkhittena pañc-upādāna-k-khandhā dukkhā.*')

subsequently, shortly after his enlightenment,⁸ formulated as the first of his four ‘noble truths’, that to be a human is to suffer. The nature of this suffering is more complex or subtle than just ‘to suffer’ or ‘be in pain’, physically or mentally. It is a deep sense of disappointment with life, a feeling of the inevitability of change, the futility of all endeavours, the impermanence of all creation, the fleetingness of all forms.⁹ All things in this world have three common traits according to early Buddhism - the so-called ‘three signs’ (*tilakkhana*) - impermanence (*anicca*), non-self (*anatta*) and unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*). In the early Buddhist analysis of the human personality as consisting of five *khandhas* (personality factors), it is pointed out that ‘in short the five *khandhas* are *dukkha*’ (...*saṃkhittena pañcupādānakkhandhā dukkhā*) (S.v.421).

The *citta* (mind) is the seat or locus of *dukkha*; it is because of the very nature of the *citta* that human life suffers. The *citta* is the creator of *dukkha* because it is filled with the *āsavas* (influences), which are the main culprits for the unsatisfactoriness of human existence, according to early Buddhism. The substance the mind is made of is such that it can be affected by or infused with the *āsavas*, and all its functions will then be tainted. The mind will be a vessel or instrument for the *āsavas*, making life inclined towards the desire for gratification of the senses (*kāma*), the desire for rebirth (*bhava*), ignorance of what is real and what is unreal (*avijjā*) and mistaken ideas (*diṭṭhi*).¹⁰ If the mind is left to continue to operate in its natural state as under the influence of the *āsavas*, it will perpetuate *samsāra*, strengthening the state of bondage. This process must be stopped for the goal of *nibbāna* to be realised.

In order to understand what *cetovimutti* (liberation of the mind or liberation from the mind) entails, it is important to clarify to the greatest possible extent *what the mind is*, according to early Buddhism. Importantly, the mind is the *very object of nibbāna*; *nibbāna happens to the mind* (Johansson 1979 163 and 1969 107). Thus, the mind is the very reason there is a need for *nibbāna* in the first place. The process by which the mind itself attains *nibbāna* is described thus in the Anicca Sutta (The Sermon on Impermanence) at S.iii.45:¹¹

⁸ ‘Enlightenment’ and ‘enlightened’ are not exact translations of *bodhi/bodha* and *buddha*, as they are derived from the root *budh* ‘to be awake’. Hence ‘awakening’ and ‘awakened’ are truer to the original meaning, emphasising the gnostic nature of the event: that he ‘became aware’ or ‘came to know’ (see: Collins, Steven (2010): *Nirvana: Concept, Imagery, Narrative*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 79-81).

⁹ For a discussion of the complex meaning of *dukkha*, see Collins (2010) pp. 33-34.

¹⁰ All views or opinions are wrong, according to early Buddhism.

¹¹ ‘*Rūpadhātuyā ce, bhikkhave, bhikkhuno cittaṃ virattaṃ vimuttaṃ hoti anupādāya āsavehi, vedanādhātuyā ... pe ... saññādhātuyā ... saṅkhāradhātuyā ... viññāṇadhātuyā ce, bhikkhave, bhikkhuno cittaṃ virattaṃ vimuttaṃ hoti anupādāya āsavehi. Vimuttattā ʻthitaṃ. ʻThitattā santusitaṃ. Santusitattā na paritassati. Aparitassam*

If, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu's mind has become dispassionate towards the form element, it is liberated from the taints by non-clinging. If his mind has become dispassionate towards the feeling element...towards the perception element...towards the volitional formations element...towards the consciousness element, it is liberated from the taints by non-clinging. By being liberated, it is steady; by being steady, it is content; by being content, he is not agitated. Being unagitated, he¹² personally attains *Nibbāna*. He understands: "Destroyed is birth, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is no more for this state of being."¹³

This is a brief version of the process of transformation of the *citta* (minus the crucial element of meditation, it must be added), which we will investigate in part 2.

1.2 The *citta* in the Nikāyas

Providing an extensive account of the various descriptions of the mind in the Nikāyas is outside the scope of this thesis. There is, however, a large corpus of studies available, e.g. *The Dynamic Psychology of Early Buddhism* by Rune E. A. Johansson (1979), which reaches the conclusion that '...we can say that *citta* corresponds fairly closely to "mind"' (Johansson 1979 161). He remarks that '*citta* is a somewhat wider concept [than "mind"], including as it does not only the momentarily conscious processes, but also the continuous, unconscious background...' (Johansson 1979 161). *Citta* is also a wider concept than mind because 'It is sometimes used in a way which suggests a personal identity from existence to existence' (Johansson 1979 157 and Johansson 1965 175).

1.3 The *citta* as troublemaker

There seems to be ample evidence in the Pali texts to support the supposition that the *citta* is a troublemaker or cause of *dukkha*.

paccattaññeva parinibbāyati. 'Khīṇā jāti, vusitaṃ brahmacariyaṃ, kataṃ karaṇīyaṃ, nāparaṃ itthattāyā'ti pajānāti'ti.'

¹² Or rather, 'it' (referring to the *citta*).

¹³ Translated by Bodhi, Bhikkhu (2010): *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha*. Boston: Wisdom Publications, available at <https://suttacentral.net/en/sn22.45>, accessed 10/11/2016.

The *citta* of the *puthujjana* is replete with vices. In its natural or uncultivated state, it houses all kinds of lowly or negative qualities. Both the good and bad moralities (*sīlā*) originate in the mind, as is stated in M.ii.27 (quoted in: Hamilton 1996 112). The existence of the mind is enigmatic: it cannot be pinpointed or seen, yet man is stuck with it. It is the very nature of *upādāna* (clinging) which catches or traps man in the illusory personality in the first place. A clinging mind works as a kind of adhesive power that attaches man to the five personality factors (*pañcakkhandā*). When the clinging stops, it is explained at A.iii.351, the mind is freed: ‘Not clinging in any way, the mind is rightly liberated’ (*Sabbaso anupādāya, sammā cittaṃ vimuccati*). In the Sakkapañha Sutta (S.iv.102), the connection between clinging and consciousness is described thus:¹⁴

There are...forms cognizable by the eye that are desirable, lovely, agreeable, pleasing, sensually enticing, tantalizing. If a bhikkhu seeks delight in them, welcomes them, and remains holding to them, his consciousness becomes dependent upon them and clings to them. A bhikkhu with clinging does not attain Nibbāna...a bhikkhu without clinging attains Nibbāna.¹⁵

The connection between the mind (=consciousness) and clinging is apparently desire (*kāma*), which in turn leads to *dukkha*. In the Buddhist rationale of the theory of dependent origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*), the process that caused the problem must be reversed in order for the problem to disappear, expressed thus regarding grasping and consciousness at M.iii.261: ‘Therefore you should train yourself thus: I will not cling to this world, and so no consciousness dependent on this world shall arise in me’ (*Tasmātiha te...evaṃ sikkhitabbaṃ: ‘na idhalokaṃ upādiyissāmi, na ca me idhalokanissitaṃ viññāṇaṃ bhavissatī’ti*). The sentence is repeated with ‘this world’ replaced with ‘next world’ (*paraloka*).

The elusive nature of the mind can be illustrated by the fact that it does not occur in any of the philosophical models we will explore in the following paragraphs, yet is

¹⁴ ‘Santi kho... cakkhuvīññeyyā rūpā, iṭṭhā kantā manāpā piyarūpā kāmūpasamhitā rajanīyā. Tañce bhikkhu abhinandati abhivadati ajjhosāya tiṭṭhati. Tassa taṃ abhinandato abhivadato ajjhosāya tiṭṭhatotannissitaṃ viññāṇaṃ hoti tadupādānaṃ. Saupādāno...bhikkhu no parinibbāyati...anupādāno...bhikkhu parinibbāyati.’

¹⁵ Bodhi, Bhikkhu (2000): *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha*. Boston: Wisdom Publications, available at. <https://suttacentral.net/en/sn35.118>, accessed 02.11.16.

ubiquitous in descriptions of the human experience, such as this from the Majjhima Nikāya (M.i.511):¹⁶

Indeed, I have long been tricked, cheated, and defrauded by this mind. For when clinging, I have been clinging just to material form, I have been clinging just to feeling, I have been clinging just to perception, I have been clinging just to formations, I have been clinging just to consciousness. With my clinging as condition, being comes to be; with being as condition, birth; with birth as condition, ageing and death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair come to be. Such is the origin of this whole mass of suffering.¹⁷

Johansson remarks that the *citta* is ‘made responsible for all the false values and activities that keep the *paṭiccasamuppāda*-development going’ (Johansson 1979 159). The *citta* is even given credit for running or leading the whole world (S.i.39):¹⁸ ‘The world is led around by mind; by mind it’s dragged here and there. Mind is the one thing that has all under its control.’¹⁹

1.4 *Citta* within the wider context of early Buddhist philosophy

Early Buddhism consists of several parallel philosophical models explaining the world and life of man. These models exist side by side, and sometimes overlap. Firstly, there are the four Noble Truths, where the mind plays no obvious role, but - as we shall see - this thesis postulates that the first truth that life is *dukkha* is about the mind, because the mind is the medium and location of *dukkha*, the instrument holding man in a state of *dukkha*.

¹⁶ ‘*Dīgharattaṃ vata bho ahaṃ iminā cittaena nikato vañcito paluddho. Ahañhi rūpaṃyeva upādiyamāno upādiyiṃ, vedanaṃyeva upādiyamāno upādiyiṃ, saññāṃyeva upādiyamāno upādiyiṃ, saṅkhāreyeva upādiyamāno upādiyiṃ, viññāṃyeva upādiyamāno upādiyiṃ. Tassa me upādānapaccayā bhavo, bhavapaccayā jāti, jātipaccayā jarāmaraṇaṃ sokaparidevadukkhadomanassupāyāsā sambhavanti; evametassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa samudayo hotī’ ti.*’

¹⁷ Translation by Bodhi, Bhikkhu (2009): *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha*. Boston: Wisdom Publications, available at . <https://suttacentral.net/en/mn75>, accessed 02.11.16.

¹⁸ ‘*Cittena nīyati loko, cittaena parikassati; Cittassa ekadhammassa, sabbeva vasamanvagū’ ti.*’

¹⁹ Translated by Bodhi, Bhikkhu (2000): *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha*. Boston: Wisdom Publications, available at . <https://suttacentral.net/en/sn1.62>, accessed 02.11.16.

Cited in: Johansson 1979 159.

Secondly, there is the application of the early Buddhist doctrine of *paṭiccasamuppāda* (dependent origination) in the form of the twelve *nidānas*²⁰ or links where each link is the cause of the next link, creating a causal nexus or circle of dependent origination which becomes the *samsāra* or cycle of birth and death. It is interesting to take note of the fact that the only time in the Nikāyas (S.v.184) that the *citta* is said to arise from a cause, it is said to do so from *nāmarūpa*, the *nidāna* which has arisen from *viññāṇa* (consciousness) (Johansson 1979 158). Unfortunately, however, this explanation is no explanation at all, and only serves to reiterate the fact that *citta* as a word exists outside the formal philosophical system of early Buddhism comprised of technical terms: *nāma* means the mind or psyche in its widest sense as everything mental, and is said - in the Visuddhimagga - to include all four 'mental' or formless (*arūpa*) *khandhas*: *vedanā*, *saññā*, *saṅkhāra* and *viññāṇa* (Hamilton 1996 124).

Thirdly, the *pancakkhandas* (five personality factors) or more correctly *upādāna khandas* (personality factors of grasping)²¹ which constitute the early Buddhist model explaining the constituent parts of the human personality. These are: *rūpa* (physical phenomenon, body), *vedanā* (feeling), *saññā* (perception), *saṅkhāra* (mental constructions, volitions) and *viññāṇa* (consciousness). The *citta* is, as we have seen, related to all these *khandas* except the body or physical form, and it seems reasonable to understand the word *citta* as a practical or colloquial way of referring to mental functioning or activity in general, especially the affective side, as will become clear in the course of this thesis. It serves as a quick reference to mental states or activities (emotions and cognitions), and this may be the explanation why it is not itself a part of any of the philosophical models of early Buddhism; it may be a case of colloquial versus literary language. Or it could be semantically too diffuse for a terminus technicus.

Fourthly, the noble eightfold path (*ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo*), which is all about cultivating the *citta*, even though the *citta* is not mentioned by its proper name. This thesis will, however, not investigate the noble eightfold path in relation to *citta* in detail, but focus on meditation and mindfulness (see part 2).

1.5 *Viññāṇa* or consciousness

²⁰ There are several series of *nidānas* in the Nikāyas, from six to ten. The number twelve is from the Visuddhimagga.

²¹ According to Johansson, *upādāna* refers to the collecting function of *kamma* effects, which keep man trapped in the cycle of birth and death (Johansson 1979 61). It is what makes man cling to relative existence.

Since we find consciousness or *viññāṇa* as a central concept in early Buddhism, in the following we will take a closer look at its relation to *citta*.

Viññāṇa is the fourth and last of the *arūpakkhandas* or formless personality factors, and the third *nidāna* or link in the causal chain. It also figures in *viññāṇañcāyatana* (plane of infinite consciousness) among the meditational states as the second of the *arūpajjhānas* (formless stages). It is thus a highly technical term in early Buddhism, but also, as Sue Hamilton remarks in her extensive study of the *khandas* (Hamilton 1996 82) ‘...*viññāṇa* is often used in the Pali texts as a generic term to denote “mind” in general.’ She also observes that ‘...the most common terms used, often seemingly interchangeably with *viññāṇa*, are *citta* and *manas*’ (Hamilton 1996 82). Simply stated, *viññāṇa* leads a double life in the Pali texts as a common word for ‘mind’, and as a technical term for ‘consciousness’ in the philosophical models of early Buddhism. To define *viññāṇa* more closely, it seems to be an ‘awareness of’, and does not have a discriminatory capacity (Hamilton 1996 92) as associated with an intellect. Hamilton sums up thus: ‘*Viññāṇa* does not specifically do the discriminating, but, rather, is the awareness by which we experience every stage of the cognitive process, including the process of discriminating’ (Hamilton 1996 92).

Even though *viññāṇa* and *citta* (as well as *manas*), as we have seen, are used interchangeably in the Pali texts, there may still be a difference between them: ‘*Viññāṇa* functions as the provider of awareness and continuity by which one knows one’s moral condition (in its broadest sense), and *citta* is an abstract representation of that moral condition’ (Hamilton 1996 112). This may indicate that *citta* refers to the *content* of consciousness, and not consciousness *itself*, which is the function of *viññāṇa*. This makes sense, but one should always be wary of making such generalisations. Johansson supports this view by stating that: ‘Usually the contents and processes of consciousness are given other names: *saññā* (ideations), *vedanā* (sensations and feelings), *dhammā* (mental processes) etc.’ (Hamilton 1996 59).

Viññāṇa plays a central part in the Buddhist theory of rebirth, because it is the *viññāṇa* which reincarnates (Johansson 1979 57). It descends into the mother’s womb and is the cause of the growth of the mind and body (*nāmarūpa*) which become the human being (D.ii.63, quoted in: Johansson 1979 57).²² It is also enumerated as an element or *dhātu*: earth,

²² ‘*Viññāṇapaccayā nāmarūpan’ti iti kho panetaṃ vuttaṃ, tadānanda, imināpetam pariyāyena veditabbaṃ, yathā viññāṇapaccayā nāmarūpaṃ. Viññāṇañca hi, ānanda, mātukucchismiṃ na okkamissatha, api nu kho nāmarūpaṃ mātukucchismiṃ samuccissathā’ti? ‘No hetam, bhante’. ‘Viññāṇañca hi, ānanda, mātukucchismiṃ okkamitvā vakkamissatha, api nu kho nāmarūpaṃ itthattāya abhi-nib-bat-tis-sathā’ti? ‘No hetam, bhante’. ‘Viññāṇañca hi, ānanda, daharasseva sato voc-chij-jis-satha kumārakassa vā kumārikāya vā, api nu kho*

water, light, air, space and *viññāṇa* (Johansson 1979 58). *Viññāṇa* is also the component that remembers former lives (Johansson 1979 61).

Johansson observes that *viññāṇa* as a *nidāna* in the *paṭiccasamuppāda* series is ‘more of concrete, conscious processes which are the inhabitants of this inner room’, while as a *khandā* it is ‘more of an inner functional unit, inner space, store-room’ (Johansson 1979 64).

Since *viññāṇa* plays the central role in *bhava* or relative existence, which is the state of *dukkha* of the *puthujjana*, the whole Buddhist endeavour is to stop the *viññāṇa* from perpetuating *samsāric* life. The *viññāṇa* is the medium of rebirth, as Johansson remarks (Johansson 1969 108). To accomplish this ‘stopping’ of the *viññāṇa*, the *citta* must undergo purification (*suddhi*, *visuddhi*) of all defilements, as we shall see in part 2 about the *maggā*. This purification is primarily referred to as development or cultivation (*bhāvanā*), by entering the state of meditation generally referred to as *samādhi* (Johansson 1979 63).

This purification takes the form of calming the *citta* in meditation, emptying it of attachment to the objects of the senses and so forth (Johansson 1979 63). The goal seems, however, to be to reach a stage where there is a total cessation of *viññāṇa*. Judging from the Nikāyas, it seems that the culmination of the purification or cultivation of the *viññāṇa* is not only a cessation (*nirodha*) of all *activity* in the *viññāṇa*, but of *viññāṇa itself*. In the Sutta Nipāta 1037, we read:²³ ‘As to where mind and body ceases without remainder: with the cessation of consciousness, in this place it ceases.’²⁴ In Sutta Nipāta 1111, we read:²⁵ ‘If a person does not enjoy sensation, internally or externally, in this way consciousness is stopped for him wandering mindfully.’²⁶ When trying to understand how early Buddhism views the universe, an important guideline is that absolutely everything is created (*kata*) and dependent/conditioned (*samutpanna*) and therefore subject to change and death except one ‘thing’ - *nibbāna*. *Nibbāna* is the *amatā dhātu* or ‘immortal element’, and since it is unmade (*akata*) and independent/unconditioned (*anutpanna*), it is not subject to change. Unless *viññāṇa* can be proven to be *nibbāna* itself, or an essential aspect of it, it is also just another conditioned thing, and will change and disappear like all other *dhammā aniccā* (perishable things).

nāmarūpaṃ vuddhiṃ virūhiṃ vepullaṃ āpajjissathā’ti? ‘No hetuṃ, bhante’. ‘Tasmātihānanda, eseva hetu etaṃ nidānaṃ esa samudayo esa paccayo nāmarūpassa—yadidaṃ viññāṇaṃ.’

²³ ‘*Yattha nāmañca rūpañca, asesam uparujjhati; viññāṇassa nirodhena, etthetaṃ uparujjhati*’.

²⁴ Translated by Ānandajoti Bhikkhu (1999, revised May 2007) available at <https://suttacentral.net/en/snp5.2>, accessed 02.11.16.

²⁵ ‘*Ajjhattañca bahiddhā ca, vedanaṃ nābhinandato; evaṃ satassa carato, viññāṇaṃ uparujjhatī’ti*.’

²⁶ Translated by Ānandajoti Bhikkhu (1999, revised May 2007), available at <https://suttacentral.net/en/snp5.14>, accessed 02.11.16.

The *viññāṇa* seems to be of utmost importance in early Buddhism as the *nidāna* and *khanda* upon which *dukkha* depends, and where Buddhist practitioners concentrate their efforts of self-restraint and meditation to end the perpetuation of repeated relative existence (*bhava*), otherwise referred to as *jāti* or (re-)birth. Two verses from the Sutta Nipāta (734-35) clearly show the relationship between *viññāṇa*, *dukkha* and *nibbāna*: ‘Whatever suffering arises, it is all because of consciousness. Through the calming of consciousness, there is no production of suffering. Having recognised this as danger, that suffering is caused by consciousness, the monk calms his consciousness and becomes satisfied, attains nirvana.’²⁷

Viññāṇa is also conceived of as a *stream of consciousness* ‘...flowing through a string of existences, in time’ (Johansson 1965 192).

Viññāṇa is conditioned and is itself a condition. In the scheme of dependent origination in the *paṭiccasamuppāda* series, it is conditioned by *saṅkhāra* and *nāma-rūpa* (name and form), generally understood as mind and body. The *saṅkhāras* are the mental dispositions or volitional formations that create *kamma*. The word means ‘construction’ or ‘something put together’, and it is understood passively as ‘something that is put together; constructed’, and actively as ‘something that puts together; constructs’ (PED p. 664). As Hamilton points out, ‘The term *saṅkhāra* occurs in many different contexts in the Nikāyas, and has been notoriously difficult to explain and understand’ (Hamilton 1996 66). She focuses on three distinct contexts in which *saṅkhāra* occurs: first, in the *tilakkhaṇa* formula, it refers to anything conditioned, dependent or formed, in short any *samsāric* phenomena (Hamilton 1996 67). Second, in the *paṭiccasamuppāda* formula, it means formative activities, which she explains as an ‘active and formative principle which, conditioned by ignorance, in turn conditions (or forms) the arising of a particular individual’ (Hamilton 1996 70). 3. Third, *saṅkhāra* is a *khanda*, and Hamilton understands it as the ‘*khanda* of will’, ‘the “volitional constituent” of the human being’ (Hamilton 1996 70).

In the Mahāvedalla Sutta (M.i.292), the following is said about how the various elements of the psyche are related to each other:²⁸

²⁷ ‘*Yaṃ kiñci dukkhaṃ sambhoti, sabbaṃ viññāṇapaccayā; viññāṇassa nirodhena, natthi dukkhassa sambhavo. Etamādīnavaṃ ñatvā, dukkhaṃ viññāṇapaccayā; viññāṇūpasamā bhikkhu, nicchāto parinibbutoti.*’
Translation by Johansson, Rune E. A. (1973): *Pali Buddhist Texts Explained to the Beginner*. Lund: Studentlitteratur. p. 50.

²⁸ ‘*Yā cāvuso, vedanā yā ca saññā yañca viññāṇaṃ – ime dhammā saṃsaṅgā udāhu visamsaṅgā? Labbhā ca panimesaṃ dhammānaṃ vinibbhujitvā vinibbhujitvā nānākaraṇaṃ paññāpetu*’nti? ‘*Yā cāvuso, vedanā yā ca saññā yañca viññāṇaṃ – ime dhammā saṃsaṅgā, no visamsaṅgā. Na ca labbhā imesaṃ dhammānaṃ vinibbhujitvā vinibbhujitvā nānākaraṇaṃ paññāpetuṃ. Yaṃ hāvuso [yañcāvuso (syā. kaṃ. ka.)], vedeti taṃ sañjānāti, yaṃ sañjānāti taṃ vijānāti. Tasmā ime dhammā saṃsaṅgā no visamsaṅgā. Na ca labbhā imesaṃ dhammānaṃ vinibbhujitvā vinibbhujitvā nānākaraṇaṃ paññāpetu*’nti.’

Feeling, perception, and consciousness are conjoined, friend, not disjoined. It is not possible, having separated them one from another, to delineate the difference among them. For what one feels, that one perceives. What one perceives, that one cognizes. Therefore these qualities are conjoined, not disjoined, and it is not possible, having separated them one from another, to delineate the difference among them.²⁹

The relationship between *citta* and *viññāṇa* will be clearer towards the end of part 3, but so far it seems reasonable to translate *citta* as mind and *viññāṇa* as consciousness. Harvey observes that ‘*Viññāṇa*...is a much more closely defined and exactly used term [than *citta*]’ (Harvey 1995 198).

1.6 The *āsavas* or influences

The problem with the mind is that it is contaminated or corrupted in the normal state of the *puṭhujjana* or ordinary person. This corruption is the very reason human existence is in a state of *dukkha*, and the *raison d’être* of early Buddhism is to provide a way out of this unsatisfactory human condition. This corruption is due to the so-called *āsavas*, variously translated as defilements, fermentations, cankers, influxes, taints, obsessions, inflations or influences. The etymological meaning of the word is ‘influx’ or ‘influence’ (*ā* ‘in’ + *√sru* ‘to flow’, something that ‘flows in’), and the meaning is ‘a negative influence’ or ‘an impurity, defilement.’³⁰ A related category consists of the so-called *kilesas* (or *klesas*) or defilements,³¹ which somehow serve the same purpose as the *āsavas*, but feature less prominently in the explanations for the corrupted state of the *citta* in the Nikāyas, and with reasonable certainty they are a later invention than the *āsavas* (they are sometimes mixed together or used interchangeably, see sections 3.4 and 3.7). In A.i.8-11, it is stated: ‘Monks, this *citta* is brightly shining [*pabhassaram*], but it is defiled [*upakkiliṭṭham*] by defilements which arrive

²⁹ ‘Mahavedalla Sutta: The Greater Set of Questions-and-Answers’ (MN 43), translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu. *Access to Insight (Legacy Edition)*, 30 November 2013, available at www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.043.than.html, accessed 02.11.16.

³⁰ Regarding the difficulty of translating the word, see Johansson 1979 181.

³¹ There are different numbers of *kilesas* found in the texts, see: PED pp. 216-17. They feature prominently in the Mahāyāna, while the *āsavas* are mostly forgotten in later Buddhist sectarian developments (Johansson 1979 177).

[*āgantukehi upakkilesehi*]. Monks, this citta is brightly shining, but it is freed [*vipamuttam*] from defilements which arrive' (quoted in: Harvey 1995 167).³²

The *citta* of the ordinary man is referred to as *sāsava* or 'with *āsavas*', while the *citta* of the Arhat - the man who has reached *nibbāna* - is referred to as *anāsava* or 'without *āsavas*'.

The primary *āsava* seems to be *avijjā* (ignorance), which is also the first *nidāna*. How ignorance is the cause of *samsāra* is expressed succinctly in the Sutta Nipāta, verses 729-30:³³

729. Those who travel the journeying-on of (repeated) births and deaths again and again, to existence in this form or existence in that form, this is transition through ignorance alone. 730. For this ignorance is a great delusion whereby this journeying-on goes on for a long time. But whatever beings possess knowledge, they do not come to renewed existence.³⁴

Giving nescience credit for creating the whole universe seems to be a central tenet of Indian philosophy, also found in Hindu traditions such as Advaita Vedānta. The universe is *bhrama* (hallucination), *mithyā* (error), *marīci* (mirage). It is *māyā* (illusion), *vikalpa* (mental fabrication), *kalpanā* (imagination). The primacy of *avijjā* is supported by A.iii.414.³⁵ It states that 'cessation of ignorance is the cessation of *āsavā*' (quoted in: Johansson 1979 177). In the same passage the reason is given for the circumstances of rebirth as corresponding to the ignorance in this life: if you are very ignorant, you will be reborn in the animal kingdom, but if your ignorance is much less you may be reborn in heaven among the gods (*devaloka*).

³² '*Pabhassaramidaṃ bhikkhave cittaṃ tañca kho āgantukehi upakkilesehi upakkiliṭṭhaṃ. Taṃ assutavā puthujjano yathābhūtaṃ nappanājāti. Tasmā assutavato puthujjanassa cittabhāvanā natthīti vadāmīti. Pabhassaramidaṃ bhikkhave cittaṃ tañca kho āgantukehi upakkilesehi vippamuttaṃ. Taṃ sutavā ariyasāvako yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti. Tasmā sutavato ariyasāvakaṃ cittaṃ bhāvanā atthīti vadāmīti.*'

³³ '**729.** *Jātimaraṇasamsāraṃ ye vajanti punappunaṃ itthabhāvaññathābhāvaṃ, avijjāy'*; *eva sā gati. 730.* *Avijjā h'; ayaṃ mahāmoho, yen' idaṃ samsītaṃ ciraṃ, vijjāgatā ca ye sattā, nāgacchanti punabbhavan' ti.*'

³⁴ Translated by Bhikkhu Sujato. This translation was edited by Bhikkhu Sujato as part of the full translation of the Sutta Nipāta with commentary prepared from a draft handwritten and typed manuscript of Laurence Khantipalo Mills in 2015. The project was managed by Laurence's students, Michael Wells and Gary Dellora, and initial digitising of the text was by Sean Read. The full text is available at <https://suttacentral.net/en/snp3.12>, accessed 02.11.16.

³⁵ '*Katamo ca, bhikkhave, āsavānaṃ nidānasambhavo? Avijjā, bhikkhave, āsavānaṃ nidānasambhavo. Katamā ca, bhikkhave, āsavānaṃ vemattatā? Atthi, bhikkhave, āsavā nirayagamanīyā, atthi āsavā tiracchā-na-yoni-gamanīyā, atthi āsavā petti-visa-ya-gamanīyā, atthi āsavā -manus-sa-loka-gamanīyā, atthi āsavā deva-loka-gamanīyā. Ayaṃ vuccati, bhikkhave, āsavānaṃ vemattatā. Katamo ca, bhikkhave, āsavānaṃ vipāko? Yaṃ kho, bhikkhave, avijjāgato tajaṃ tajaṃ attabhāvaṃ abhiniḅbatteti puññabhāgiyaṃ vā apuññabhāgiyaṃ vā, ayaṃ vuccati, bhikkhave, āsavānaṃ vipāko. Katamo ca, bhikkhave, āsavānirodho? Avijjānirodho, bhikkhave, āsavānirodho. Ayameva ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo āsavānirodhagāminī paṭipadā...*'

The other *āsavas* are *kāma* (desire), *bhava* (becoming, i.e. desire for renewed existence)³⁶ and *diṭṭhi* (view, i.e. erroneous view or opinion). *Diṭṭhi* is not always included amongst the *āsavas*, and is thus considered a somewhat later addition (Vetter 1988 xxiv). The *āsavas* are literally understood as something that - given the right conditions - can ‘flow into’ someone, as this quote from Saṃyutta Nikāya illustrates, when the Buddha says: ‘By the destruction of all collecting I live so mindful that the *āsavā* no longer flow into me (...*āsavā nānusavanti*...)’ (S.ii.54. Quoted in: Johansson 1979 177-78). The word also has a synonym in *ogha*, a word meaning ‘flood’ and used in the same way as *āsava* (Johansson 1979 178). This creates an impression that being affected by the *āsavas* is comparable to being ‘flooded’ or ‘inundated’, i.e. being completely submerged.

The cause of the *āsavas* is given as ‘improper attention’ (*ayoniso...manasikaroto*) in the Sabbāsavasutta (M.i.6-12. Quoted in: Johansson 1979 178). We have to bear in mind, however, that ignorance is a cause in itself, even the primary cause in the twelvefold causal chain, so this explanation must be understood within the right context. The *āsavas* are lodged so deeply in the *citta* that the *citta* cannot be controlled, held back, removed and so forth simply by applying right attention; it is only after the very last of the four formless stages of meditation, the *asaññānāsaññāyatana* or ‘neither-perception-nor-non-perception’ - which comes after the *ākīñcaññāyatana* or ‘consciousness of nothingness’ has ceased (see Johansson 1965 201) - that the *āsavas* are destroyed.³⁷ Their destruction takes place in a final stage after the *asaññānāsaññāyatana* which is called *saññāvedayitanirodha* or ‘the cessation of perception and feeling’.³⁸ They may, however, be attenuated or weakened by the application of right attention, but that is another question. Destruction of the *āsavas* is a common or core description of *nibbāna*. It is the third and final *vijjā* or ‘vision’ which occurs in the third watch of the night of the Buddha’s night of enlightenment that he deals with the *āsavas* and becomes liberated from them (Wayman 1997 15). It is the final stage of the path.

In its widest sense, an *āsava* is anything that defiles the mind, any impurity or speck of darkness in the luminous nature of the pure or emptied mind (compare *pabhassara citta* or ‘the luminous mind’, the mind being ‘*nibbāna*-ised’ (*nibbuto*) or completely transformed).

³⁶ There is an account in A.iii.352 (Iṇa Sutta) where *bhava* is the only *āsava* mentioned in the process of liberation of the mind: ‘*Tassa sammā vimuttassa, nāṇaṅce hoti tādino; ‘Akuppā me vimuttī’ti, bhavasamyojanakkhaye.*’ (‘For the one thus rightly liberated, there is - in the cessation of the bonds of becoming (*bhava*) - the knowledge: ‘Unshakeable is my liberation’).

³⁷ In the accounts without the *āyatana*s, the *āsavas* disappear after the fourth *jhāna*.

³⁸ This stage is the subject of an extensive study by Griffiths, Paul J. (1991): *On Being Mindless. Buddhist Meditation and the Mind-Body Problem*. LaSalle, IL: Open Court.

The effects of being under the influence of the *āsavas* are described thus in the Mahāsaccaka Sutta (M.i.237):³⁹

Him I call deluded, Aggivessana, who has not abandoned the taints that defile, bring renewal of being, give trouble, ripen in suffering, and lead to future birth, ageing, and death; for it is with the non-abandoning of the taints that one is deluded. Him I call undeluded who has abandoned the taints that defile, bring renewal of being, give trouble, ripen in suffering, and lead to future birth, ageing, and death; for it is with the abandoning of the taints that one is undeluded. The Tathāgata, Aggivessana, has abandoned the taints that defile, bring renewal of being, give trouble, ripen in suffering, and lead to future birth, ageing, and death; he has cut them off at the root, made them like a palm stump, done away with them so that they are no longer subject to future arising. Just as a palm tree whose crown is cut off is incapable of further growth, so too, the Tathāgata has abandoned the taints that defile...done away with them so that they are no longer subject to future arising.⁴⁰

The Sabbāsava Sutta otherwise has little else to offer about the *āsavas* except for reiterating that ‘Monks, the ending of the fermentations is for one who knows and sees...’⁴¹ The light of knowledge dispels the *āsavas*, which are creations of the darkness of ignorance. In the Sutta Nipāta, deliverance from the *āsavas* is described as caused by surrendering the greed for *nāma-rūpa* or physical and mental objects (SNp 1100). The Sutta Nipāta also provides a more dynamic view of the *āsavas* in saying that the sage (*muni*) should give up old *āsavas* and not form new ones (SNp 913). In Sutta Nipāta 374, the abandonment of the *āsavas* is cited as the destruction of acquisitions (...*pahānam āsavānaṃ sabbūpadhīnam*

³⁹ ‘*Yassa kassaci, aggivessana, ye āsavā saṅkilesikā ponobbhavikā sadarā dukkhavipākā āyatim jātijarāmaṇiyā appahīnā, tamahaṃ ‘sammūlho’ ti vadāmi. Āsavānañhi, aggivessana, appahānā sammūlho hoti. Yassa kassaci, aggivessana, ye āsavā saṅkilesikā ponobbhavikā sadarā dukkhavipākā āyatim jātijarāmaṇiyā pahīnā, tamahaṃ ‘asammūlho’ ti vadāmi. Āsavānañhi, aggivessana, pahānā asammūlho hoti. Tathāgatassa kho, aggivessana, ye āsavā saṅkilesikā ponobbhavikā sadarā dukkhavipākā āyatim jātijarāmaṇiyā pahīnā ucchinnamūlā tālāvattthukatā anabhāvaṅkatā āyatim anuppādadhammā. Seyyathāpi, aggivessana, tālo matthakacchinno abhabbo puna virūlhiyā; evameva kho, aggivessana, tathāgatassa ye āsavā saṅkilesikā ponobbhavikā sadarā dukkhavipākā āyatim jātijarāmaṇiyā pahīnā ucchinnamūlā tālāvattthukatā anabhāvaṅkatā āyatim anuppādadhammā’ ti.’*

⁴⁰ ‘Maha-Saccaka Sutta: The Longer Discourse to Saccaka’ (M.i.237), translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu. *Access to Insight (Legacy Edition)*, 30 November 2013, available at www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.036.than.html, accessed 17.11.16.

⁴¹ Translation by Bhikkhu Bodhi: <https://suttacentral.net/en/mn2>, accessed 17.11.16.

parikkhayā...). We can see here that, at least in the Sutta Nipāta, there are various explanations for the cause of the abandonment of the *āsavas*.

According to Lambert Schmithausen, the Dhammacakkappavattanasutta is a heterogeneous text, consisting of at least three different parts woven together into one text in one or more later redactions; he claims that the description of the *āsavas* belongs to the earliest layer (Schmithausen 1981 205-6).⁴² If this premise is correct, we may at least tentatively conclude that the *āsavas* were a central part of the declaration of enlightenment where Gotama gives his own, first-person account of the moment of enlightenment and his subsequent realisation. We will return to this subject matter in part 3.

The Itivuttaka 56 shows how the *āsavas* are connected - and even identified - with *dukkha*.⁴³

A disciple of the Buddha,
Concentrated, clearly comprehending
And mindful, knows the taints
And the origin of taints,
Where they cease and the path
That leads to their full destruction.
With the destruction of the taints a bhikkhu,
Without longing, has attained Nibbāna.⁴⁴

1.7 *Attā* or the self

In his study ‘Citta, Mano, Vinnana - A Psychosemantic Investigation’, Rune Johansson asks: ‘Is the *citta* self?’⁴⁵ His conclusion after carefully analysing *citta* in the Nikāyas is that it ‘is not the self but it often stands for the person and the identification is then not far away’ (Johansson 1965 169). He points out that, in the Nikāyas, ‘Only once is it explicitly denied that *citta* is the self (S.ii.94), while it is very often denied that *viññāṇa* and the other *khandha*

⁴² Schmithausen, Lambert (1981): ‘On some Aspects of Descriptions or Theories of “Liberating Insight” and “Enlightenment” in Early Buddhism’. In: *Studien zum Jainismus und Buddhismus (Gedenkschrift für Ludwig Alsdorf)*, hrsg. von Klaus Bruhn und Albrecht Wezler: Wiesbaden, pp. 199-250.

⁴³ ‘*Samāhito sampajāno, sato buddhassa sāvako; Āsave ca pajānāti, āsavānañca sambhavaṃ. Yattha cetā nirujjhanti, maggañca khayagāmināṃ; Āsavānaṃ khayā bhikkhu, nicchāto parinibbuto ’ti.*’

⁴⁴ Translated from the Pali by John D. Ireland. Digital Transcription Source: BPS Transcription Project. Extracted from *The Udāna & the Itivuttaka*, translated and introduced by John D. Ireland (1997), available at <https://suttacentral.net/pi/iti56>, accessed 02.11.16.

⁴⁵ Johansson, Rune E. A. (1965): ‘Citta, Mano, Vinnana - A Psychosemantic Investigation’. In: *University of Ceylon Review*. volume 23, nos 1 & 2, April-October 1965 pp. 165-215.

are the self” (Johansson 1965 1969). According to Johansson, the *citta* seems to be something the person has. In other words, there is a clear distinction between the self or person and the *citta*. Harvey, on the other hand, claims to have found that ‘...in the “early Suttas”, no metaphysical Self is accepted, but that *citta* (mind/heart) is often seen as “self” in an empirical sense...’ (Harvey 1995 111). He points out that all references in the Nikāyas to taming, conquering and cultivating oneself and so on refer to the *citta*, as ‘...the “self” which needs such treatment is the *citta*’ (Harvey 1996 23). This seems to make perfectly good sense.

1.8 *Mano*

In his study of *citta*, *viññāṇa* and *mano*, Johansson (1965) unfortunately does not directly compare *mano* to *citta*, but he says that it ‘...seems to be much easier to grasp than the other concepts discussed in this paper’ (Johansson 1965 183). *Mano* is an inner sense, a coordinating centre for the senses. It shares many traits with *citta*, as Johansson shows. But it does not attain liberation or survive death, like the *citta* does (Johansson 1965 189).

There is an interesting use of the word *mano* in SNp. 1144, where a disciple by the name of Pingiya describes that his body is too old and feeble to follow Gotama around, then saying: ‘I go constantly on a mental journey, for my mind, brahman, is joined to him’ (*saṃkappayattāya vajāmi niccaṃ, mano hi me brāhmaṇa tena yutto*). This is reminiscent of the devotionalism of the Bhagavad Gītā, where the *bhaktas* or devotees of Kṛṣṇa are described as being joined to their Lord in devotion (e.g. Bhagavad Gītā 18.65-66). There is an obvious quality of *bhakti* in the description of Pingiya’s relationship to Gotama (SNp 1138-1142).

1.9 *Paññā*

Central to this thesis about the content of ‘mind liberation’ is a reappraisal of what I consider to be the primary meaning of *paññā* (generally translated as wisdom) in the Nikāyas, and a major virtue in both early and later (e.g. Mahāyāna) Buddhism.⁴⁶ I see *paññā* in a historical perspective as a concept which has undergone considerable evolution even during the time

⁴⁶ *Paññā* is a feminine noun constructed from the prefix *pa* (Skt: *pra*) + the verbal root $\sqrt{\text{ñā}}$ (Skt: *jñā*), which means “to know”. The prefix gives it a more dynamic or active nuance.

until the canon was closed; from being the problem or at least a part thereof, to becoming the *solution* to the problem. It became the medium or instrument of liberation, I will argue.

There is no need to reiterate the glory of *paññā* in Buddhism; suffice it to say that the realisation of Buddhist truths depends on *paññā* (Johansson 1969 197), which later is even elevated to a goddess (and given the epithet *Sarvabuddhamātā* or ‘Mother of all Buddhas’)⁴⁷ in the Prajñāpāramitā literature, the beginnings of Mahāyāna. This reappraisal in no way represents a diminishment of the greatness and importance of the role of *paññā* in the soteriological system of Buddhism, but is rather an attempt to understand the whole gamut of the early Buddhism’s contribution to the soteriological role of the intellect in Indian philosophy.

My thesis is that *paññā* at the time of, or for, the Buddha initially did not exclusively mean ‘wisdom’, defined as a supreme knowledge⁴⁸ which could bring about ‘the realisation of Buddhist truths’ about reality ‘as it is’ (*yathābhūta-dassana*). It also meant ‘understanding’ in a more neutral and ordinary sense, specifically ‘intellectual understanding’, and may conveniently be translated as ‘intellect’ (or ‘intelligence’, which I understand as the function or quality of the intellect).⁴⁹ The Buddha’s path may be understood as a way to cultivate or purify this intellect along with its affective counterpart, the *citta*, as we shall see in part 2. *Paññā* is that finest or subtlest part of the mind or human consciousness that can be purified or cultivated to an extent to which it becomes the instrument of direct knowledge or the realisation of reality, a transparent clarity where the *amatā dhātu* or immortal element shines forth and is realised by the Buddhist practitioner.

I have chosen to introduce *paññā* in this section about the *citta* because they are closely connected, as will become clearer in the course of this thesis. They are frequently grouped together (S 1.13, D 3.269, Th 1.25 sq), as PED observes (p. 267), making them a pair, a fact that is an important argument in this thesis. *Citta* is *dukkha*, but the purified or cultivated *paññā* is that faculty in the *viññāṇa* which can bring an end to the *dukkha*⁵⁰ by

⁴⁷ Conze, Edward (1973): *The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines & Its Verse Summary*. New Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications (First Indian Edition 1994).

⁴⁸ There seems to be a word with this exclusive meaning, namely *aññā* (e.g. SNp 1107 quoted in section 2.7); otherwise, the compound *ñāṇa-dassana* (e.g. Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta) is used exclusively with the same meaning.

⁴⁹ There is a parallel in the Vedānta, where the intellect which comprehends *vyavahārika satya* or conventional knowledge such as grammar and so forth is called *aparā buddhi* or inferior intellect, while the intellect capable of realising the higher transcendental truth referred to as *pāramārthika* (the highest meaning) is referred to as *parā buddhi* or superior intellect.

⁵⁰ In the Mahāvedalla Sutta (M.i.292), one with *paññā* is defined as one who understands the four noble truths about *dukkha*: ‘*Paññāvā paññāvā’ti, āvuso, vuccati. Kittāvatā nu kho, āvuso, paññāvāti vuccatī’ti?*’

bringing the *citta* itself to cessation or *nirodha*.⁵¹ My impression is that this is the chief reason *paññā* has risen to such notoriety or fame in later stages of Nikāya Buddhism, and especially in Mahāyāna: *paññā* is (or rather, became) the bringer of *nibbāna*. *Paññā* is the *magga*, the path to *nibbāna* or liberation, and one could say that *paññā* is *nibbāna* as well, as *the awareness of liberation* (see section 3.7).

Paññā, I surmise, was seen by the early Buddhist texts as being used in contemporary society to propagate various ‘sectarian’ ideas contemporary in *samaṇa* or ascetics’ circles, referred to as *diṭṭhis* or ‘[faulty] views’ by the Buddha. By reading the Sutta Nipāta (878-914) we can gain an idea about the kind of opposition the Buddha was faced with by these thinkers from competing ideologies, rival schools or conservative brahmins, in a no doubt fertile philosophical climate (see SNp 381-82 for a reference to argumentative sectarians or *titthiyā vādasīlā* such as Jains and Ājīvikas). In SNp 896, *nibbāna* (= *khema* ‘security’) is even called *avivādashūmi* or ‘the state with no dispute’. The reaction of the Buddha was to drop philosophical speculation (*takka*) or disputation (*vivāda*) completely (his famous silence)⁵² and emphasise action, e.g. he advised people to follow the *dhamma* instead of arguing. The

‘Pajānāti pajānāti’ ti kho, āvuso, tasmā paññavāti vuccati. ‘Kiñca pajānāti? ‘Idaṃ dukkha’nti pajānāti, ‘ayaṃ dukkhasamudayo’ ti pajānāti, ‘ayaṃ dukkhanirodho’ ti pajānāti, ‘ayaṃ dukkhanirodhagāminī paṭipadā’ ti pajānāti. ‘Pajānāti pajānāti’ ti kho, āvuso, tasmā paññavāti vuccati’ ti.’

One with ‘bad *paññā*’ (*duppañño*) is described as one who doesn’t understand the four noble truths about suffering: *‘Kiñca nappajānāti? ‘Idaṃ dukkha’nti nappajānāti, ‘ayaṃ dukkhasamudayo’ ti nappajānāti, ‘ayaṃ dukkhanirodho’ ti nappajānāti, ‘ayaṃ dukkhanirodhagāminī paṭipadā’ ti nappajānāti. ‘Nappajānāti nappajānāti’ ti kho, āvuso, tasmā duppaññoti vuccati’ ti.* This explanation, given as a questions-and-answers session between Mahākotṭhika and Sāriputta, shows that the meaning given to *paññā* is that of purely intellectual knowledge, what we may call ‘discernment’ or ‘ratiocination’. This indicates that *paññā* may be called ‘intellect’, and that it can have right or wrong knowledge, which is the nature of intellectual knowledge.

⁵¹ I argue that the final meditational stage (*saññāvedayitanirodha* or the cessation of perception and feeling) is the purification of feeling (*citta*) and thought (*paññā*) to the extent that they cease to operate, and reveal the *amata* (the immortal). ‘Cease to operate’ means that the clinging (*upādāna*) to any experience - internal or external - has ended. That is the only way to explain how the enlightened being can continue to live after reaching enlightenment. See section 3.5 for a further discussion.

⁵² An example of Gotama’s refusal to answer questions like whether the universe is finite or infinite, the soul and body are one or different, or whether a *tathagata* exists or does not exist after death, is found in the Potthapada Sutta, where Potthapada asks Gotama:

‘But why hasn’t the Blessed One expounded these things?’

‘Because they are not conducive to the goal, are not conducive to the Dhamma, are not basic to the holy life. They don’t lead to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to calm, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to Unbinding. That’s why I haven’t expounded them.’

‘And what *has* the Blessed One expounded?’

‘I have expounded that, “This is stress”... “This is the origination of stress”... “This is the cessation of stress”... “This is the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress.”’

‘And why has the Blessed One expounded these things?’

‘Because they are conducive to the goal, conducive to the Dhamma, and basic to the holy life. They lead to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to calm, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to Unbinding. That’s why I have expounded them.’ ‘Potthapada Sutta: About Potthapada’ (DN 9), translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu. *Access to Insight (Legacy Edition)*, 30 November 2013, available at www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/dn/dn.09.0.than.html, accessed 02.11.16.

brahmin,⁵³ according to SNp 911, has ‘not even any association to knowledge’ (*na pi ñāṇabandhu*). In SNp 528 the wanderer Sabhiya asks Gotama: ‘When he has obtained what, do they call him “knowledgeable?”’ (*Kimṣattinam āhu vedagaṃ, iti Sabhiyo anuviditaṃ kena...*). Gotama gives the answer in 529: ‘Having considered all knowledges, Sabhiya,’ said the Blessed One, ‘those belonging to ascetics and those of brahmans, with his passion gone in respect of all sensations, having gone beyond all knowledge, he is “knowledgeable”’ (*Vedāni viceyya kevalāni Sabhiyā ti Bhagavā samaṇānaṃ yāni p’; atthi brāhmaṇānaṃ sabbavedanāsu vītarāgo sabbaṃ vedam aticca vedagū so*).⁵⁴ All knowledge belonging to man (*puṭhujjana*) is faulty and must be discarded, as well as knowledge belonging to *samanas* and *brahmanas* (SNp 1077-83). Only the transformed *paññā* can realise truth, and only meditation and mindfulness can transform *paññā* (see part 2). However much one uses an undeveloped or underdeveloped *paññā*, no real knowledge will emerge; rather, it will perpetuate ignorance. The *paññā* must be cultivated by mindfulness or meditation, as this passage from D.ii.123 emphasises: ‘Great becomes the fruit, great the advantage of *paññā* when it is supported by *samādhi*’ (*samādhiparibhāvitā paññā mahapphalā hoti mahānisamsā*).⁵⁵ The *āsavas* must be attenuated until extinction for *paññā* to have any real effect in bringing about the realisation of *nibbāna*. This seems to be the Buddha’s stance (e.g. A.v.31-32, quoted in section 3.7). The Buddha distinguishes clearly between one who possesses *paññāṇa* (*paññāṇavā*), which is synonymous with *paññā* judging from the context, and one who is still acquiring *paññā* (*paññakappī*) (SNp 1088-91).⁵⁶ There are also many references in the Nikāyas to the great benefits of developing *paññā*, the factors contributing to the development of *paññā*, and so on (Johansson 1969 212-13).

There is a dialogue or debate - within both Buddhism itself and in modern Buddhist scholarship - about whether *paññā* can lead to enlightenment by itself, or if it is in need of

⁵³ Gotama uses the word brahmin/brahmana in at least two senses: as an objective reference to a member of the upper, priestly class, and often in the sense of what a brahmin *ought to be*, if he could only leave his cultural conditioning and embrace the teachings of early Buddhism.

⁵⁴ Translated by Bhikkhu Sujato. This translation was edited by Bhikkhu Sujato as part of the full translation of the Sutta Nipāta with commentary prepared from a draft handwritten and typed manuscript of Laurence Khantipalo Mills in 2015. The project was managed by Laurence’s students Michael Wells and Gary Dellora, and initial digitising of the text was by Sean Read. Full text is available at <https://suttacentral.net/downloads> <https://suttacentral.net/en/snp3.6>, accessed 02.11.16.

⁵⁵ Quoted in: Johansson 1979 213.

⁵⁶ ‘*Yasmiṃ kāmā na vasanti, (iccāyasmā todeyyo): Taṇhā yassa na vijjati; kathaṃkathā ca yo tiṇṇo, vimokkho tassa kīdiso*’. ‘*Yasmiṃ kāmā na vasanti, (todeyyāti bhagavā): Taṇhā yassa na vijjati; kathaṃkathā ca yo tiṇṇo, vimokkho tassa nāparo*’. ‘*Nirāsaso so uda āsasāno, paññāṇavā so uda paññakappī; muniṃ ahaṃ sakka yathā vijaññaṃ, taṃ me viyācikkha samantacakkhu*’. ‘*Nirāsaso so na ca āsasāno, paññāṇavā so na ca paññakappī; evampi todeyya muniṃ vijāna, akiñcanaṃ kāmabhava asattan’ti*’.

samādhi.⁵⁷ The question is simply this: is it possible to achieve enlightenment without meditation? In this thesis I will take a closer look at this debate to see what kind of bearing it may have on understanding the concept of *cetovimutti*. Could the answer simply be that *paññā* is the effect of *samādhi*, that the precious liberating insight into the true nature of things arises in the stillness and clarity of meditation? Where else does insight come from? Does it come from hearing or thinking? Is it enough to be *told* about the four truths for *paññā* to arise and *nibbāna* to take place? I will try to find the answer to this in the Nikāyas as I take a closer look at the subjects of meditation in part 2 and *cetovimutti* (mind liberation) in part 3.

The entry on *paññā* in PED does not indicate that it may have a negative aspect, but portrays it as intelligence, wisdom, insight and so on.⁵⁸ Rune Johansson, on the other hand, gives us a much more nuanced image in his study of early Buddhist psychology (Johansson 1969). He observes that ‘Basically, *paññā* seems to be a word for an intellectual function’ (Johansson 1969 197). It is described as ‘an instrument used for attaining Buddhist ends’ (Johansson 1969 197). He observes further: ‘Basically, *paññā* seems to be a pure theoretical function of understanding, without a motivational power of its own’. He then relates a story from Majjhima Nikāya (1.92),⁵⁹ in which the Buddha describes how *paññā* - even the right kind of *paññā* (*sammappaññā*) - about how sense pleasures are not ultimately satisfying *did not make him free from them*. *Paññā* is here portrayed as nothing more than *theoretical insight* and is not transformational in the sense of causing liberation.⁶⁰ It does not lead to *nibbāna*, at least not by itself. Johansson also quotes M.i.479, where *paññā* clearly denotes

⁵⁷ A thorough treatment of this problem is found in: Vetter, Tilmann (1988): *The Ideas and Meditative Practices of Early Buddhism*, Leiden: EJ Brill. See also: Gombrich 1996 96-134.

⁵⁸ Another sober account is found in Williams, Paul (1990): *Mahayana Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations*. London & New York: Routledge, p. 40.

⁵⁹ ‘*Appassādā kāmā bahudukkhā bahupāyāsā, ādīnava ettha bhīyyo ’ti—iti cepi, mahānāma, ariyasāvakassa yathābhūtaṃ sammappaññāya sudiṭṭhaṃ hoti, so ca aññatreva kāmehi aññatra akusalehi dhammehi pītisukhaṃ nādhigacchati, aññaṃ vā tato santataraṃ; atha kho so neva tāva anāvaṭṭī kāmesu hoti. Yato ca kho, mahānāma, ariyasāvakassa ’appassādā kāmā bahudukkhā bahupāyāsā, ādīnava ettha bhīyyo ’ti—evametam yathābhūtaṃ sammappaññāya sudiṭṭhaṃ hoti, so ca aññatreva kāmehi aññatra akusalehi dhammehi pītisukhaṃ adhigacchati aññaṃ vā tato santataraṃ; atha kho so anāvaṭṭī kāmesu hoti.*

Mayhampi kho, mahānāma, pubbeva sambodhā, ana-bhisam-buddhassa bodhi-sattas-seva sato, ’appassādā kāmā bahudukkhā bahupāyāsā, ādīnava ettha bhīyyo ’ti—evametam yathābhūtaṃ sammappaññāya sudiṭṭhaṃ hoti, so ca aññatreva kāmehi aññatra akusalehi dhammehi pītisukhaṃ nājjhagamaṃ, aññaṃ vā tato santataraṃ; atha khvāhaṃ neva tāva anāvaṭṭī kāmesu paccaññāsim. Yato ca kho me, mahānāma, ’appassādā kāmā bahudukkhā bahupāyāsā, ādīnava ettha bhīyyo ’ti—evametam yathābhūtaṃ sammappaññāya sudiṭṭhaṃ ahoṣi, so ca aññatreva kāmehi aññatra akusalehi dhammehi pītisukhaṃ ajjhagamaṃ, aññaṃ vā tato santataraṃ; athāhaṃ anāvaṭṭī kāmesu paccaññāsim.’

⁶⁰ Gombrich (1996 128-29) gives three examples of *paññā* as dry intellection. Gombrich writes that there is evidence in the canonical texts that it is possible to interpret ‘... *paññā* in the narrow sense of intellection without a deeper, experiential realisation...’

‘cleverness in discussion’, understood as being ‘skilled in hair-splitting’ and using *paññā* to ‘break the views’ of other people (Johansson 1969 197).

These quotes serve as arguments for my thesis regarding the original meaning of the phrase *cetovimutti paññāvimutti* (see section 3.4) as being ‘liberation from emotion, liberation from cognition’ (or ‘liberation of the mind, liberation of the intellect’) and not ‘liberation of the mind, liberation through wisdom’, as is commonly contended, both by Western scholarship and the tradition itself.⁶¹ Another argument involves the widespread discussion of the need for cultivating or improving the *paññā*, of how people can have ‘bad’ *paññā* (*duppañño*) (Johansson 1969 199). All this seems to indicate that *paññā* is basically just ‘understanding’ or ‘intellect’, and that a great deal of work is needed to become the Supreme Insight that it is hailed as.⁶² A directly comparable word in English is ‘intelligence’, whose primary meaning is positive (e.g. ‘he is intelligent’), but it is also possible to have low intelligence. A system for measuring one’s IQ (intelligence quotient) has even been invented. Having a low IQ is often regarded as being stupid, and *paññā* is used in much the same way. In part 2, I will investigate how the *magga* or path is about transforming the *citta* and *paññā*, which - as will be apparent - together constitute the human psyche (also referred to as the human personality) into *nibbanā*. *Paññā* can also be used to pertain to negative qualities and is thus not linked only to positive things. In the Sutta Nipāta 75 we may read that, nowadays, it is very hard to find friends without a motive, and that ‘Wise as to their own advantage, men are impure’ (...*āttaṭṭhapaññā asucī manussā*...).⁶³ To use the word ‘wise’ in this context shows how wrong it is to consider *paññā* to have only one meaning, i.e. wisdom. In this context, a neutral or even negative meaning is intended.

There is a word in Pali used exclusively for the highest kind of *āsava* that destroys knowledge realising *nibbāna - aññā*. Vetter translates this as ‘insight’, distinguishing it from *paññā*, which he translates as ‘discriminative insight’ (Vetter 1988 30-32), emphasising the intellectual quality of *paññā*, which fits well with my supposition that *paññā* may indeed be understood as the intellect. *Buddhi*, the most common word for intellect in Sanskrit, is widely

⁶¹ For a detailed discussion of this, see: Gombrich, Richard (1996): *How Buddhism Began: The Conditioned Genesis of the Early Teachings*. London: SOAS, pp. 96-134.

⁶² For a brief discussion of the history of its translation into European languages, see: Fa Qing 2001 7.

⁶³ Translated by: Norman, K. R. (2001): *The Group of Discourses (Sutta-Nipāta)*. Oxford: Pali Text Society, p. 9.

employed across the various schools of ‘orthodox’ Indian philosophy, but it is conspicuously lacking from the Nikāyas.⁶⁴

As an argument against the ‘intellect’ interpretation of *paññā*, I will cite Itivuttaka 41 to show that *paññā* (here translated as ‘wisdom’) can indeed be portrayed as the highest kind of knowledge identical with *aññā*.⁶⁵

See the world with its devas [divine beings], destitute of wisdom, established in name-and-form, conceiving this to be the truth. Wisdom which leads to penetration⁶⁶ is the best thing in the world; by this one completely understands the ending of both birth and being. Devas and human beings hold dear those awakened ones ever mindful, possessing joyous wisdom, bearing their final bodies.⁶⁷

We see in this passage how *paññā* is understood not only as a theoretical knowledge about ‘the ending of both birth and being’ (representative of the four noble truths), but as a knowledge that is transformational. *Paññā* is here portrayed as a truly liberating gnosis, which has brought about an end to *dukkha* or the pain of cyclical existence, here indicated by the description ‘bearing their final bodies’, which is a sign of the Arhat, the highest level of accomplishment in early Buddhism. The Arhat has reached *nibbāna* and will not be reborn.

⁶⁴ A search in the Sutta Pitaka for the word ‘*buddhi*’ gives one hit in Samyutta Nikāya and five hits in Khuddaka Nikāya. The occurrences are so few that whatever meaning the word has in these texts cannot make it the word in common usage for ‘intellect’ in early Buddhism. That makes *paññā* an even more likely candidate. *Paññā*, on the other hand, can not to be said to have a prominent position in Hinduism: There is a usage of the word in Patanjali’s Yoga Sūtras worthy of mention, namely the *ṛtaṃbharā prajñā* or “truth-bearing insight” (1.48), which occurs in a state of clarity (*vaiśāradya*) created by deep, thoughtless concentration (*nirvicāra*). The word is not used in the older upanishads, but seems to come into use in the younger upanishads such as the *Kauśītakibrāhmaṇopaniṣad*.

⁶⁵ ‘*Paññāya parihānena, passa lokam sadevakam; Nivīṭṭham nāmarūpasmim, idaṃ saccanti maññati. Paññā hi seṭṭhā lokasmim, yāyaṃ nibbedhagāminī yāya sammā pajānāti, Jātibhavaparikkhayam. Tesam devā manussā ca, sambuddhānaṃ satīmatam; Pihayanti hāsapaññānaṃ sarīrantimadhārinan’ti.*’

⁶⁶ A *varia legio* for *nibbedhagāminī* ‘leading to penetration’ i.e. ‘insight’ is *nibbānagāminī* ‘leading to *nibbāna*’. See: <https://suttacentral.net/pi/iti41>, accessed 02.11.16.

⁶⁷ Translated from the Pali by John D. Ireland. Digital Transcription Source: BPS Transcription Project. Extracted from *The Udāna & the Itivuttaka*, translated and introduced by John D. Ireland (1997). The complete book, including introduction and notes by the translator, is available from the Buddhist Publication Society, available at <https://suttacentral.net/en/iti41>, accessed 02.11.16.

Part 2: *Magga*

2.1 Introduction

One can easily become caught up in complex considerations of meditation in early Buddhism, especially if seen through the systematising lens of the commentarial tradition of the Abhidhamma. I will therefore set a different tone for my treatment of this from the outset - to Gotama, *meditation was war*. This allusion to war is not my interpretation, but the imagery through which the Buddhist tradition itself has portrayed Gotama's interactions with the character, Māra.⁶⁸ Gotama named his enemy Māra, a personification of Death, the essence of *samsāra*, the eternally changing world of cyclical existence, and sometimes also a term applied to the whole of worldly existence (PED p. 530). Māra, accompanied by his three seductive daughters (and three lesser known sons), fought desperately against Gotama, who had challenged their power over him, tearing at the shackles binding him and every living being to worldly existence. These bonds or *samyojanas* are of one's own making, created by one's own clinging or *upādāna*,⁶⁹ so the way to conquer Māra and his army (e.g. SNp 561 and 563) - an important martial reference - is to let go of everything, of all the changing forms and phenomena. As it is said in Sutta Nipāta 1103: 'Dispel all craving for grasping...above, below, across, and also in the middle. For whatever they grasp in this world, by that very thing Māra follows a creature.'⁷⁰ Another description of how one can avoid Māra is found at SNp 1118-1119:

...what view of the world is one to have for the King of Death not to see him? View the world as empty, Mogharāja, always (being) mindful. Destroying the view of one's self, one may thus cross over death. The king of death does not see one who has such a view of the world (Norman 2001 126).⁷¹

⁶⁸ For an extensive account of Gotama's dealings with Māra in both early and Mahāyāna sources, see: Alex Wayman (1997): 'Untying the Knots in Buddhism: Selected Essays.' Buddhist Tradition Series vol. 28 1997. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass. p. 3-37.

⁶⁹ When *upādāna* (grasping, attachment) to craving is given up, suffering ends. This is the third noble truth about the cessation of suffering (see Collins 2010 65).

⁷⁰ 'Ādānataṇhaṃ vinayetha sabbaṃ Bhadrāvudhā ti Bhagavā uddhaṃ adho tiriyaṅ cāpi majjhe, yaṃ yaṃ hi lokasmiṃ upādiyanti, ten'; eva Māro anveti jantum.'

⁷¹ '...kathaṃ lokaṃ avekkhantaṃ maccurājā na passati'. 'Suññato lokaṃ avekkhassu Mogharāja sadā sato attānuciṭṭhiṃ ūhacca, evaṃ maccutaro siyā: evaṃ lokaṃ avekkhantaṃ maccurājā na passatī' ti.'

To escape Māra's domain, one must abandon the idea that there is a self anywhere in the body, feelings, thoughts, volitional formations or consciousness itself. The five personality factors are without self, and seeing a self in them is the fundamental error. Meditation represents a letting-go, a struggle against what one wants to hold on to, and against what one wants to believe in. The focus of the mind must be the reality of the *amata* or 'immortal'.⁷² After the enlightenment, Gotama declares:⁷³ 'I alone am rightly enlightened; cooled (Skt. *sītibhūta*), Nirvāṇa-attained. To set in motion the Wheel of the Dhamma I go to Kasi City, beating the drum of the deathless (or, ambrosia) in a world that is blind' (Wayman 1997 18). When Gotama sat down to meditate under the Bodhi tree, he had decided that he would finish the war: it would be a final face-off, and he would not get up unless he emerged the victor. Indeed, he declares himself, according to the Ariyapariyesanā Sutta (M.i.160), a victor to the ascetic Upaka whom he met on the road while he was looking for his five former companions:⁷⁴ 'They are indeed victors (*jina*) who, like me, have attained destruction of the fluxes. Vanquished by me are the evil natures. Therefore, Upaka, I am a victor.'⁷⁵

It is easy to lose sight of this important point of meditation as a personal 'war' when delving into placid descriptions of 'discriminating insight', 'tranquillity', 'concentration' and so on in our treatment of meditation in the Nikāyas, while trying to understand the *magga* as a way of transforming the human consciousness from *citta* to *nibbāna*, the state of *cetovimutti*. *Cetovimutti* is something Gotama gained for himself after a long and arduous struggle, and this thesis is trying to describe how it was turned into a practical philosophical system (e.g. the *magga* or Path) in the canonical texts.

2.2 Meditation before Gotama

There is ample evidence from the Nikāyas that Gotama was not the inventor of meditation, but rather that he learnt it, as well as other ascetic practices, from teachers within the *Śramaṇa* (Pali: *samaṇa*) culture of ascetics and from yogis. At one point, however, he dropped the meditation techniques he had been taught, following instead a 'natural' meditation technique characterised by a feeling of bliss which he had discovered by himself

⁷² Vetter argues that Gotama's first description of his enlightenment was not about (discovering the cause and so forth of) suffering, but about realising immortality (Vetter 1988 xxviii-xxviii).

⁷³ 'Ahañhi arahā loke, ahaṃ satthā anuttaro; ekomhi sammāsambuddho, sītibhūtosmi nibbuto. Dhammacakkaṃ pavattetuṃ, gacchāmi kāsinaṃ puraṃ; andhībhūtasmiṃ lokasmiṃ, āhañchaṃ amatadundubhin'ti.'

⁷⁴ 'Mādisā ve jinā honti, ye pattā āsavakkhayaṃ; Jitā me pāpakā dhammā, tasmāhamupaka jino'ti.'

⁷⁵ Translated by: Wayman 1997 18.

as a young man (Vetter 1988 3, cf. section 3.2). A commendable introduction to this subject is a study by Johannes Bronkhorst.⁷⁶ He concludes thus:

None of the early scriptures of India, whether Buddhist or non-Buddhist, contain any indication that the Buddhist form of meditation existed prior to the beginnings of Buddhism. Some passages in the Buddhist canon, on the other hand, describe the Buddha as an innovator, also where the technique of meditation is concerned. There seems little reason to doubt that Buddhist meditation was introduced by the founder of Buddhism, i.e., by the historical Buddha (Bronkhorst 1986 117).

From whom Gotama may have learnt meditation, or the kind of meditation it was, is of little consequence for this study. The research topic of this study has been narrowed down to this question: what happened to Gotama's mind during his enlightenment? Accordingly, if part 1 about the *citta* pertains to *why* Gotama embarked on a search for liberation, this part is about *how* he did it, and part 3 is about what the *outcome* was with respect to how it changed him. As Bronkhorst observes, Gotama found his own way (Bronkhorst 1986 117). Let us take a look at the description of this way as it is presented to us in the Nikāyas.

2.3 The *magga*

A frequently cited story (Vetter 1988 3) from Gotama's childhood serves as a backdrop to his illustrious career as a meditator. The story is from the Mahāsaccaka Sutta of the Majjhima Nikāya (M.i.237):

Then, Aggivessana, I thought: I remember that once when my father, the Sakka, was working (in the fields), I was sitting in the cool shadow of a Jambu tree. Separated from objects which awaken desire, separated from harmful qualities I reached a (state of) joy and happiness (*pīti-sukha*) accompanied by contemplation and reflection which is the first dhyāna (meditation) and remained in it for some time. Could this be, perhaps, the way (*magga*) to enlightenment (*bodha*)? After this memory, Aggivessana, I had this knowledge: this is the way to enlightenment. [Then], Aggivessana, I thought: why

⁷⁶ Johannes Bronkhorst (1986): *The Two Traditions of Meditation in Ancient India*. Franz Steiner Verlag: Stuttgart. See also: Alexander Wynne (2007): *The Origin of Buddhist Meditation*. Routledge: London and New York.

should I be afraid of this happiness that has nothing to do with objects which awaken desire and nothing to do with harmful qualities. [Then], Aggivessana, I thought: I am not afraid of this happiness that has nothing to do with objects which awaken desire and nothing to do with harmful qualities.⁷⁷

As Vetter observes, this memory from Gotama's childhood has come down to us in 'the stereotype terms which became common usage in Buddhism for the first stage of dhyāna' (Vetter 1988 3). Vetter makes a pertinent point here which illustrates how the Pali texts have been edited by later redactors, who have incorporated their own explanations and literary style to achieve terminological - and thus ideological - uniformity, agreeing with their own doctrinal and aesthetic standards.

The proper name of the early Buddhist path to liberation is *ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo* or the noble eightfold path (S.ii.124). An early name for it seems to be *magga uttama* or the supreme path (e.g. SNp 1136). It is also commonly and descriptively called *dukkhanirodhagāminī paṭipadā* (the road leading to the cessation of suffering) (e.g. S.v.420). According to Vetter (Vetter 1988 6-10), the path may initially have been merely a middle path between the extremities of asceticism and sense indulgence. According to Buddhist tradition, enlightenment can be said to result from the energy Gotama gained from accepting the milk porridge from Nandabālā, the daughter of the cowherd chief, before he sat down for his 'last' meditation under an Aśvattha tree. Before he accepted that meal, he was emaciated and unable to meditate (Vetter 1988 4-5 and Wayman 1997 10). Exactly when it became a path of eight limbs with three subdivisions is not clear (Vetter 1988 11-13) but below is the way in which it is presented in the Saṃyutta Nikāya ii.124:⁷⁸

⁷⁷ 'Abhijānāmi kho panāhaṃ pitu sakkassa kammante sītāya jambucchāyāya nisinno vivicceva kāmehi vivicca akusalehi dhammehi savitakkaṃ savicāraṃ vivekajaṃ pītisukhaṃ paṭhamaṃ jhānaṃ upasampajja viharitā. Siyā nu kho eso maggo bodhāyā'ti? Tassa mayhaṃ, aggivessana, satānusāri viññāṇaṃ ahosi: 'eseva maggo bodhāyā'ti. Tassa mayhaṃ, aggivessana, etadahosi: 'kiṃ nu kho ahaṃ tassa sukhasa bhāyāmi, yaṃ taṃ sukhaṃ aññatreva kāmehi aññatra akusalehi dhammehī'ti? Tassa mayhaṃ, aggivessana, etadahosi: 'na kho ahaṃ tassa sukhasa bhāyāmi, yaṃ taṃ sukhaṃ aññatreva kāmehi aññatra akusalehi dhammehī'ti.'

⁷⁸ 'Ayameva ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo, seyyathidaṃ—sammādiṭṭhi ... pe ... sammāsamādhī. Ayaṃ kho so, bhikkhave, purāṇamaggo purāṇañjaso pubbakehi sammāsambuddhehi anuyāto, tamanugacchiṃ; tamanugacchanto jarāmaṇaṃ abhhaññāsīṃ; jarāmaṇasaṃmudayaṃ abhhaññāsīṃ; jarāmaṇanirodhaṃ abhhaññāsīṃ; jarāmaṇanirodhagāminiṃ paṭipadaṃ abhhaññāsīṃ. Tamanugacchiṃ; tamanugacchanto jātiṃ abhhaññāsīṃ ... pe ... bhavaṃ abhhaññāsīṃ ... upādānaṃ abhhaññāsīṃ ... taṇhaṃ abhhaññāsīṃ ... vedanaṃ abhhaññāsīṃ ... phassaṃ abhhaññāsīṃ ... saḷāyatanaṃ abhhaññāsīṃ ... nāmarūpaṃ abhhaññāsīṃ ... viññāṇaṃ abhhaññāsīṃ. Tamanugacchiṃ; tamanugacchanto saṅkhāre abhhaññāsīṃ; saṅkhārasamudayaṃ abhhaññāsīṃ; saṅkhāranirodhaṃ abhhaññāsīṃ; saṅkhāranirodhagāminiṃ paṭipadaṃ abhhaññāsīṃ.'

(...) Just this noble eightfold path: right view, right aspiration, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration. That is the ancient path, the ancient road, travelled by the Rightly Self-awakened Ones of former times. I followed that path. Following it, I came to direct knowledge of aging and death, direct knowledge of the origination of aging and death, direct knowledge of the cessation of aging and death, direct knowledge of the path leading to the cessation of aging and death. I followed that path. Following it, I came to direct knowledge of birth...becoming...clinging...craving...feeling...contact...the six sense media...name-and-form...consciousness, direct knowledge of the origination of consciousness, direct knowledge of the cessation of consciousness, direct knowledge of the path leading to the cessation of consciousness. I followed that path.⁷⁹

Vetter believes this is more of a list than an actual path to be followed stage by stage (Vetter 1988 xxxviii). The eightfold path is also known as *brahmacariya*, conventionally translated as ‘the holy life’, and described in Buddhism as ‘the moral life, holy life, religious life, as a way to end suffering’ (PED p. 494). I follow Ergardt and translate it as ‘the religious life’.⁸⁰

2.4 *Brahmacariya*: the religious life

In the most common of what are often referred to as the Arhat formulas, we find a reference to *brahmacariya* as instrumental in bringing about the goal of the Buddhist practitioner: ‘*khīṇā jāti, vusitaṃ brahmacariyaṃ, kataṃ karaṇīyaṃ nāparaṃ itthattāya.*’ (destroyed is birth, brought to a close is the *brahmacariya*, done is what has to be done, there is no more being such and such).⁸¹

The reference to *brahmacariya* is also found in one more of the four traditional Arhat formulas (Ergardt 1977 3):

‘*Eko vūpakaṭṭho appamatto ātāpī pahitatto viharanto nacirass’; eva yass’ atthāya kulaputtā samma-d-eva agārasmā anagāriyaṃ pabbajanti, tad anuttaram*

⁷⁹ Nagara Sutta, *Samyutta Nikaya ii.124*, translated by Thanissaro Bhikkhu (Thanissaro Bhikkhu. ‘Nagara Sutta’). Access to Insight, accessed 13.9.2016.

⁸⁰ Jan T. Ergardt (1977): *Faith and Knowledge in Early Buddhism*. Leiden: E. J. Brill.

⁸¹ Translated by: I. B. Horner (1954-59): *Middle Length Sayings* (3 vols), PTS: London. 1:29. (Quoted in: Ergardt (1977) p. 3). I have taken the liberty of replacing Horner’s translation of *brahmacariya* (‘Brahma-faring’) with the original word for the sake of clarity.

brahmacariyapariyosānaṃ diṭṭhe va dhamme sayama abhiññāya sacchikatvā upasampajja vihāsi.‘

([He], abiding alone, aloof, diligent, ardent, self-resolute, not long afterwards, by his own super-knowledge, having precisely here-now realised that matchless culmination of the *brahmacariya* for the sake of which young men of family rightly go forth from home into homelessness, abided in it).⁸²

This second Arhat formula broaches a central aspect of *brahmacariya*, which is to leave the ordinary life of being a householder, family man, owner of property or a business and so forth. Early Buddhism describes life in society as a hindrance to attaining *nibbāna* and urged those seeking liberation to ‘go forth’ (*pabbajanti*). There was also a tradition of lay followers. Ergardt describes *brahmacariya* as ‘...concretely a life with special duties which is fairly well defined in the Majjhima-Nikāya with knowledge, morality and meditation as the leading themes of the eightfold path...’ (Ergardt 1977 8).⁸³ Freiberger observes how the word *brahma* takes on a different meaning in early Buddhist usage: “Es wird deutlich, daß *brahma* im buddhistischen Kontext anders verstanden werden muß als im vorbuddhistischen “Brahmanismus” bzw. im Hinduismus. Es bezeichnet nicht mehr das “All-Eine” der *Upaniṣads*, sondern das “Höchste” im buddhistischen Sinne: das Nibbāna oder auch als Adjektiv allgemein etwas besonders Hohes, Großes, “Heiliges” oder “Göttliches”.⁸⁴ Once the *brahmacārī* (the religious practitioner) had cleared his schedule of worldly involvements and societal responsibilities, he could get down to the business of meditation. An incident recorded in the Sutta Nipāta (455-56) narrates in what way Gotama himself abandoned the categories of society. The brahmin Sundarikabhāradvāja is looking for somebody to eat the remains of the offerings of an *aggihutta* sacrifice he has just performed, and sees Gotama sitting at the foot of a tree with a cloak over his head. As he approaches, Gotama hears his footsteps, uncovers his head and reveals that it is shaven. Sundarikabhāradvāja is unsure as to who Gotama is, since some brahmins also shave their heads (and not only ascetics), so he asks politely of what descent Gotama is. Gotama replies:⁸⁵

⁸² Translated by: Horner (1954-58) 1:50f.

⁸³ Ergardt’s study is only of the Majjhima Nikaya.

⁸⁴ Freiberger, Oliver (1996): Zur Interpretation der Brahmaṇḍa-Strafe im buddhistischen Ordensrecht. In: *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*. Stuttgart: Kommissionsverlag Franz Steiner. Vol. 146 456-491.

⁸⁵ ‘*Na brāhmaṇo no ’mhi na rājaputto, na vessāyano uda koci no ’mhi, gottama pariññāya puthujjanānaṃ akiñcana manta carāmi loke. Saṃghāṭivāsī agiho carāmi nivuttakeso abhinibbutatto alippamāno idha mānavehi akalla maṃ brāhmaṇa pucchi gottapañhaṃ.*’

I am certainly not a brahman, nor a prince, nor a vessa, nor am I anyone (else). Knowing (and renouncing) the clan of the common people, I wander in the world, possessing nothing, (being) a thinker. Wearing a robe, houseless, I wander with shaven hair, with self completely quenched,⁸⁶ not clinging here to (other) men. You have asked me an unfitting question about my clan, brahman.⁸⁷

2.5 Magga as a way to immortality

Vetter believes that the first interpretation the early texts give of Gotama's enlightenment was the word *amata* (Sanskrit: *amṛta*) or 'immortality', and not the term 'cessation of suffering' (Vetter 1988 5-6). As support for the primacy of immortality as the content of Gotama's enlightenment, he quotes S.ii.12: 'those who possess the dhyāna [meditation] (*jhāyino*) shall no longer be subject to death (*maccu*)' (Vetter 1988 6). He backs this up by quoting M.i.151 where it is said that the one who has reached the first stage of *dhyāna* can no longer be seen by Māra, and A 9.4.8 where it is said that the meditator has freed himself of Māra's power (Vetter 1988 6).

Gotama, then, claimed to have accomplished what the gods of the Vedic culture to which he belonged had claimed to have done before him: becoming immortal. When he, shortly after his enlightenment, declares 'Listen! Immortality is found!' (*amatam adhigatam*) (Vetter 1988 8), his enthusiasm is reminiscent of the gods, who proclaim in hymn 8.48.3 of the Rig-Veda:⁸⁸ 'We have drunk the Soma; we have become immortal; we have gone to the light; we have found the gods. What can hatred and the malice of a mortal do to us now, O immortal one?'⁸⁹

The search for immortality has been an evolving concept in Indian history, beginning as a desire for a continued life in heaven after death, then a fear of eventually dying in heaven also arose, the so-called 're-death' or *punarmṛtyu* (Collins 2010 30). Later, in the Vedic period, the idea of becoming the immortal Brahman (e.g. Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 1.4.10)

⁸⁶ i.e. who has reached *nibbāna* (*abhinibbutatto*).

⁸⁷ Translated by: Norman 2001 49.

⁸⁸ 'a *āpāma sōmam amṛtā abhūmāganma jyōtir āvidāma devān
c kiṃ nūnām asmān kṛṇavad ārātiḥ kīm u dhūrtir amṛta mārtyasya*'

⁸⁹ *The Rig Veda: An Anthology* (trans. Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty (1981). Harmondsworth: Penguin books, pp.134-35.

evolved as seen in the Upanishads. I would add to Vetter's list of quotes supporting the primacy of immortality as the content of Gotama's enlightenment the Ariyapariyesanā Sutta (M.i.160), where Gotama tells the Brahmā Sahampati that, through his enlightenment, the 'door to the Deathless are open' (*Avāpuretaṃ amatassa dvāraṃ, suṇantu dhammaṃ vimalenānubuddhaṃ*) to those able to understand his teaching. Furthermore (as quoted above), upon finding his five old companions who greeted him by his old name and called him 'friend', he replied:⁹⁰ 'Bhikkhus, do not address the Tathāgata by name and as "friend". The Tathāgata is an Accomplished One, a fully Enlightened One. Listen. Bhikkhus, the Deathless has been attained.'⁹¹

2.6 *Sati* or mindfulness.

Buddhist meditation is considered to be a cultivation of the mind (*cittabhāvanā*) and is generally understood to take two forms: *sati* (mindfulness) and *samādhi* (concentration) (Johansson 1969 92). *Sati* is described as a quality of alertness or attentiveness which the Buddhist practitioner attempts to apply towards his own feelings and thoughts (D.ii.298). The mindfulness exercises can also take the form of intellectual analysis (D.ii.294), and Johansson observes how '*sati* naturally leads over to *paññā*' (Johansson 1969 94). *Sati* is also described as a way of promoting morality and avoiding creating kammic consequences (D.ii.290. Quoted in: Johansson 1969 97). *Sati* is even described as counteracting the influx of the *āsavas* (S.ii.54).

Sati is derived from the Sanskrit verbal root $\sqrt{smṛ}$ whose primary meaning is 'to remember'. A more accurate translation than 'mindfulness' is thus 'recollective awareness' or 'remembrance', but 'mindfulness' is such a widely accepted translation that I use it throughout this thesis. *Sati* is sometimes explained as simply 'good memory', as this passage from Anuruddha Sutta indicates (A.iv.228):⁹² 'There is the case where a monk is mindful,

⁹⁰ 'Evaṃ vutte, ahaṃ, bhikkhave, pañcavaggiye bhikkhū etadavocaṃ: 'mā, bhikkhave, tathāgataṃ nāmena ca āvusovādena ca samudācaratha Arahaṃ, bhikkhave, tathāgato sammāsambuddho. Odahatha, bhikkhave, sotaṃ, amatamadhigataṃ, ahamanusāsāmi, ahaṃ dhammaṃ desemi.'

⁹¹ Translated by Bodhi, Bhikkhu (2009): *The Middle Length Discourses*. Boston: Wisdom Publications, p. 264.

⁹² 'Idha bhikkhave, bhikkhu satimā hoti paramena satinepakkena samannāgato cirakatampi cirabhāsitaampi saritā anussaritā.'

highly meticulous, remembering and able to call to mind even things that were done and said long ago.’⁹³

In the SNp 1107, we can see how *sati* along with equanimity (*upekkhā*)⁹⁴ are instrumental in bringing about ‘knowledge liberation’ (*aññāvimokkha*):⁹⁵ ‘Purity through equanimity and mindfulness, preceded by thought of impermanent things, this I call freedom through knowledge, the breaking up of ignorance’.⁹⁶ The function of mindfulness and its connection with the intellect is described thus (SNp 1034-35):⁹⁷

‘Streams⁹⁸ are flowing everywhere,’ said venerable Ajita, ‘What is the constraint for streams? Tell me the restraint for streams; by what are the streams shut off?’ ‘Whatever streams there are in the world, Ajita,’ said the Gracious One, ‘mindfulness is the constraint for them. That is the restraint for streams, I say; by wisdom [= *paññā*] they are shut off.’

Here we can see mindfulness as a mode of the intellect whereby it is able to stop the ‘streams flowing everywhere’, which is a suitable metaphor for the continuous activity of emotion and cognition.

In the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (Sermon on the Establishment of Mindfulness) (M.i.55) and the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (Great Sermon on the Establishment of Mindfulness) (D.ii.290), four domains to be mindful of are described: body (*kāya*), sensations or feelings (*vedanā*), mind (*citta*) and phenomena (*dhamma*).

2.7 The nine stages of meditation

⁹³ ‘Anuruddha Sutta: To Anuruddha’ (AN 8.30), translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu. *Access to Insight (Legacy Edition)*, 30 November 2013, available at www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/an/an08/an08.030.than.html, accessed 02.11.2016.

⁹⁴ *Upekkhā* is derived from a verbal root of ‘seeing’ (from *upa* + $\sqrt{\text{ikṣ}}$ ‘looking on’ (with neutrality or indifference). See PED p. 150.

⁹⁵ ‘*Upekkhāsatisamsuddham, dhammatakkapurejavam; aññāvimokkham pabrūmi, avijjāya pabhedanam.*’

⁹⁶ Translated by Ānandajoti Bhikkhu. Original translation 1999, revised, May 2007. The text and translation, together with detailed notes and discussions, may be found in multiple formats on the translator’s website, Ancient Buddhist Texts. <https://suttacentral.net/en/snp5.14>, accessed 17.11.2016.

⁹⁷ ‘*Savanti sabbadhi sotā, (iccāyasmā ajito): Sotānaṃ kiṃ nivāraṇaṃ; Sotānaṃ saṃvaraṃ brūhi, kena sotā pidhiyyare.*’ ‘*Yāni sotāni lokasmiṃ, (ajitāti bhagavā): Sati tesam nivāraṇaṃ; Sotānaṃ saṃvaraṃ brūmi, paññāyete pidhiyyare.*’

⁹⁸ *Sota* or ‘stream, flood, torrent’ refers metaphorically to the ‘stream of cravings’, and is used in compounds such as *bhavasota* ‘stream of rebirth’ and *viññāṇasota* ‘flux of consciousness’ (PED p. 725).

The nine stages of meditation are generally held to consist of four *rūpa jhānas* or form meditations,⁹⁹ four *arūpa jhānas* or formless meditations which are called *āyatanas* or ‘dimensions, spheres’, and finally the ninth stage.¹⁰⁰ This ninth stage is technically called *saññāvedayitanirodha* or ‘cessation of perceptions and feelings’, also referred to as *nirodha-samāpatti* (attainment of cessation).¹⁰¹ This ninth stage seems to be a transitional one between meditation per se and the realisation of *nibbāna*. These stages are meant to be a description of what happens to the *citta* as it is gradually transformed from perpetuating *saṃsāra* and creating *dukkha* to having reached *nibbāna*; as it is being purified of all *āsava*s and reaching complete purity (*parisuddhi*) where *nibbāna* occurs and the *amatā dhātu* is revealed as the only real, unchanging reality.

Johansson (1979 98) recounts how *sati* is the preparation for *samādhi*. He quotes D.ii.300:

The first task is to master the five hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*), namely *kāma-cchanda*, ‘sensuality and desire’, *vyāpāda*, ‘aggressiveness’, *thīna-middha*, ‘inactivity and drowsiness’, *uddhacca-kukkucca*, ‘nervousness’, and *vicikicchā*, ‘doubt’. This is done by means of mindfulness (D.ii.300), and when they are conquered, the meditating disciple is prepared to enter into the first stage of *samādhi*, called the first *jhāna*.

I will use Poṭṭhapāda Sutta (D.i.182) as a basis for my exposition of the nine stages of meditation, and compare it to other descriptions from the Nikāyas where relevant. The reason I have chosen this *sutta* is because it contains an interesting variation at the final stage (it combines stages eight and nine into a novel stage called *saññagga* or ‘peak of perception’), which shows how there has been a particular discussion within the tradition about what the final stage of cessation entails.¹⁰² The first *jhāna* is described thus:

‘Tassime pañca nīvaraṇe pahīne attani samanupassato pāmujaṃ jāyati, pamuditassa pīti jāyati, pītimanassa kāyo passambhati, passaddha-kāyo sukhaṃ vedeti, sukhino

⁹⁹ Paul J. Griffiths has given a detailed analysis of the four stages as they occur 86 times in the first four Nikāyas: Paul J. Griffiths (1983): ‘Buddhist Jhāna: A Form-Critical Study’. *Religion*, 13:55-68.

¹⁰⁰ The numbers of these stages vary, from only the four *jhānas*, the four *jhānas* plus four *āyatanas*, and then the additional ninth stage, called a *nirodha*. In the Mahānidāna Sutta (D.ii.55), these nine stages are reduced to eight and renamed as ‘emancipations’ (*vimokkhā*).

¹⁰¹ See: Paul Williams (ed.): *Buddhism: Critical Concepts in Religious Studies. Vol 2 (2005): The Early Buddhist Schools and Doctrinal History; Theravāda Doctrine*. London & New York: Routledge. P. 155-59.

See: Vetter (1988 67) for a discussion of the presumed history of *saññāvedayitanirodha*.

¹⁰² See Bronkhorst (1986 77) and Vetter (1988 67).

cittaṃ samādhīyati. So vivicc' eva kāmehi vivicca akusalehi dhammehi savitakkam savicāraṃ vivekajaṃ pīti-sukhaṃ paṭhamajjhānam upasampajja viharati. Tassa yā purimā kāma-saññā sā nirujjhati. Vivekaja-pīti-sukha-sukhuma-sacca-saññā tasmim samaye hoti, vivekaja-pīti-sukha-sukhuma-sacca-saññā yeva tasmim samaye hoti. Evam pi sikkhā ekā saññā uppajjanti, sikkhā ekāsaññā nirujjhanti. Ayaṃ sikkhā'; ti Bhagavā avoca.

Thanissaro Bhikkhu translates this thus:

Seeing that these five hindrances have been abandoned within him, he becomes glad. Glad, he becomes enraptured. Enraptured, his body grows tranquil. His body tranquil, he is sensitive to pleasure. Feeling pleasure, his mind becomes concentrated. Quite withdrawn from sensual pleasures, withdrawn from unskillful mental qualities, the monk enters and remains in the first jhana: rapture and pleasure born from withdrawal, accompanied by directed thought and evaluation. His earlier perception of sensuality ceases, and on that occasion there is a perception of a refined truth of rapture and pleasure born of seclusion. On that occasion he is one who is percipient of a refined truth of rapture and pleasure born of seclusion. And thus it is that with training one perception arises and with training another perception ceases.¹⁰³

This initial stage of meditation is clearly characterised by the joy or bliss of having overcome the hindrances, and the ability to withdraw from the world of the senses and mental negativity. Most translators (e.g. Johansson) translate *viveka* as 'seclusion' in the sense that the meditator has entered seclusion (from sensual pleasures and so forth) and that this is the reason he feels happy. The word *viveka* has another meaning, however, which is 'discrimination', in the sense of being able to distinguish between different things, e.g. between what is real and what is not real. This meaning seems to fit well with the context too, since it is coupled with *vitakka* (reasoning) and *vicāra* (enquiry). *Viveka* is by definition the function of the intellect, and this seems to be the main aspect of the first meditation. The phrase 'so vivicc' eva kāmehi vivicca akusalehi dhammehi' (quite withdrawn from sensual pleasures, withdrawn from unskillful mental qualities) makes it a moot point whether *vivicca*

¹⁰³ 'Potthapada Sutta: About Potthapada' (DN 9), translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu. *Access to Insight (Legacy Edition)*, 30 November 2013, available at www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/dn/dn.09.0.than.html, accessed 02.11.2016. All the following translations of the meditation stages are by Thanissaro Bhikkhu.

(separated from) refers to a *physical* separation from objects of the world, sense activity and so forth, or a *mental* separation, meaning that the meditator separates himself or his consciousness from unwholesome *dharmas*, which we may understand as being negative thoughts or mental dispositions and so forth.¹⁰⁴ The chain of events seems to be this. First, there is gladness (*pāmuja*) about having overcome the five hindrances. This gladness leads to joy (*pīti*),¹⁰⁵ which in turn makes the body of the meditator calm. The calm body creates ease or bliss (*sukha*) which leads to the mind being concentrated (*cittaṃ samādhīyati*). Then there is a definition of sorts of the first *jhāna*: ‘The first *jhāna* is a joy and ease created by discrimination and accompanied by reasoning and enquiry’ (*savitakkaṃ savicāraṃ vivekajaṃ pīti-sukhaṃ paṭhamajjhānam*). There is then a cessation of ‘desire perception’ (*kāma-saññā*), and instead there occurs a ‘perception of subtle and true joy and ease born of discrimination’ (*vivekaja-pīti-sukha-sukhuma-sacca-saññā*). This process of leaving one perception and gaining another perception (one that is subtler and ‘truer’) is called *sikkhā* or ‘training, discipline, study’. Next there is the second *jhāna*:

Puna ca paraṃ Poṭṭhapāda bhikkhu vitakkavicārānaṃ vūpasamā ajjhataṃ sampasādanaṃ cetaso ekodibhāvaṃ avitakkaṃ avicāraṃ samādhijāṃ pītisukhaṃ dutiyajjhānaṃ upasampajja viharati. Tassa yā purimā vivekajaṃ pītisukhaṃ sukhumasaccasaññā sā nirujjhati. Samādhijapītisukhasukhumasaccasaññā tasmim samaye hoti, samādhijapītisukhasukhumasaccasaññā yeva tasmim samaye hoti. Evam pi sikkhā ekā saññā uppajjanti, sikkhā ekā saññā nirujjanti. Ayaṃ sikkhā ti’; Bhagavā avoca.

(Then, with the stilling of directed thoughts and evaluations, the monk enters and remains in the second *jhāna*: rapture and pleasure born of composure, unification of awareness free from directed thought and evaluation - internal assurance. His earlier perception of a refined truth of rapture and pleasure born of seclusion ceases, and on that occasion there is a perception of a refined truth of rapture and pleasure born of concentration. On that occasion he is one who is percipient of a refined truth of rapture

¹⁰⁴ In some non-Buddhist schools of Indian philosophy, *viveka* is clearly discrimination and not seclusion: *Viveka* (Skt., ‘discrimination’). In Sāṃkhya philosophy, the direct intuitive discrimination between *puruṣa* (pure consciousness) and *prakṛti* (materiality), and the goal of the Sāṃkhya system. In Advaita Vedānta *viveka* is considered one of the four requisites of a seeker after knowledge of Brahman and is defined by Śaṅkara as: ‘an (intellectual) discrimination between what is eternal and what is non-eternal’ (*Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* 1.1) (from: John Bowker (1997): ‘Viveka.’ *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of World Religions*. Available at www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1O101-Viveka.html, accessed 02.11.2016.

¹⁰⁵ *Pāmuja*, *pīti* and *sukha* are synonyms, and ambiguous in this context.

and pleasure born of concentration. And thus it is that with training one perception arises and with training another perception ceases.)

Reasoning and enquiry cease and there is joy and ease created by inner (*ajjhata*) tranquillity (*sampasādana*) and concentration of mind (*cetaso ekodibhāva*). The functioning of the intellect in the form of reasoning, investigation and discrimination ceases, and all thought processes become unified. There is still a perception of subtle and true joy and ease, but it is not born of discrimination but of concentration (*samādhi*). Then there is the third *jhāna*:

Puna ca paramṃ Poṭṭhapāda bhikkhu pītiyā ca virāgā upekhako ca viharati sato ca sampajāno, sukhañ ca kāyena paṭisaṃvedeti yan taṃ ariyā ācikkhanti: ‘Upekhako satimā sukha-vihārī ti,’ tatiyajjhānaṃ upasampajja viharati. Tassa yā purimā samādhijaṃ pītisukhaṃ sukhumasaccasaññā sā nirujjhati. Upekhāsukhasukhumasaccasaññā tasmimṃ samaye hoti, upekhāsukhasukhumasaccasaññī yeva tasmimṃ samaye hoti. Evam pi sikkhā ekā saññā uppajjanti, sikkhā ekā saññā nirujjanti. Ayam sikkhā’;
ti Bhagavā avoca.

(And then, with the fading of rapture, he remains equanimous, mindful, and alert, and senses pleasure with the body. He enters and remains in the third *jhāna*, of which the Noble Ones declares, ‘Equanimous and mindful, he has a pleasant abiding.’ His earlier perception of a refined truth of rapture and pleasure born of concentration ceases, and on that occasion there is a perception of a refined truth of equanimity. On that occasion he is one who is percipient of a refined truth of equanimity. And thus it is that with training one perception arises and with training another perception ceases.)

The meditator now becomes disinterested in even non-sensual joy as he becomes equanimous (*upekhaka*), mindful (*sata*) and alert (*sampajāna*). We can assume that equanimity, mindfulness and alertness are the direct results of the concentration of the *citta* that took place in the second *jhāna*. He still feels ease (*sukha*) in his body. The perception of subtle and true joy and ease born by concentration now ceases and is replaced by ‘a perception of subtle and true ease (created by) equanimity’ (*upekhā-sukha-sukhuma-sacca-saññā*). Then there is the fourth *jhāna*:

Puna ca paramṃ poṭṭhapāda bhikkhu sukhasa ca pahānā dukkhasa ca pahānā,
pubbeva somanassadomanassānaṃ atthagamā adukkhamasukhaṃ

upekkhāsatipārisuddhiṃ catuttham jhānaṃ upasampajja viharati. Tassa yā purimā upekkhāsukhasukhumasaccasaññā sā nirujjhati. Adukkhamasukhasukhumasaccasaññā tasmim samaye hoti. Adukkhamasukhasukhumasaññī yeva tasmim samaye hoti. Evampi sikkhā ekā saññā uppajjati. Sikkhā ekā saññā nirujjhati. Ayampi sikkhā"ti bhagavā avoca.

(And then, with the abandoning of pleasure and pain - as with the earlier disappearance of elation and distress - the monk enters and remains in the fourth jhana: purity of equanimity and mindfulness, neither-pleasure-nor-pain. His earlier perception of a refined truth of equanimity ceases, and on that occasion there is a perception of a refined truth of neither pleasure nor pain. On that occasion he is one who is percipient of a refined truth of neither pleasure nor pain. And thus it is that with training one perception arises and with training another perception ceases.)

The most significant transformation in this fourth stage is that the sense of ease or happiness (*sukha*), which has been present in the preceding three stages, now disappears along with any sense of its opposite, namely pain or suffering. We might infer that the meditator now transcends even the subtlest form of happiness or ease and enters a deep state of neutrality, a ‘perfection of equanimity and mindfulness’ (*upekkhā-sati-pārisuddhi*) which is a ‘subtle and true perception of neither pain nor pleasure’ (*adukkha-m-asukha-sukhuma-sacca-saññā*). Collins (Collins 2010 20) observes that ‘Thus, in the fourth and highest *jhāna* of form, the only emotional response left to the practitioner is that of equanimity; ratiocination, pleasure, pain and indeed all intense emotional reactions have been left behind.’ The fourth *jhāna* concludes the perceptions of form, and marks the beginning of the formless *jhānas*, also referred to as the four *āyatana*s or ‘dimensions’. Below is the first *āyatana*: *ākāsānañcāyatana* or ‘the dimension of infinite space’:

Puna ca param Poṭṭhapāda bhikkhu sabbaso rūpasaññānaṃ samatikkamā paṭigha-saññānaṃ atthagamā nānattasaññānaṃ amanasikārā ‘ananto ākāso ti’ ākāsānañcāyatanaṃ upasampajja viharati. Tassa yā purimā rūpasaññā sā nirujjhati. Ākāsānañcāyatana-sukha-sukhuma-sacca-saññā tasmim samaye hoti, ākāsānañcāyatana-sukhuma-sacca-saññī yeva tasmim samaye hoti. Evam pi sikkhā ekā saññā uppajjanti, sikkhā ekā saññā nirujjhanti. Ayam sikkhā’; ti Bhagavā avoca.

(And then, with the complete transcending of perceptions of [physical] form, with the disappearance of perceptions of resistance, and not heeding perceptions of diversity, [perceiving,] ‘Infinite space,’ the monk enters and remains in the dimension of the infinitude of space. His earlier perception of a refined truth of neither pleasure nor pain ceases, and on that occasion there is a perception of a refined truth of the dimension of the infinitude of space. On that occasion he is one who is percipient of a refined truth of the dimension of the infinitude of space. And thus it is that with training one perception arises and with training another perception ceases.)

Interestingly, in this first of the formless stages, there is no longer any resistance, which may refer to any impulse in the body and mind that can counteract or disturb the meditation. There is also no perception of form, or any perception of diversity. There is now only a perception that ‘space is infinite’ (*ananto ākāso*), and the meditator dwells in a sphere or dimension (*āyatana*) of infinite space. Strangely, however, *sukha* (ease or happiness), which disappeared along with its opposite, pain, in the fourth *jhāna*, returns: ‘there is a subtle, true and easy perception of the infinity of space’ (*ākāsānañcāyatana-sukha-sukhuma-sacca-saññā*). This is a significant inconsistency of the stages of concentration, and this may indicate that the system of meditation stages in early Buddhism is composed of different pieces that do not really fit together. Perhaps the four form meditations - which are called *jhānas*, and the four formless meditations which are called *āyatanas* - are two different sets or systems that existed independently earlier and were only later joined together for reasons we can only speculate about. It could also be a copyist’s mistake. This inconsistency does, however, support Vetter’s argument that the meditation stage system was put together at a later stage, not reflecting what he calls the more original *dhyāna* meditation, but originating in non-Buddhist circles (Vetter 1988 64). The second *āyatana*: *viññāṇañcāyatana* or ‘the dimension of infinite consciousness’ is as follows:

Puna ca paramṃ Poṭṭhapāda bhikkhu sabbaso ākāsānañcāyatanaṃ samatikkamma ‘anantaṃ viññāṇan ti’ viññāṇañcāyatanaṃ upasampajja viharati. Tassa yā purimā ākāsānañcāyatana-sukhuma-sacca-saññā, sā nirujjhati. Viññāṇañcāyatana-sukhuma-sacca-saññā tasmim samaye hoti, viññāṇañcāyatana-sukhuma-sacca-saññī yeva tasmim samaye hoti. Evam pi sikkhā ekā saññā uppajjanti, sikkhā ekā saññā nirujjhanti. Ayaṃ sikkhā’; ti Bhagavā avoca.

(And then, with the complete transcending of the dimension of the infinitude of space, [perceiving,] ‘Infinite consciousness,’ the monk enters and remains in the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness. His earlier perception of a refined truth of the dimension of the infinitude of space ceases, and on that occasion there is a perception of a refined truth of the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness. On that occasion he is one who is percipient of a refined truth of the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness. And thus it is that with training one perception arises and with training another perception ceases.)

The infinity of space is now replaced by a perception of the infinity of consciousness. Vetter considers this sphere a puzzle (Vetter 1988 64) and a ‘curious stage’ (Vetter 1988 65). Perception now seems to be turning back on itself and perceiving itself as infinite. In the next stage, even this disappears. The third *āyatana*: *ākiñcaññāyatana* or ‘dimension of nothingness’ is as follows:

Puna ca param Poṭṭhapāda bhikkhu sabbaso viññāṇaṅcāyatanaṃ samatikkamma ‘n’; atthi kiñcīti’ ākiñcaññāyatanaṃ upasampajja viharati. Tassa yā purimā viññāṇaṅcāyatana-sukhuma-sacca-saññā, sā nirujjhati. Ākiñcaññāyatana-sukhuma-saccasaññā tasmim samaye hoti, ākiñcaññāyatana-sukhuma-sacca-saññā yeva tasmim samaye hoti. Evam pi sikkhā ekā saññā uppajanti, sikkhā ekā saññā nirujjhanti. Ayaṃ sikkhā’; ti Bhagavā avoca.

(And then, with the complete transcending of the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness, [thinking,] ‘There is nothing,’ enters and remains in the dimension of nothingness. His earlier perception of a refined truth of the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness ceases, and on that occasion there is a perception of a refined truth of the dimension of nothingness. On that occasion he is one who is percipient of a refined truth of the dimension of nothingness. And thus it is that with training one perception arises and with training another perception ceases.)

The perception that ‘consciousness is infinite’ is now gone, replaced by the idea that ‘there is nothing’ (*n’; atthi kiñcīti*). My main problem with this sphere is understanding what this nothingness entails: if consciousness is gone (assuming ‘infinity of consciousness’ is the same as ‘consciousness’), who then ‘knows’ or ‘observes’ in this meditation? What is the nature of the knowing subject? This would make sense within the orthodox philosophical

schools such as Advaita, where there is an eternal witness consciousness present (*sākṣin*, *dr̥ṣṭṛ*), but as the self is gone as well as consciousness, *who or what is meditating?* The fourth stage does not provide an answer to this question. The fourth *āyatana*: *saññagga* or ‘peak of perception’ is below:

Yato kho Poṭṭhapāda bhikkhu idha saka-saññī hoti, so tato amutra tato amutra anupubbena saññaggaṃ phusati. Tassa saññagge t̥hitassa evaṃ hoti: ‘Cetayamānassa me pāpiyo, acetayamānassa me seyyo. Ahañ ce va kho pana ceteyyaṃ abhisamkhareyyaṃ, imā ca me saññā nirujjheyyaṃ, aññā ca oḷārikā saññā uppajjeyyaṃ. Yan nūnāham na ceteyyaṃ na abhisamkhareyyanti. ‘So na c’eva ceteti na abhisamkharoti. Tassa acetayato anabhisamkharoto tā c’; eva saññā nirujjhanti, aññā ca oḷārikā saññā na uppajjanti. So nirodhaṃ phusati. Evaṃ kho Poṭṭhapāda anupubbābhisaññā-nirodha-sampajāna-samāpatti hoti.

(Now, when the monk is percipient of himself here, then from there to there, step by step, he touches the peak of perception. As he remains at the peak of perception, the thought occurs to him, ‘Thinking is bad for me. Not thinking is better for me. If I were to think and will, this perception of mine would cease, and a grosser perception would appear. What if I were neither to think nor to will?’ So he neither thinks nor wills, and as he is neither thinking nor willing, that perception ceases and another, grosser perception does not appear. He touches cessation. This, Potthapada, is how there is the alert step-by-step attainment of the ultimate cessation of perception.)

Perhaps surprisingly, the thinking process returns here. In the second *jhāna* we observed that the mind had become concentrated (*cetaso ekodibhāva*) and was now something akin to a homogenous mass of consciousness, where both reasoning and enquiry had ceased. Now, however, the meditator is confronted with a reflective thought activity about whether or not he should engage in thinking. In addition, a whole new concept is introduced called ‘willing’ (*abhisamkharoti*). He decides to stop both thinking and willing, and there is then a cessation of the previous perception (of neither thinking nor willing) and - importantly - *no new perception arises*. Instead, he attains cessation (*nirodha*) which is a major event in Buddhist terms because it is the realisation of the third noble truth about the cessation of suffering (*dukkha-nirodha*). From the context one might, however, assume that *nirodha* refers to perception and not to suffering, since the name of this *āyatana* is - not actually *āyatana* even

but *samāpatti* ('attainment') - 'the alert attainment of successive cessation of perception' (*anupubbābhisaññā-nirodha-sampajāna-samāpatti*). Interestingly, in this stage the meditator is initially said to be 'self-aware' (*saka-saññī*), which would answer the question about whether there is any 'who' or 'what' meditating: there is a knowing subject with self-reflective awareness in this stage. He then reaches (literally 'touches' *phusati*) the 'peak of perception' (*saññaggam*), which is either the cessation of perception or the right condition for reaching the cessation of perception.

The description of the fourth *āyatana* in the Poṭṭhapāda Sutta is a variation in relation to the standard account, which we will look at in the following.¹⁰⁶ This demonstrates an early debate within the tradition regarding what the final stage or stages of meditation are, centring on what *nirodha* (cessation) entails. In the standard account, the fourth and final *āyatana* is called *nevasaññānāsaññā* or 'neither-perception-nor-non-perception', followed by a ninth stage called *saññāvedayitanirodha* or 'cessation of perceptions and feelings', also known as *nirodhasamāpatti* (attainment of cessation). It seems that the author or authors of the Poṭṭhapāda Sutta wanted to add their voices to this debate by introducing the idea of the final stage before *nibbāna* (i.e. the stage in which *nibbāna* is realised) as the 'peak of perception' (*saññagga*), which is explained as *anupubbābhisaññā-nirodha-sampajāna-samāpatti* (the alert attainment of cessation of successive perception). The point is possibly to emphasise that the cessation of the various perceptions is not a cataleptic state of unconsciousness,¹⁰⁷ but that there is still a presence of consciousness, expressed by the adjective *sampajāna* (alert, mindful, attentive), which according to PED (p. 690) is 'almost synonymous with *sata*', the adjectival form of *sati* (mindfulness). We may hence interpret *saññagga* or 'peak of perception' to be some kind of pure perception which is transcendental and has no object.¹⁰⁸

We will now take a closer look at the standard account of the nine stages. This consists of the four *jhānas*, the four *āyatanas*,¹⁰⁹ and the one *nirodha* or *samāpatti*. There are

¹⁰⁶ See Griffiths (1983) for the standard account.

¹⁰⁷ For a discussion of consciousness in the state of cessation in the Theravāda tradition, see: Griffiths 1986 5-13.

¹⁰⁸ PED (p.70) explains *abhisaññā-nirodha* as meaning 'trance' and being an expression 'used by wanderers' and not by Buddhists. This may indicate that the author or authors of this *sutta* were influenced by ideas originating outside the Buddhist tradition.

¹⁰⁹ In Udāna 80, *nibbāna* is clearly described as beyond all spheres or *āyatanas*: 'There is that sphere, monks, where there is no earth, no water, no fire, no air, no sphere of infinite space, no sphere of infinite consciousness, no sphere of nothingness, no sphere of neither perception nor non-perception, no this world, no world beyond, neither Moon nor Sun. There, monks, I say there is surely no coming, no going, no persisting, no passing away, no rebirth. It is quite without support, unmoving, without an object - just this is the end of suffering.'

several inconsistencies which indicate that these nine stages are formed from various traditions.¹¹⁰ According to the standard account of the stages of meditation, the fourth *āyatana* is a sphere of neither perception nor non-perception (Vetter 1988 63), and a ninth stage, as we can see in the passage below from the Anguttara Nikāya iv.448, now told by Gotama in the first person:

So kho ahaṃ aparena samayena sabbaso nevasaññānāsaññāyatanaṃ samatikkamma saññāvedayitanirodhaṃ upasampajja viharāmi, paññāya ca me disvā āsavā parikkhayaṃ agamaṃsu.

Yāvakīvañ cāhaṃ imā nava anupubbavīhārasamāpattiyo na evaṃ anulomapaṭilomaṃ samāpajjim pi vuṭṭhahiṃ pi, neva tāvāhaṃ sadevake loke samārake sabrahmake sassamaṇabrāhmaṇiyā pajāya sadevamanussāya anuttaraṃ sammāsambodhiṃ abhisambuddho paccaññāsim... Nāṇaṃ ca pana me dassanaṃ udapādi ‘akuppā me cetovimutti, ayam antimā jāti, natthi dāni punabbhavo’; ti.¹¹¹

(Thereafter I altogether transcended the dimension of neither-ideation-nor-non-ideation [*nevasaññānāsaññāyatanaṃ*] and entered and remained in the cessation of ideation and feeling [*saññāvedayitanirodhaṃ*]. And when I got insight through understanding, my obsessions [*āsavā*] were expelled. But when I had entered into and emerged from the attainment of these nine successive states, both forwards and backwards, then I completely understood and I attained the highest insight, which is unsurpassed in the world (with its gods, Māra and Brahma) and among mankind (with recluses, brahmins, gods and men). And the understanding and insight came to me, ‘Unshakeable is the liberation of my mind [*cetovimutti*], this is my last birth, now there is no return.)¹¹²

¹¹⁰ In the Sāmaññaphala Sutta (D 2), the four *jhānas* are given the standard description without any mention of *āyatanas*, and perhaps - more interestingly - without any mention of *nirodha* at the end. Instead, the meditator directs and inclines his now purified mind towards knowledge and vision (...*ñānadassanāya cittaṃ abhinīharati abhininnāmeti*). This is the kind of knowledge Gotama achieved during his enlightenment, i.e. the highest *nibbāna*-realising kind of gnosis. After this, the meditator understands the nature of his body and mind, and seeing things as they really are constitutes achieving the goal. There is no mention of liberation, the destruction of defilements, the end of suffering and so forth. The goal here is described simply as having a knowledge with which things are seen clearly: ‘*So evaṃ pajānāti: ‘ayaṃ kho me kāyo rūpī cātumahābhūtikō mātāpettikasambhavo odanakummāsūpacayo’. aniccucchādanaparimaddanabhedanavidhamsanadhammo; idaṅca pana me viññānaṃ ettha sitaṃ ettha paṭibaddhaṃ’ti.*’

¹¹¹ Text edition: Johansson 1973 101, which omits a repetitive sentence compared to the PTS edition.

¹¹² Translated by: Johansson 1965 103. The Pali words in brackets are my additions.

We can see that the ninth and final stage in this sequence, the cessation of ideation and feeling (*saññāvedayitanirodha*), is also a cessation.¹¹³ This may reveal an important aspect of the common, underlying structure of this ‘stage meditation’: that it culminates in a cessation which marks the end of the *magga* or path itself, and the attainment of the goal of *nibbāna*. It is expressed above by the declaration of enlightenment, which is the main subject of this thesis: ‘Unshakeable is the liberation of my mind (*cetovimutti*), this is my last birth, now there is no return.’

2.8 Obstacles in meditation

Apart from the obvious obstacles the meditator may encounter in the course of the practice as described in section 2.6, there are far subtler challenges to overcome. What these may consist of are described in *Dutiya Anuruddha Sutta* (A.iv.282):¹¹⁴

Then the Venerable Anuruddha approached the Venerable Sariputta and exchanged greetings with him. When they had concluded their greetings and cordial talk, he sat down to one side and said to the Venerable Sariputta: ‘Here, friend Sariputta, with the divine eye, which is purified and surpasses the human, I survey a thousand-fold world systems. Energy is aroused in me without slackening; my mindfulness is established without confusion; my body is tranquil without disturbance; my mind is concentrated and one-pointed. Yet my mind is still not liberated from the taints through non-

¹¹³ As Collins observes, this stage of cessation, also known as *nirodha-samāpatti* or ‘attainment of cessation’, is closely associated with *nibbāna*, ‘even at times seeming to be a synonym’ (Collins 2010 46).

Schmithausen (Schmithausen 1981 223) observes that this stage is ‘...not free from a certain ambivalence, sometimes appearing as a cataleptic state similar to death...In any case it is, by definition, devoid of ideation (*sañjñā*), i.e. consciousness implying formation of notions, from which *prajñā*, as it is usually understood in the early texts, does not seem to be easily detachable.’

¹¹⁴ *Ekamantaṃ nisinno kho āyasmā Anuruddho āyasmantaṃ Sāriputtaṃ etad avoca:*

Idhāhaṃ āvuso Sāriputta dibbena cakkhunā visuddhena atikkantamānusakena sahasaṃ lokaṃ olokemi.

Āraddhaṃkho pana me viriyaṃ asallīnaṃ upaṭṭhitā sati asammūṭṭhā passaddho kāyo asāraddho samāhitaṃ cittaṃ ekaggaṃ. Atha ca pana me na anupādāya āsavehi cittaṃ vimuccatī ti.

2. *Yaṃ kho te āvuso Anuruddha evaṃ hoti -- ahaṃ dibbena cakkhunā visuddhena atikkantamānusakena sahasaṃ lokaṃ olokemī ti, idan te mānasmīṃ. Yam pi te āvuso Anuruddha evaṃ hoti -- āraddhaṃ kho pana me viriyaṃ asallīnaṃ upaṭṭhitā sati asammūṭṭhā passaddho kāyo asāraddho samāhitaṃ cittaṃ ekaggaṃ ti, idan te uddhaccasmīṃ. Yam pi te āvuso Anuruddha evaṃ hoti -- atha ca pana me na anupādāya āsavehi cittaṃ vimuccatī ti, idan te kukkuccasmīṃ. Sādhu vat’; āyasmā Anuruddho ime tayo dhamme pahāya ime tayo dhamme amanasikarivā amatāya dhātuyā cittaṃ upasaṃharatū ti.*

3. *Atha kho āyasmā Anuruddho aparena samayena ime tayo dhamme pahāya ime tayo dhamme amanasikarivā amatāya dhātuyā cittaṃ upasaṃhāsi. Atha kho āyasmā Anuruddho eko vūpakaṭṭho appamatto ātāpī pahitatto viharanto na cirass’; eva yass’; atthāya kulaputtā sammad eva agārasmā anagāriyaṃ pabbajanti tad anuttaram brahmacariyapariyosānaṃ diṭṭh’; eva dhamme sayāṃ abhiññā sacchi-katvā upasampajja vihāsi, khīṇā jāti vusitaṃ brahmacariyaṃ kataṃ karaṇīyaṃ nāparaṃ itthattāyā ti abbhaññāsi. Aññataro ca pan’; āyasmā Anuruddho arahataṃ ahoṣī ti.*

clinging.’ [The Venerable Sariputta said:] (1) ‘Friend Anuruddha, when you think: “With the divine eye, which is purified and surpasses the human, I survey a thousand-fold world systems”, this is your conceit.’ (2) ‘And when you think: “Energy is aroused in me without slackening; my mindfulness is established without confusion; my body is tranquil without disturbance; my mind is concentrated and one-pointed”, this is your restlessness.’¹¹⁵ (3) ‘And when you think: “Yet my mind is still not liberated from the taints through non-clinging”, this is your remorse.

‘It would be good if you would abandon these three qualities and stop attending to them. Instead, direct your mind to the deathless element.’ Some time later the Venerable Anuruddha abandoned those three qualities and stopped attending to them. Instead, he directed his mind to the deathless element. Then, dwelling alone, withdrawn, heedful, ardent, and resolute, in no long time the Venerable Anuruddha realised for himself with direct knowledge, in this very life, that unsurpassed consummation of the spiritual life for the sake of which clansmen rightly go forth from the household life into homelessness, and having entered upon it, he dwelled in it. He directly knew: ‘Destroyed is birth, the spiritual life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is no more coming back to any state of being.’ And the Venerable Anuruddha became one of the arahants.

This story shows how Anuruddha was meditating in the wrong way, and thus unable to attain *cetovimutti*. Focusing¹¹⁶ the mind on the deathless element and thereby dissolving it therein will lead to *nibbāna*; engaging in any kind of process of *thinking* during meditation will only perpetuate the existence of the *citta* and postpone its release. This is perhaps the most important quality about meditation: it is not about mental activity in any way - at least not ultimately, but in various ways during the initial stages - but about ending the activity of the mind through concentration (*samādhi*), defined as the ‘one-pointedness’ (*ekagga*) of the mind. This is the meaning of the word used to describe this meditative state of mind:

¹¹⁵ Bhikkhu Bodhi has translated *uddhacca* as ‘restlessness’, but the word has another meaning which I think would suit the context better - ‘haughtiness’. Anuruddha is *proud* of having mastered control of his body, his energy and mind, and this pride has created haughtiness, which only serves to strengthen his illusory sense of ‘self’.

¹¹⁶ The word used here for the action of the *citta* in relation to *amata* is *upasamharati*, which literally means ‘taking (*hr*) completely (*sam*) towards (*upa*)’. In Sanskrit, the word could even be as strong as meaning ‘absorb’, indicating that the *citta* is being dissolved in *amata* in the sense of becoming one. But it also has a meaning of ‘withholding’ or ‘suppressing’, which could indicate that there is a considerable effort involved in bringing the *citta* towards *amata*, or keeping it in check.

samāhita or ‘concentrated’, a past participle derived from the verbal root *sam-ā-√dhā* (‘to collect, bring together’).

2.9 The Path as *cittabhāvanā* (mind-cultivation) and *cittasuddhi* (mind-purification)

The *magga* (path) is the purification and expansion of the *citta* until it becomes so pure that it no longer obstructs or covers the *amatā dhātu*, and so expanded (*appamāṇa*) that it no longer has the limitation of form, and has thus become formless. Cultivation of the mind seems to have been part of everyday life for the bhikkhus, as a story from Udumbarika Sutta (D.iii.36) indicates¹¹⁷. The householder Sandhāna was visiting the Buddha at Rājagaha, but it occurred to him that it was not timely, because he was in retreat. He also realised it was untimely to visit the monks, because they were also in retreat ‘practising mind cultivation’ (*manobhāvanīyānampi bhikkhūnaṃ asamayo dassanāya. Paṭisallīnā manobhāvanīyā bhikkhū*).

There are, as scholars have observed, various and at times incompatible descriptions in the Nikāyas regarding the nature of this meditation-based process of transformation.¹¹⁸ One description which seems to be the basic structure of this mental transformation is found in the Jhāna Sutta (A.iv.422). In each of the eight meditations, the meditator is described as contemplating in this way:

So yad eva tattha hoti rūpagataṃ vedanāgataṃ saññāgataṃ saṅkhāragataṃ viññāṇagataṃ, te dhamme aniccato dukkhato rogato gaṇḍato sallato aghato ābādhatto parato palokato suññato anattato samanupassati. So tehi dhammehi cittaṃ paṭivāpeti, so tehi dhammehi cittaṃ paṭivāpetvā amatāya dhātuyā cittaṃ upasaṃharati ‘etaṃ

¹¹⁷ *Evaṃ me sutaṃ— ekaṃ samayaṃ bhagavā rājagahe viharati gijjhakūṭe pabbate. Tena kho pana samayena nigrodho paribbājako udumbarikāya paribbājakārāme paṭivasati mahatīyā paribbājakaparīsāya saddhiṃ tiṃsamattehi parib-bāja-ka-satehi. Atha kho sandhāno gahapati divā divassa rājagahā nikkhāmi bhagavantam dassanāya. Atha kho sandhānassa gahapatissa etadahosi: “akālo kho bhagavantam dassanāya. Paṭisallīno bhagavā. Mano-bhāva-nīyā-nampi bhikkhūnaṃ asamayo dassanāya. Paṭisallīnā manobhāvanīyā bhikkhū.”*

¹¹⁸ Schmithausen (Schmithausen 1981 228) observes, in his in-depth analysis of the role of *paññā* (which he calls ‘Liberating Insight’) in enlightenment, that there are three currents in the Nikāyas regarding enlightenment: 1) the ‘positive-mystical’ current, according to which liberation requires ‘the immortal’ to be realised directly (cf. Schmithausen 1981 214); 2) the ‘negative intellectual’, according to which ‘...Liberating Insight being described as the comprehension of or insight into the negative nature of existence...’ (Schmithausen 1981 219); and 3) ‘...an attempt of the mystical current at adapting its fundamental position, viz. that Liberating Insight is a *prajñā* having Nirvāṇa for its content, to the view that *prajñā* is not possible without *saṃjñā*, and therefore not realizable in *saṃjñāvedayitanirodha*.’

santaṃ etaṃ paṇītaṃ, yad idaṃ sabbasaṅkhārasamatho sabbūpadhipaṭinissaggo taṇhakkhayo virāgo nirodho nibbānaṃ; ti.

(He regards whatever phenomena there that are connected with form, feeling, perception, fabrications, and consciousness, as inconstant, stressful, a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction, alien, a disintegration, an emptiness, not-self. He turns his mind away from those phenomena, and having done so, inclines his mind to the property of deathlessness: ‘This is peace, this is exquisite - the resolution of all fabrications; the relinquishment of all acquisitions; the ending of craving; dispassion; cessation; Unbinding [*nibbāna*].’) ¹¹⁹

Because each of the eight stages is described as having the same content, the focus is taken away from the successive quality of meditation, and shifted to the underlying structure of each single stage of meditation, which is described in a similar way. This underlying structure can be simply expressed as a turning away of the *citta* from the phenomena and towards the noumenon, the immortal reality. ¹²⁰

In this Sutta, the destruction of the influences is said to depend on *each one* of the eight stages. ¹²¹ This is yet another indication that the emphasis is not on the succession of the stages per se, but on accomplishment at each single stage, and that the stage at hand is what is important, and not the relational qualities pertaining to where the stage is in the succession of stages. This seems reasonable, and it is easy to imagine that this is essentially how meditation was for the early bhikkhus: they were contemplating the words of their master about the pain of being bound to the forms and phenomena of cyclical existence and trying to realise their truth, and directing their minds towards the transcendental reality of *amata* or ‘the immortal’. As this contemplation deepened, the mind became concentrated and entered *samādhi*, the

¹¹⁹ ‘Jhana Sutta: Mental Absorption’ (AN 9.36), translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu. *Access to Insight (Legacy Edition)*, 30 November 2013, available at www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/an/an09/an09.036.than.html, accessed 02.11.16.

¹²⁰ This two-part process of first turning the mind away from the outer phenomenal world and then directing it towards an inner transcendental reality has a direct parallel in the Yoga philosophy of Patañjali, where mental activity (*vṛtti*) is classified as either turned outwards (*vyutthāna*) towards matter (*prakṛti*) or inwards in order to achieve cessation (*nirodha*) of mental phenomena, towards *puruṣa* (spirit).

¹²¹ *Paṭhamam p’; ahaṃ bhikkhave jhānaṃ nissāya āsavānaṃ khayaṃ vadāmi, dutiyam p’; ahaṃ bhikkhave jhānaṃ nissāya āsavānaṃ khayaṃ vadāmi, tatiyam p’; ahaṃ bhikkhave jhānaṃ nissāya āsavānaṃ khayaṃ vadāmi, catuttham p’; ahaṃ bhikkhave jhānaṃ nissāya āsavānaṃ khayaṃ vadāmi, ākāsañcāyatanam p’; ahaṃ bhikkhave nissāya āsavānaṃ khayaṃ vadāmi, viññānañcāyatanam p’; ahaṃ bhikkhave nissāya āsavānaṃ khayaṃ vadāmi, ākiñcaññāyatanam p’; ahaṃ bhikkhave nissāya āsavānaṃ khayaṃ vadāmi . . . pe . . . nevasaññānāyatanam p’; ahaṃ bhikkhave nissāya āsavānaṃ khayaṃ vadāmi.*

meditation state proper. Whatever stage was the starting point for the *citta* was of little importance as soon as the state of *samādhi* had been reached. I would contend that the state of *samādhi* is the actual transformation and purification of the *citta*; it cannot be reached by *thinking* in the form of intellectual activity - or by any other activity for that matter - which can only serve as a preliminary stage, as we can see in Jhāna Sutta. The definition of this purification is *āsavakkhaya* or ‘the destruction of the influences’; the destruction of these mental defilements is both the culmination of the *magga* and the attainment of *nibbāna*. This is what Gotama discovered for himself according to the sources, and that is why an essential part of his philosophy is to urge people to stop speculating and debating and start meditating. He had reached the conclusion that thinking was just another endless cycle, as was talking; to stop the wheel of becoming (*bhavacakka*), the continuous flow of consciousness (*viññāṇasota*) had to be stopped.

The presence in this text of the *āsavas* or influences, which according to Schmithausen belong to the oldest layer of the Buddha’s teaching,¹²² as well as the absence of the ninth stage of *nirodha samāpatti*,¹²³ which is considered a later addition (Vetter 1988 67), serve as internal evidence indicating that this Sutta is an older text.

2.10 The ‘soft and workable’ mind

There is a detailed description of what happens to the *citta* during meditation in the Verañja Sutta (A.iv.172), which contains the standard account of the night of enlightenment (Wayman 1997 14-16) with the three watches accompanied by the three realisations (*vijjā*) and so forth. After going through the four *jhānas*, Gotama proclaims: ‘When my mind was thus concentrated, purified, cleansed, unblemished, rid of defilement, malleable, wieldy, steady, and attained to imperturbability...’¹²⁴ (*So evaṃ samāhite citte parisuddhe pariyodāte anaṅgaṇe vigatūpakkilese mudubhūte kammaniye ṭhite āneñjappatte...*). After this transformation, he first directs the mind towards knowing his own past lives, then in the second watch knowing the past lives of others, and finally, in the third watch, he directs his

¹²² Lambert Schmithausen (1981): ‘On some Aspects of Descriptions or Theories of “Liberating Insight” and “Enlightenment” in Early Buddhism’. In: *Studien zum Jainismus und Buddhismus* (Gedenkschrift für Ludwig Alsdorf), hrsg. von Klaus Bruhn und Albrecht Wezler, Wiesbaden, p. 206.

¹²³ This ninth stage is described thus in the Anupada Sutta (MN.iii.25), in which it is stated that ‘... *Sāriputto sabbaso nevasaññānāsaññāyatanaṃ samatikkamā saññāvedayitanirodhaṃ upasampajja viharati. Paññāya c’; assa disvā āsavā parikkhīṇā honti.*’

¹²⁴ Translated by: Bhikkhu Bodhi, *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha* (Wisdom Publications, 2012). <https://suttacentral.net/en/an8.11>, accessed 02.11.16.

mind towards knowing the four noble truths which are interwoven with knowledge of the destruction of the taints. This is an important clue which may answer the questions raised by scholars such as Vetter regarding the place of the four noble truths in the account of Gotama's enlightenment (Vetter 1988 14-16) and formulation of his philosophy. Gotama's final knowledge is described thus:

When my mind was thus concentrated, purified, cleansed, unblemished, rid of defilement, malleable, wieldy, steady, and attained to imperturbability, I directed it to the knowledge of the destruction of the taints. I understood as it really is: 'This is suffering'; I understood as it really is: 'This is the origin of suffering'; I understood as it really is: 'This is the cessation of suffering'; I understood as it really is: 'This is the way leading to the cessation of suffering.' I understood as it really is: 'These are the taints'; I understood as it really is: 'This is the origin of the taints'; I understood as it really is: 'This is the cessation of the taints'; I understood as it really is: 'This is the way leading to the cessation of the taints.'¹²⁵

When I knew and saw thus, my mind was liberated from the taint of sensuality, from the taint of existence, and from the taint of ignorance. When it was liberated there came the knowledge: 'It's liberated.' I directly knew: 'Destroyed is birth, the spiritual life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is no more coming back to any state of being.'¹²⁶

The absence of *ditṭhāsava* is conspicuous, but as pointed out in section 1.6, it is considered a later addition, probably added as a reaction to the futility of speculation and debating, as Gotama and his followers were communicating their teachings and encountering resistance

¹²⁵ Translated by: Bhikkhu Bodhi, *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha* (Wisdom Publications, 2012). <https://suttacentral.net/en/an8.11>, accessed 02.11.16

¹²⁶ *So evaṃ samāhite citte parisuddhe pariyodāte anaṅgaṇe vigaṭṭupakkilese mudubhūte kammaniye ṭhite āneñjappatte āsavānaṃ khayañāṇāya cittaṃ abhininnāmesim. So 'idaṃ dukkhaṃ' ti yathābhūtaṃ abbhāññāsim, 'ayaṃ dukkhasamudayo' ti yathābhūtaṃ abbhāññāsim, 'ayaṃ dukkhanirodho' ti yathābhūtaṃ abbhāññāsim, 'ayaṃ duk-kha-nirodha-gāminī paṭipadā' ti yathābhūtaṃ abbhāññāsim; 'ime āsavā' ti yathābhūtaṃ abbhāññāsim, 'ayaṃ āsavasamudayo' ti yathābhūtaṃ abbhāññāsim, 'ayaṃ āsavanirodho' ti yathābhūtaṃ abbhāññāsim, 'ayaṃ āsava-nirodha-gāminī paṭipadā' ti yathābhūtaṃ abbhāññāsim. Tassa me evaṃ jānato evaṃ passato kāmāsavāpi cittaṃ vimuccittha, bhavāsavāpi cittaṃ vimuccittha, avijjāsavāpi cittaṃ vimuccittha. Vimuttasmim vimuttamiti ñāṇaṃ ahoṣi. 'Khīṇā jāti, vusitaṃ brahmacariyaṃ, kataṃ karaṇīyaṃ, nāparaṃ itthattāyā' ti abbhāññāsim.*

from argumentative and critically minded people who were holding on to their own views. It may thus simply be an indication that the text belongs to an older layer.

The interesting point is the way in which the four noble truths and the *āsavas* are interwoven in the text. In fact, the *āsavas* are equated with *dukkha*, and this produces a highly illuminating connection between two core concepts in early Buddhism.

There are two words describing the *citta* purified by concentration in this passage. These words are essential in understanding just how the mind of the *puthujjana* can be turned into the mind of an Arhat. They are *mudubhūta* and *kammanīya*, which mean, respectively, ‘made soft’ (*mudum karoti*) and ‘workable, wieldy’. This is almost an allusion to baking or cooking, where food items are treated in preparation to be changed from one state to another. The mind is being *prepared for becoming something else*. The mind of the ordinary person is like dense or solid matter, and to get the *āsavas* out, it must be made soft and workable. There is no mention of fire in this passage, but we cannot help thinking of allusions to the fire of knowledge, the heat of *tapas* created by ascetic practice and so forth, which no doubt were common concepts in the ascetic culture to which Gotama belonged.

It is clear from this passage that it is the *citta* which is being liberated, and it is being liberated from desire (*kāmāsava*), becoming (*bhavāsava*) and ignorance (*avijjāsava*). I would expect *avijjā* to be the first of the influences to be listed since it is considered the chief *āsava*, but here it is the last, whereas *kāma* is the first. This may offer a clue to understanding one of the inconsistencies modern scholars have been struggling with regarding the Buddha’s early teaching: why did he say that *taṇhā* or ‘longing, desire’ was the cause of *samsāra* initially, and then change it to *avijjā* later?¹²⁷ The concept of the *āsavas* seems to be early, as Schmithausen has observed, and *taṇhā* can be regarded as synonymous with *kāma*. Perhaps *taṇhā* was in fact the first *āsava* which - renamed *kāma* - became subordinate to *avijjā*.¹²⁸ This is plausible, because we know from the later addition of the *diṭṭhāsava* that the *āsavas* were a work in progress. The shift from ‘desire’ to ‘ignorance’ as the main culprit for suffering and cyclical existence may simply reflect a shift from a newly discovered, rudimentarily formulated philosophy to the building of a more impressive metaphysical edifice as the Buddha was expounding his teaching to an ever widening audience - or it could

¹²⁷ Vetter 1988 xxi. See also section 2.10 about ‘the path of discriminative insight’.

¹²⁸ This is my theory - that *taṇhā* was renamed *kāma* and expanded first with *avijjā* and *bhava*, and then later with *diṭṭhi*. Itivuttaka 56 supports this: *Tayo me, bhikkhave, āsavā. Katame tayo? Kāmāsavo, bhavāsavo, avijjāsavo—ime kho, bhikkhave, tayo āsavā’ti*. Itivuttaka 57 also supports the primacy of *kāma*, as it is mentioned before *avijjā* and *bhava*: *Yassa kāmāsavo khīṇo, avijjā ca virājitā; bhavāsavo parikkhīṇo, vipparamutto nirūpadhi; dhāreti antimaṃ dehaṃ, jetvā māraṃ savāhinin’ti*. The relationship between *taṇhā* and *kāma* may be the same as between *citta* and *viññāna*.

even just reflect a change of emphasis (from affective to cognitive, from ethical to metaphysical), context or perspective.

The *āsavas* here are identified with the four truths about *dukkha*. It seems that we can trace the early elaborations of the Buddha's teaching by looking at how these core concepts are related. However this is no easy task, and may never be properly resolved. We may have to live with inconsistencies and divergent parallelisms.

Interestingly, it seems that early Buddhism placed so much emphasis on meditation that it was made the foundation of their ontology. In the Dhātusutta (Ittivutaka 51), a tripartite ontology is introduced: 1) the form element (*rūpadhātu*); 2) the formless element (*arūpadhātu*); and 3) the cessation element (*nirodhadhātu*).¹²⁹ These clearly correspond to: 1) the four form meditations; 2) the four formless dimensions; and 3) the state of cessation. This tripartite division of reality seems to be a precursor to the later *trīsvabhāva* doctrine of Mahāyāna.

2.11 The path of discriminating insight

Vetter (Vetter 1988 xxxi-xxxvii) raises the issue that there seem to be two paths to *nibbāna*: one with meditation, and another with *paññā* (Gombrich 1997 131). However, is it attested to in the Nikāyas that it is possible to reach *nibbāna* without meditation, and through *paññā* only? It is stated that reason alone (e.g. discursive thinking) is not sufficient, as *nibbāna* is called *atakkāvacaro* or 'unthinkable', 'beyond the range of thought' (M 26.168), so this *paññā* which can realise *nibbāna* must in any case be something greater and more powerful than any kind of thinking. My tentative answer to this is as follows: it seems clear from the sources that the defining characteristic of the *magga* is meditation (Gombrich 1996 127). Gotama sitting meditating under the Bodhi tree is the image expressing the very essence of the path. Yet there can be no *nibbāna* without *paññā*, arguably, because *paññā* basically means intellectual *understanding*, and *nibbāna* is an act of understanding, or at least having understanding as an essential component (see section 3.7). It may be called 'supreme' understanding, 'the highest' understanding and so on (*Ñāṇa-dassana* or 'knowledge and vision' are the words used by Gotama introducing the declaration of his enlightenment, e.g. S.v.420), but only when it is in fact that and not intellectual knowledge which may be

¹²⁹ *Tisso imā, bhikkhave, dhātuyo. Katamā tisso? Rūpadhātu, arūpadhātu, nirodhadhātu—imā kho, bhikkhave, tisso dhātuyo 'ti. Etamatthaṃ bhagavā avoca. Tatthetaṃ iti vuccati: 'Rūpadhātuṃ pariññāya āruppesu asaṅghitā; Nirodhe ye vimuccanti, te janā maccuhāyino. Kāyena amataṃ dhātuṃ, phusayitvā nirūpadhiṃ; Upadhip-paṭi-nissag-gaṃ, sacchikatvā anāsavo; Deseti sammāsambuddho, asokaṃ virajaṃ padan 'ti.*

mediocre, inferior or of any other kind. *Nibbāna* is basically a knowledge act in which the knowing subject - which is not always easy to name or identify properly in Buddhism because of the *anatta* ('no self') theory and the Buddha's reluctance to discuss certain metaphysical matters - understands that 'it is free'. That is abundantly clear from Gotama's description in the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta (S.v.420): '*vimuttam iti*' or 'it is free'. Vetter points out that the neuter adjective *vimuttam* has no reference to anything previously spoken (Vetter 1988 xxxiii). The reference must have been so obvious at the time that no explanation was needed. As this thesis emphasises, the only thing in need of liberation is the mind, and *citta* is neuter. It is the mind which is *nibbāna*-ised (*nibbuta*). There is no liberation without knowledge or understanding. The Sanskrit proverb *hr̥te jñānān na muktiḥ* (there is no liberation without knowledge) seems to be the common foundation of the major philosophical traditions of India. This is obvious, proven by postulating the opposite: is there any liberation *without* knowledge? What is the value of being free if you do not know it?¹³⁰ I would argue that the reason why a second *paññā*-based path as an alternative may be postulated both within the tradition and by scholars is that the different meanings of *paññā* are not properly understood or employed. *Paññā* is not primarily 'discriminating insight' or 'wisdom', but 'understanding', primarily of an intellectual nature. It has to be made clear which meaning of *paññā* is being used to be able to make sense of this whole issue. Somehow *paññā* has been reified and made into an autonomous contender to *samādhi*, while their relationship seems to be this: *paññā* - in its purest, *nibbāna*-realising form - is *samādhija* or born in meditation, or developed through mindfulness (see section 3.4 regarding the relationship between meditation and mindfulness). *Paññā* is the outcome of the purification of the *āsava*-defiled mind through mindfulness (*sati*). When mindfulness has brought about insight (*vipassanā*) and ignorance is removed, there is the destruction of the defilements (*āsavakkhaya*), and this is understood by the meditator ('When the mind was freed (*vimuttasmiṃ*) the knowledge (*ñāṇaṃ*) came (*ahosi*): it is freed (*vimuttam iti*)' - *vimuttasmiṃ vimuttam iti ñāṇaṃ ahosi* from the Verañja Sutta (A.iv.172) and elsewhere). Mindfulness is the cultivation and purification of *paññā*, which is the same thing. It is purified by being cultivated, and cultivated by being purified, in the sense that cultivation is the process of removing the impurities that are the *āsavas*. Mindfulness is the path, and *paññā* - purified and transformed into an instrument for *vipassanā* and finally deserving the translation 'liberating insight' - is the goal. Their relationship is thus as cause and effect.

¹³⁰ As Gombrich (Gombrich 1996 117) has observed: '...knowing that one is enlightened is a part of being enlightened.'

Theoretically, only *paññā* is needed to reach *nibbāna*, defined as *vimuttam iti* or ‘knowing it is free’. Is it possible to cultivate *paññā* through something other than meditation? Is it possible to hear the four truths, ponder them and realise their full meaning and then become free? Or is it even possible to be born with a fully evolved *paññā*? Is there any evidence that enlightenment was explicitly achieved without meditation?

The evidence of the Nikāyas is overwhelmingly that this is not the case unless there has been a previous process of meditation, whether in this life or before. The two texts quoted in support of the path of ‘insight only’ are the Kīṭāgiri Sutta (Gombrich 1996 123) and Susīma Sutta (Gombrich 1996 131), which Gombrich has shown cannot be used as credible evidence in support of an argument in favour of a path to *nibbāna* without meditation.

As Vetter writes (Vetter 1988 ix), several scholars have observed inconsistent doctrines, beginning with Schmithausen (1981), and later on J. Bronkhorst (Bronkhorst 1986). Furthermore, as Vetter observes, ‘...comparison of the different extant versions of a text (Pāli, Sanskrit, Chinese) does not simply lead to the oldest nucleus of the doctrine. The only thing that can be established is that in this way one arrives at a Sthavira canon dating from ca. 270 B.C...’ (Vetter 1988 ix). Vetter focuses on ‘the three most striking tenets analysed by Schmithausen’ (Schmithausen 1981 xi), which in Vetter’s words are:

1. One is freed from all cankers - and later released from rebirth and suffering - when one has progressed through four stages of dhyāna-meditation and, at the fourth stage, realised three kinds of knowledge, or at least one kind, namely the knowledge of the four noble truths.
2. One is freed from all cankers - and later released from rebirth and suffering - when one has progressed through four stages of dhyāna-meditation and subsequently gone to four stages of formless meditation and when one finally achieves the cessation of perceptions and feelings (*saññā-vedayita-nirodha*).
3. One is freed from all desire - and thereby later from rebirth and suffering - when, with discriminating insight (*paññā*) one segments oneself in five constituents and recognises each as being transient and therefore suffering, i.e. unsatisfactory, and, consequently, as not worthy of being called self or mine’ (Vetter 1988 xi-xxii).

Vetter claims that path number two can be dismissed as not having been taught by the Buddha, at least not early on (Vetter 1988 xii). This leaves path one and three, and Vetter writes that both of these paths contain elements which belong to a younger period, and it is

thus not easy to say which is the oldest. Vetter observes that meditation is the essential component of path one, while the other path is based on *paññā*, and no mention of meditation or of any other ascetic conduct is made. The audience addressed are monks and nuns, so some preparation is expected (Vetter 1988 xxiii). We will return to this issue of the role of *paññā* in part 3.

The mind is described as naturally luminous or radiant (*pabhassara*) in the short Pabhassara Sutta (A.i.10).¹³¹ When the accidental impurities are removed, the mind returns to its natural luminous state. That process is explicitly called cultivation of mind (*cittabhāvanā*) in this *sutta*. When this happens, it is the role of *paññā* to know it, to bring about the complete realisation (*yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti*) of the liberated state of the mind (*cittaṃ vip̐pamuttaṃ*).

¹³¹ *Pabhassaramidaṃ bhikkhave cittaṃ tañca kho āgantukehi upakkilesehi upakkiliṭṭhaṃ. Taṃ assutavā puthujjano yathābhūtaṃ nappanājāti. Tasmā assutavato puthujjanassa cittabhāvanā natthīti vadāmīti. Pabhassaramidaṃ bhikkhave cittaṃ tañca kho āgantukehi upakkilesehi vip̐pamuttaṃ. 48 Taṃ sutavā ariyasāvako yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti. Tasmā sutavato ariyasāvakassa cittabhāvanā atthīti vadāmīti.*

Part 3: *Cetovimutti*

3.1 Introduction.

This part is about *nibbāna* as *cetovimutti* or liberation of the mind, in the mind, or even ‘from the mind.’¹³² I will attempt to explore what this mind liberation entails in the following. We must, however, heed the Buddha’s words about the impossibility of trying to understand this mind liberation with our thinking or describe it with our language. In the Aggivacchagotta Sutta (M.i.483), the wanderer Vacchagotta asks the Buddha whether the Arhat exists after death:

‘But, Master Gotama, the monk whose mind is thus released: Where does he reappear?’
‘Reappear,’ Vaccha, doesn’t apply.’ ‘In that case, Master Gotama, he does not reappear.’ ‘Does not reappear,’ Vaccha, doesn’t apply. ‘...both does and does not reappear.’ ‘...doesn’t apply.’ ‘...neither does nor does not reappear. ‘...doesn’t apply.’¹³³

The Upasīvamānavapucchā (The Young Man Upasīva’s Questions) from Sutta Nipāta (SNp 1073-76) includes a question by Upasīva about what will happen to the consciousness of one who has reached *nibbāna*:¹³⁴

¹³² As to the etymology of *cetovimutti*: according to PED (p. 272) *ceto* (nt.) is a synonym for *citta*, and only the gen. *cetaso* and the instr. *cetasā* are in use. PED translates *cetovimutti* as ‘emancipation of heart’, and adds that it always occurs with *paññāvimutti*. This is incorrect, as *cetovimutti* does occur alone as well, e.g. in Mahāvedalla Sutta (M.i.292).

¹³³ ‘*Kim nu kho, bho gotama, ‘hoti tathāgato paraṃ marañā, idameva saccaṃ moghamaññan’ti—evaṃdiṭṭhi bhavaṃ gotamo’ti? ‘Na kho ahaṃ, vaccha, evaṃdiṭṭhi: ‘hoti tathāgato paraṃ marañā, idameva saccaṃ moghamaññan’ti.*

‘*Kim pana, bho gotama, ‘na hoti tathāgato paraṃ marañā, idameva saccaṃ moghamaññan’ti—evaṃdiṭṭhi bhavaṃ gotamo’ti? ‘Na kho ahaṃ, vaccha, evaṃdiṭṭhi: ‘na hoti tathāgato paraṃ marañā, idameva saccaṃ moghamaññan’ti.*

‘*Kim nu kho, bho gotama, ‘hoti ca na ca hoti tathāgato paraṃ marañā, idameva saccaṃ moghamaññan’ti—evaṃdiṭṭhi bhavaṃ gotamo’ti? ‘Na kho ahaṃ, vaccha, evaṃdiṭṭhi: ‘hoti ca na ca hoti tathāgato paraṃ marañā, idameva saccaṃ moghamaññan’ti.*

‘*Kim pana, bho gotama, ‘neva hoti na na hoti tathāgato paraṃ marañā, idameva saccaṃ moghamaññan’ti—evaṃdiṭṭhi bhavaṃ gotamo’ti? ‘Na kho ahaṃ, vaccha, evaṃdiṭṭhi: ‘neva hoti na na hoti tathāgato paraṃ marañā, idameva saccaṃ moghamaññan’ti.*

‘Aggi-Vacchagotta Sutta: To Vacchagotta on Fire’ (MN 72), translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu. *Access to Insight (Legacy Edition)*, 30 November 2013, available at www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.072.than.html, accessed 02.11.16.

¹³⁴ *Tiṭṭhe ce so tattha anānuyāyī, Pūgampi vassānaṃ samantacakkhu; Tattheva so sītisiyā vimutto,*

‘If he remains there without going away for a great number of years, All-Seeing Visionary, will he become cool and free right there, or will the consciousness of such a one fall away?’

‘As a flame overthrown by the force of the wind, Upasīva,’ said the Gracious One, ‘goes to rest and can no longer be discerned, just so the Sage free from the mental body goes to rest and can no longer be discerned.’

‘The one who has come to rest, is he then nothing?’ said venerable Upasīva, ‘or is he actually eternally healthy? Please explain this to me, O Sage, for this Teaching has been understood by you.’ ‘There is no measure of the one who has come to rest, Upasīva,’ said the Gracious One, ‘there is nothing by which they can speak of him, when everything has been completely removed, all the pathways for speech are also completely removed.’¹³⁵

Even though the canonical texts emphasise the absence of any *vādapatha* or ‘pathways for speech’ by which *nibbāna* can be reached, they nonetheless make considerable efforts to describe this transcendental and therefore indescribable state, perhaps because there is a *correct intellectual representation* of these matters and an *incorrect* one, and intellectual clarity was in itself considered to be a virtue, while being constantly aware of the ultimately transcendental nature of realising *nibbāna*. These attempts at describing the indescribable have given us a whole new range of words which try to bridge the gap between language and reality, e.g. when *nibbāna* is described as *ehi-passika* or ‘come-and-see-ish’ i.e. ‘which is to be directly experienced’ (PED p. 162), and *tathatta* or ‘the state of being so’ (PED p. 296). I will start my investigation of these canonical statements about the *nibbāna*-ised mind by looking briefly at the biographical accounts we have of the night of Gotama’s enlightenment in the texts of the Sutta Piṭaka, before I move on to look more closely at *nibbāna* and the mind of the Arhat in the philosophy of early Buddhism.

3.2 The night of *nibbāna*

Cavetha viññānaṃ tathāvidhassa. Accī yathā vātavegena khittā, (upasīvāti bhagavā): Atthaṃ paleti na upeti saṅkhaṃ; Evaṃ munī nāmakāyā vimutto, Atthaṃ paleti na upeti saṅkhaṃ. Atthaṅgato so uda vā so natthi, Udāhu ve sassatiyā arogo; Taṃ me munī sādhu viyākarohi, Tathā hi te vidito esa dhammo. Atthaṅgatassa na pamāṇamatthi, (upasīvāti bhagavā): Yena naṃ vajjuṃ taṃ tassa natthi; Sabbesu dhammesu samohatesu, Samūhatā vādapathāpi sabbe’ti.

¹³⁵ Translated by Ānandajoti Bhikkhu (1999, revised May 2007). The text and translation, together with detailed notes and discussions, may be found in multiple formats on the translator’s website, Ancient Buddhist Texts, available at <https://suttacentral.net/en/snp5.7>, accessed 02.11.16.

My rendering of Gotama's night of enlightenment starts when he has decided that the asceticism he has practised for six years is fruitless, has accepted the milk rice from the village girl and regained his energy, and sat down to meditate at the base of an Asvattha tree.¹³⁶ We have already looked at the battle between Gotama and Māra, the King of Death, in section 2.1. We have also looked at the four *jhānas* in the account of the stages of meditation in section 2.7. When Gotama had successfully entered the fourth *jhāna*, he directed his attention to the knowledge of the recollection of past abodes, seeing his own former lives. This was his first vision or *vijjā*. The second *vijjā* was that he saw with his 'divine eye' how beings are born, die and reborn according to their *kammās* or actions. Then, he directs his mind towards the third and final vision of the night of enlightenment, which is described thus in the Verañja Sutta (A.iv.173):¹³⁷

When my mind was thus concentrated, purified, cleansed, unblemished, rid of defilement, malleable, wieldy, steady, and attained to imperturbability, I directed it to the knowledge of the destruction of the taints. I understood as it really is: 'This is suffering'; I understood as it really is: 'This is the origin of suffering'; I understood as it really is: 'This is the cessation of suffering'; I understood as it really is: 'This is the way leading to the cessation of suffering.' I understood as it really is: 'These are the taints'; I understood as it really is: 'This is the origin of the taints'; I understood as it really is: 'This is the cessation of the taints'; I understood as it really is: 'This is the way leading to the cessation of the taints.'

When I knew and saw thus, my mind was liberated from the taint of sensuality, from the taint of existence, and from the taint of ignorance. When it was liberated there came the knowledge: 'It's liberated.' I directly knew: 'Destroyed is birth, the spiritual life has

¹³⁶ Wayman 1997 10-36.

¹³⁷ 'So evaṃ samāhite citte parisuddhe pariyodāte anaṅgaṇe viga-tū-pak-kilese mudubhūte kammaniye thite āneñjappatte āsavānaṃ khayañāṇāya cittaṃ abhininnāmesim. So 'idaṃ dukkhaṇ'ti yathābhūtaṃ abbaññāsim, 'ayaṃ dukkhasamudayo'ti yathābhūtaṃ abbaññāsim, 'ayaṃ dukkhanirodho'ti yathābhūtaṃ abbaññāsim, 'ayaṃ dukkhanirodhagāminī paṭipadā'ti yathābhūtaṃ abbaññāsim; 'ime āsavā'ti yathābhūtaṃ abbaññāsim, 'ayaṃ āsavasamudayo'ti yathābhūtaṃ abbaññāsim, 'ayaṃ āsavanirodho'ti yathābhūtaṃ abbaññāsim, 'ayaṃ āsavanirodhagāminī paṭipadā'ti yathābhūtaṃ abbaññāsim. Tassa me evaṃ jānato evaṃ passato kāmāsavāpi cittaṃ vimuccittha, bhavāsavāpi cittaṃ vimuccittha, avijjāsavāpi cittaṃ vimuccittha. Vimuttasmiṃ vimuttamiti ñāṇaṃ ahoṣi. 'Khīṇā jāti, vusitaṃ brahmacariyaṃ, kataṃ karaṇīyaṃ, nāparaṃ itthattāyā'ti abbaññāsim. Ayaṃ kho me, brāhmaṇa, rattiyā pacchime yāme tatiyā vijjā adhiṅgatā; avijjā vihatā vijjā uppaññā; tamo vihato āloko uppanno, yathā taṃ appamattassa ātāpino pahitattassa viharato. Ayaṃ kho me, brāhmaṇa, tatiyā abhinibbhidā ahoṣi kukkuṭacchāpakasseva aṇḍakosamhā'ti.

been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is no more coming back to any state of being.’

This, brahmin, was the third true knowledge attained by me in the last watch of the night. Ignorance was dispelled, true knowledge had arisen; darkness was dispelled, light had arisen, as happens when one dwells heedful, ardent, and resolute. This, brahmin, was my third breaking out, like that of the chick breaking out of the eggshell.¹³⁸

We can clearly see here what the transformed or purified *citta* (here, including ‘intellect’) is capable of according to early Buddhism: to understand fully (‘as it really is’) the four noble truths about suffering, and to understand fully the origin and so forth of the *āsavas* or taints.¹³⁹ This knowledge has the immediate effect of liberating the mind from the *āsavas*, here listed as *kāma*, *bhava* and *avijjā*. My question at this stage of the account of enlightenment regarding the logic of the succession of events is this: what is it about this knowledge that leads to freedom from the *āsavas*? If ignorance is one of the *āsavas*, how is it possible to understand the four noble truths when it is still intact?¹⁴⁰ Would it not be impossible to understand anything correctly if one is ignorant? This appears to be a paradox, as knowledge and ignorance are mutually exclusive, meaning that it is impossible to know something and not know something at the same time. Knowledge can be expected to dawn as *a result* of the disappearance of ignorance, but here it seems that knowledge dawns while ignorance is still present in the mind, or perhaps the ignorance is chased away by this knowledge. The reason for this situation is most likely that the model of the four truths about *dukkha* and the model of the three *āsavas* are of heterogeneous origin and have been cojoined for reasons we may only ponder on.¹⁴¹ Perhaps they were both regarded as thematically connected to the Buddha’s enlightenment and later redactors felt that they should both be part

¹³⁸ Bhikkhu Bodhi (2012): *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha*, Wisdom Publications, available at <https://suttacentral.net/en/an8.11>, accessed 02.11.16.

¹³⁹ As Schmithausen (Schmithausen 1981 205) observes: ‘...the fourfold set of insight into the Cankers, their origination, etc., - which is, by the way, missing in some versions - has, obviously for the sake of symmetry, been modelled on the fourfold pattern of the Noble Truths, although this pattern hardly makes any sense in the case of the Cankers as they are specified immediately afterwards in our text (which is Dhammacakkapavattanasutta).’

¹⁴⁰ Schmithausen (Schmithausen 1981 208) does not see this as a dilemma: ‘...it is easy to understand that Ignorance may be destroyed by the comprehension of the four Noble Truths, especially if Ignorance is to be understood as ignorance or non-comprehension of the four Noble Truths’.

¹⁴¹ Schmithausen observes that it is an ‘absurdity’ that ignorance is given as the cause of ignorance (Schmithausen 1981 205).

of the description of the story of the Buddha's enlightenment in the first and most famous *sutta* in the Pali canon.

Next there is the realisation that the mind has been liberated, the awareness that the mind has now changed from being bound by the *āsavas* to being free from them (*Tassa me evaṃ jānato evaṃ passato kāmāsavāpi cittaṃ vimuccittha, bhavāsavāpi cittaṃ vimuccittha, avijjāsavāpi cittaṃ vimuccittha*). The verbs are in the past tense, and we may surmise that liberation has already occurred, and an understanding is taking place that the goal has been reached, a post facto realisation: 'After [the mind] is liberated [*vimuttasmim*] there is the knowledge [*ñāṇaṃ ahoṣi*]: 'it is liberated' [*vimuttam iti*].' This translation follows Schmithausen (Schmithausen 1981 205), who can 'see no other possibility of interpretation of this sentence in a manner that fits both grammar and context'. Reading the locative *vimuttasmim* as a temporal locative absolutive construction (see Gonda 1966 89) as 'something that has happened' does, however, create a temporal sequentiation of events which could be a misinterpretation. First, the 1) mind is liberated, and then 2) knowledge that 'it is liberated' arises.¹⁴² This divides the experience into two separate segments, which may not have been the original intention. If *vimuttasmim* is taken instead as a simple locative construction, it would mean that 'in its liberation, there is the knowledge that "it is liberated"', hence making the liberation and knowledge of the liberation *simultaneous*. As this highest kind of knowledge is always considered direct (*sacchikaroti* 'to know directly', from Sanskrit *sākṣāt* + \sqrt{kr} 'to make visible in front of the eyes', i.e. 'to see with one's own eyes') in the Nikāyas, this would seem to make sense. There is also a case to be argued for the oneness of being and knowing in this transcendental state, in which no duality or differentiation can exist according to the rationale of the philosophy of *nibbāna* in the Nikāyas (e.g. Ud. 80). In whatever way this locative is understood, this is the moment of enlightenment itself, the exact time of liberation.¹⁴³ Although this knowledge of liberation of the mind has taken place, there is yet another realisation, this time of the 'long-term' consequences of the liberation: "'Birth is finished (*khīṇā jāti*), the spiritual life has been lived (*vusitaṃ brahmacariyaṃ*), what had to be done has been done (*kataṃ karaṇīyaṃ*), there is no more coming back to any state of being (*nāparaṃ itthattāyā'ti*)" I knew (*abbhaññāsim*).'

¹⁴² This also raises the question of what function insight has in the liberation; is it causal, instrumental or just observational regarding the liberation? If *paññāvimutto* indeed means 'liberated by wisdom', it must be the factor causing the liberation, either as the direct cause or indirectly as an instrument of the cause.

¹⁴³ *Nibbāna* is by all accounts a state transcending time. *Nibbāna* is not *tekālika* or belonging to the three times, but *kālavimutta* or free from time (see Collins 2010 35).

To sum up our findings thus far: the enlightenment of Gotama - according to the Verañja Sutta - is a series of knowledge incidents: 1) three visions (*vijjā*) in the course of the meditation during the three watches of the night; 2) an insight into the four noble truths (*sacca*) about how life is suffering, there is an origin of suffering, there is a cessation of suffering, and a way to the cessation of suffering; 3) a similar analytical insight into the origin and so forth of the three *āsavas*; 4) the knowledge that the mind has been liberated from the three *āsavas*; when the mind is free, there arises 5) a knowledge that ‘it is free’. Finally, there arises 6) a realisation regarding the implications of this liberation, that birth is finished, the practice has been successful, and there will be no more future suffering. We may hence see these six realisations or knowledge incidents as stations or sequences in a wholly gnosis-driven liberation process.¹⁴⁴

In the Dhammacakkavattana Sutta, the declaration of enlightenment is expressed differently, but the main point regarding the end of rebirth is the same: *Ñāṇaṅca pana me dassanaṃ udapādi – ‘akuppā me vimutti, ayamantimā jāti, natthidāni punabbhavo’*’*ti*. This phrase is found several places in the Nikāyas, and often has *cetovimutti* as an alternative for *vimutti*. Either *vimutti* is an abbreviation for *cetovimutti*, or *vimutti* is extended to *cetovimutti* for the purpose of clarification. It is in any case clear from the texts dealing with the story of Gotama’s enlightenment that the object of liberation is the *citta* or mind.

The sentence translates as: ‘A knowledge and vision for me [*Ñāṇaṅca pana me dassanaṃ*] arose [*udapādi*] - ‘Unshakeable [*akuppā*] is my [*me*] liberation [*vimutti*], this [*ayam*] [is my] last [*antimā*] birth [*jāti*], there is not [*natthi*] now [*dāni*] rebirth [*punabbhavo’ti*]. The word ‘unshakeable’ emphasises the irreversibility of the state achieved: there is a clear understanding that the whole process of *samsāra*, of suffering as a human being caught in the cycle of birth and death, is completely finished and nothing can reverse it.¹⁴⁵ The experience of liberation contains a certainty that it is impossible to return to

¹⁴⁴ As Schmithausen observes (Schmithausen 1981 207): ‘...it should be noted that, in both the Buddha’s Enlightenment and the Disciple’s liberation, final knowledge or awareness of being liberated seems to have been regarded as an essential element...’.

¹⁴⁵ There is in the Mahāvedalla Sutta (M i.292) an idea that there are many *cetovimuttis*. Following a *anupubbavihāra* pattern of successive meditation stages (not the standard one), there is a *cetovimutti* at every stage (‘mind liberation of emptiness’, ‘mind liberation of nothingness’, and so on). At the end of the description of every stage, it is asked: ‘Which is said to be the best of the mind liberations? The unshakeable *cetovimutti*, which is empty of desire, hatred and delusion’ (‘*Yāvatā kho āvuso... cetovimuttiyo akuppā tāsaṃ cetovimutti aggamakkhāyati. Sā kho panākuppā cetovimutti suññā rāgena, suññā dosena suññā mohena*’).

the previous state of bondage. We may call this a conviction that the knowledge gained cannot be ‘unlearned’.¹⁴⁶

3.3 The mind of the Arhat

The mind or self of the enlightened being has been transformed from small or limited (*paritta*) to great (*mahaggata*) and immeasurable (*appamāṇa*) (A.i.249).¹⁴⁷ The Buddha describes the religious life leading to *nibbāna* thus: ‘This is the path by which those with great selves (*mahattehi*), great seers have fared’ (It.28-9).¹⁴⁸ The Arhat (worthy one) has successfully undergone the *bhāvanā* or cultivation of *citta* and *paññā*, or mind and intellect, and is no longer a ‘learner’ (*sekho*). He has now a ‘developed self’ (*bhāvitatto*) (SNp 1049). When the practitioner reached *nibbāna*, he or she would announce their realisation with what have become standardised formulas.¹⁴⁹ It seems, however, that some were too hasty in announcing having reached Arhatship: ‘There are some foolish fellows here who declare knowledge braggingly (or: jokingly?), it seems’ (A.iii.359).¹⁵⁰ Another statement supporting this point is found in M.ii.252: ‘There are some monks here, who, out of overconceit, declared knowledge’ (Johansson 1969 117).¹⁵¹

The Tathāgata is called ‘deep, immeasurable, unfathomable as the great ocean’ (*tathāgato gambhīro appameyyo duppariyogāho seyyathā pi mahāsamuddo*) in M.i.487. A definition of ‘ar(a)hatship’ (*arahatta*) is found in S.iv.252: ‘The destruction of desire, hate and illusion - that is called arahatship’ (*Yo kho āvuso rāgakkhayo dosakkhayo mohakkhayo idam vuccati arahattanti*).¹⁵² Otherwise, the descriptions of the personality of the Arhat are similar to the descriptions of *nibbāna*, because the essential qualification of the Arhat is that his mind is now (*pari-*)*nibbuto* or ‘*nibbāna*-ised’: there is no difference. Johansson (Johansson 1969 111) observes the following with regard to the nature of the liberated mind

¹⁴⁶ The apposition of *akuppā* (‘unshakeable, imperturbable’) to (*ceto*)*vimutti* has become standardised as a phrase in the Nikāyas, e.g. A.iii.351 (Iṇa Sutta): ‘*Tassa sammā vimuttassa, ñāṇaṃ ce hoti tādino; Akuppā me vimuttī’ti, bhavasamyojanakkhaye.*’

¹⁴⁷ See Harvey (Harvey 1995 57) regarding the identity of the mind (*citta*) and the self (*atta*).

¹⁴⁸ ‘*Samvaratthaṃ pahānatthaṃ, brahmacariyaṃ anītihaṃ; Adesayi so bhagavā, nibbā-nogadha-gā-minaṃ. Esa maggo mahattehi, amuyāto mahesibhi; Ye ye taṃ paṭipajanti, yathā buddhena desitaṃ; Dukkassantaṃ karissanti, satthu-sāsana-kārino’ti.*’

¹⁴⁹ See Ergardt (Ergardt 1977) for a detailed study of the arhat/arahant-formulas.

¹⁵⁰ Translated by: Johansson 1969 117. ‘*Atha ca pana idhekacce moghapurisā hasamānakā maññe aññaṃ byākaronti.*’

¹⁵¹ ‘*...santi panidhekacce bhikkhū adhimānenapi aññaṃ byākamsu.*’

¹⁵² See: Johansson 1969 116.

of the Arhat: ‘In none of the innumerable cases where the attainment of *nibbāna* is referred to as the destruction of the obsessions (i.e. *āsavas*), is it ever suggested that this transformation is not enough: the new state *is* “the end of suffering”’. If *nibbāna* is simply the removal of the *āsavas* from the mind, this would prompt us to take a closer look at the process of mental cultivation or purification which leads to *āsavakkhaya* or ‘destruction of the influences’. We have already studied the cultivation of mind in part 2, but will take a closer look at this process in the following section.

3.4 Liberation of mind (*cetovimutti*) and liberation of intellect (*paññāvimutti*).

My thesis about the human psyche according to early Buddhism is this - the human psyche has several functions, but only two integral ‘components’ that may be called ‘faculties’. These are: 1) the seat of emotion called the *citta* or mind; 2) the seat of cognition called *paññā* or the intellect. It is a fact that they are grouped together as a pair.¹⁵³ The boundary between them is sometimes vague, and they may thus be considered centres within or of the same *viññāṇa* or human consciousness: one affective part and one cognitive part. They are interconnected and operate seamlessly together. They are both described as being in need of *bhāvanā* or cultivation, as we shall see in a passage from Peṭakopadesa of the Khuddaka Nikāya soon quoted below.¹⁵⁴ The various functions of the human psyche, such as *saññā* and *vitakka* are not described as needing cultivation in the same way, and I thus understand them to be functions of the psyche, and not faculties. Rather, these various functions may be said to belong to either of the two ‘centres’ depending on whether they are of a cognitive or of an affective nature. *Vitakka* and *vicāra* for instance belong to *paññā*, and desire and hatred belong to *citta*. *Cetanā* or ‘will’ might be said to be a form of cooperation between the two. The main problem for *paññā* is misunderstanding or confusion (*moha*) caused by *avijjā* (ignorance), while the main problem for *citta* is *upādāna* (grasping) caused by *kāma* (desire).¹⁵⁵ An ignorant *paññā* is in a state of confusion which creates *dukkha*. The *citta* desires various sensual pleasures in the process of which it attaches itself or clings to changing things which will create *dukkha* when they change and eventually perish. All things except *nibbāna* change. *Nibbāna* (= ‘the immortal’) is according to one definition the

¹⁵³ PED p. 267.

¹⁵⁴ The Peṭakopadesa (‘Piṭaka-disclosure’), along with the later Netippakaraṇa, both belong to the Khuddaka Nikāya, texts establishing a method for composing commentaries on the Buddha’s words as recorded in the *suttas* (Piṭaka-Disclosure 1964 xi).

¹⁵⁵ ‘Problem’ is understood here in Buddhist terms as something that ‘leads to rebirth’ (*ponobhavika*).

liberation of mind from clinging: ‘*Etam amatam yadidaṃ anupādā cittassa vimokkho*’ (M.ii.261). The same idea is expressed thus in A.iii.351: ‘Not clinging in any way, the mind is rightly liberated’ (*Sabbaso anupādāya, sammā cittaṃ vimuccati*).

Using this understanding of the early Buddhist philosophy of mind makes it easier to understand why the texts tell us different things about what seemingly or expectedly is the same thing: the cause of suffering. In one account, it is *taṇhā* (Schmithausen 1981 208), and in another it is *avijjā*. For Schmithausen, this indicates that there is inconsistency or heterogeneity in the teachings of early Buddhism. If, however, one were to take into account that the *taṇhā* account refers to the *citta* as the mental seat of *feeling*, while the *avijjā* account refers to the *paññā* as the mental seat of *thinking*, it would be easier to understand these teachings as they are presented in the Pali canon, while being aware of the problems of textual transmission over a span of 2500 years, of which approximately the first five centuries were oral (Harvey 1995 9). The *citta* influenced by desire (*kāma* and *bhava*) desires, hates, binds itself, gets involved, acts, creates karmic results, suffers karmic consequences and so forth, while the *paññā* influenced by *avijjā* (and later also *diṭṭhi*) keeps misunderstanding what the world is, what the self is, during the process of which it creates a life of untruth. It is all delusion and confusion. *Citta* and *paññā* operate together, as they are the two sides of the same human psyche or consciousness, comprising a complex system of the *khandhas* or personality factors. *Citta* could not desire the possession of a physical object unless there were present an ignorance of the empty or ephemeral nature of the object, and the knowledge that attaching itself to it would eventually lead to suffering. And - by extension - life itself as a human would be understood to end in disease, old age and death, and with this knowledge the *citta* would not be inclined to bind itself, understood as clinging to the five personality factors.

The following passage from Peṭakopadesa 5 clearly demonstrates how the human psyche is understood as composed of two ‘centres’, one of affection and the other of cognition. We can see that inner cultivation is twofold: the cultivation of *citta* and of *paññā*. Through the cultivation of *citta*, there arises *samatha* or ‘pacification’, and through the cultivation of *paññā*, there arises *vipassanā* or ‘insight’. Thus *rāga* or ‘desire’ is removable through *samatha*, and *avijjā* can be removed through *vipassanā*:¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁶ ‘*Tattha cittabhāvanāya samathā, paññābhāvanāya vipassanā. Tattha evaṃ anumīyati... ..samathena rāgo pahīyati, vipassanāya avijjā.*’

Samatha is through cultivation of *citta*, and *vipassanā* is through cultivation of *paññā*. Thus it is inferred that...desire is abandoned through *samatha*, and ignorance through *vipassanā*.

This view of the human consciousness as composed of *citta* and *paññā* is also found in this passage from the *Āṅguttara Nikāya* (A.i.61):¹⁵⁷

There is *samatha* and there is *vipassanā*. *Samatha*, monks, what happens when it is cultivated? The mind (*citta*) is cultivated. *Citta* being cultivated, what happens? The desire is abandoned. *Vipassanā*, monks, what happens when it is cultivated? *Paññā* is cultivated. When intellect (*paññā*) is cultivated, what happens? The ignorance is abandoned. The *citta*, monks, cannot be liberated if it is defiled by desire. The *paññā* defiled by ignorance is not cultivated. Indeed, monks, abandonment of desire is mind liberation (*cetovimutti*), and abandonment of ignorance is intellect liberation (*paññāvimutti*).¹⁵⁸

We can infer from the association of *samatha* with *cittabhāvanā* and *cittabhāvanā* leading to the cessation of *rāga* that the *citta* is a centre or *faculty of feeling*.¹⁵⁹ Similarly, we can infer from the association of *vipassanā* with *paññābhāvanā* and of *paññābhāvanā* with the eradication of *avijjā* that *paññā* is a centre or *faculty of thinking*, which I therefore consider to be ‘the intellect’. There can, according to this text, be no liberation if the mind is tainted by desire, and no liberation of the intellect if it is tainted by ignorance. *Cetovimutti* is here defined as *rāgavirāga* or ‘dispassion for desire’, and *paññāvimutti* as *avijjāvirāga* or

¹⁵⁷ *Samatho ca vipassanā ca. Samatho, bhikkhave, bhāvito kamattham anubhoti? Cittaṃ bhāvīyati. Cittaṃ bhāvitaṃ kamattham anubhoti? Yo rāgo so pahīyati. Vipassanā, bhikkhave, bhāvitaṃ kamattham anubhoti? Paññā bhāvīyati. Paññā bhāvitaṃ kamattham anubhoti? Yā avijjā sā pahīyati. Rāgupakkiliṭṭhaṃ vā, bhikkhave, cittaṃ na vimuccati, avijjupakkiliṭṭhā vā paññā bhāvīyati. Iti kho, bhikkhave, rāgavirāgā cetovimutti, avijjāvirāgā paññāvimutti’ ti.*

¹⁵⁸ Gombrich (Gombrich 1998 113-133) uses this passage as a starting point for a discussion of whether there are ‘two paths to nirvana’. Gombrich concludes that there is only one path, and that the tradition has misunderstood the *paññāvimutti* as a liberation through insight without meditation, perhaps as a ‘narrative accident due to Sangha apologetics’ (Gombrich 1996 127).

¹⁵⁹ It may be translated with the word ‘heart’ as some do, but ‘heart’ is too narrow a concept, being too closely associated with the romantic sentiment of ‘love’. The expression ‘head and heart’ would fit quite well semantically as a translation of *paññā* and *citta*, but this is too much of a cliché to serve our purpose, which is to understand early Buddhist philosophy of mind. The PED considers *citta* as having a definite emotional tendency (Gombrich 1996 266).

‘dispassion for ignorance’.¹⁶⁰ ‘Dispassion’ presumably means in this context ‘relinquishment’ or ‘abandonment’. According to PED (p. 634), it could also mean ‘indifference’ or ‘emancipation’, i.e. that *cetovimutti* is a state of emancipation from desire.

In the Jaṭā Sutta (Tangle Sermon) (S.i.14), the twofold cultivation of mind and intellect is described thus as a reply to an answer posed by a brahmin:¹⁶¹

A tangle within, a tangle without, people are entangled in a tangle. Gotama, I ask you this: who can untangle this tangle? [The Buddha:] A man established in virtue, discerning [who has *paññā*],¹⁶² developing discernment [*paññā*] and mind [*citta*], a monk ardent, astute: he can untangle this tangle. Those whose passion, aversion, and ignorance have faded away, arahants, their effluents [*āsavas*] ended: for them the tangle’s untangled. Where name-and-form, along with perception of impingement and form, totally stop without trace: that’s where the tangle is cut.¹⁶³

We can see here another example of how *citta* and *paññā* are grouped together as a pair, and that they are both considered to be in need of cultivation. We can also see that the condition for getting ‘out of the tangle’ is that the *āsavas* must be destroyed (i.e. removed from the mind and intellect), and they are listed as lust (*rāga*), hatred (*dosa*) and ignorance (*avijjā*). We can see here what may seem like a mix-up of the *āsavas* (see section 1.6) and the *kilesas*, but we have seen elsewhere that *moha* (of the *kilesas*) and *avijjā* (of the *āsavas*) are used interchangeably (see section 3.7).

Another example of this twofold cultivation (here: ‘growth’) is found in a verse from the Theragāthā (1.46): ‘My *sati* and *paññā* have grown, my *citta* is fully concentrated. Make

¹⁶⁰ There are other explanations given as the cause(s) of *cetovimutti-paññāvimutti*: in the Mahāvedalla Sutta (M.i.292), the cause is given as *sammādiṭṭhi* (‘right view’): ‘*Pañcahi kho, āvuso, aṅgehi anuggahitā sammādiṭṭhi cetovimuttiphālā ca hoti cetovimuttiphālānisamsā ca, paññāvimuttiphālā ca hoti paññāvimuttiphālānisamsā ca. Idhāvuso, sammādiṭṭhi sīlānuggahitā ca hoti, sutānuggahitā ca hoti, sākacchānuggahitā ca hoti, samathānuggahitā ca hoti, vipassanānuggahitā ca hoti. Imehi kho, āvuso, pañcahaṅgehi anuggahitā sammādiṭṭhi cetovimuttiphālā ca hoti cetovimuttiphālānisamsā ca, paññāvimuttiphālā ca hoti paññāvimuttiphālānisamsā cā*’^{ti}.

English translation: ‘Mahavedalla Sutta: The Greater Set of Questions-and-Answers’ (MN 43), translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu. *Access to Insight (Legacy Edition)*, 30 November 2013, www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.043.than.html [02.11.16]

¹⁶¹ ‘*Antojaṭā bahijaṭā, Jaṭāya jaṭitā pajā; Tam tam gotama pucchāmi, ko imaṃ vijaṭaye jaṭan*’^{ti}. ‘*Sīle patiṭṭhāya naro sapañño, cittaṃ paññaṅca bhāvayaṃ; Ātāpī nipako bhikkhu, so imaṃ vijaṭaye jaṭaṃ. Yesaṃ rāgo ca doso ca, avijjā ca virājitā; khīṇāsavā arahanto, tesam vijaṭitā jaṭā. Yattha nāmaṅca rūpaṅca, asesam uparujjhati; paṭighaṃ rūpasaññā ca, etthesā chijjate jaṭā*’^{ti}.

¹⁶² The words in brackets are mine.

¹⁶³ ‘Jata Sutta: The Tangle’ (SN 7.6), translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu. *Access to Insight (Legacy Edition)*, 30 November 2013, available at www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn07/sn07.006.than.html, accessed 02.11.16.

whatever forms you want,¹⁶⁴ it will not bother me. (*Sati paññā ca me vuḍḍhā, cittañca susamāhitam; kāmaṃ karassu rūpāni, neva maṃ byādhayissasī'ti*). We can see *citta* and *paññā* paired, and while *paññā* is associated with *sati*, *citta* is associated with concentration or *samādhi*. We have seen these connections so frequently in the Nikāyas that it is reasonable to conclude that this is an established pattern.

When asked why there are some monks who are ‘mind-liberated’ (*cetovimuttino*) and some who are ‘intellect-liberated’ (*paññāvimuttino*), the Buddha answers, according to the Mahāmālukya Sutta (M.i.433), that ‘the difference lies in their faculties’ (*indriyas*).¹⁶⁵ According to the PED (p. 121), *indriya* refers not only to the five sense organs, but also to the mind (*mano* is used interchangeably for *citta*). PED points out that *indriya* has a much wider meaning than just ‘organ’, and can mean: ‘faculty, function’ with reference to sense-perceptibility; ‘kind, characteristic, determinating principle, sign, mark’ with reference to objective aspects of form and matter; ‘principle, controlling force’ with reference to moods of sensation and moral powers or motives controlling action; and ‘category’ with reference to cognition and insight (PED 121). There are also, in the commentarial tradition, lists of up to 22 *indriyas*, one of which is *paññundriya* (*paññā+indriya*), given the meaning ‘reason’ (PED 121). Bearing in mind this wide range of meanings, we may interpret the Buddha’s answer as referring to people manifesting liberation differently; one being ‘emotionally liberated’, and one being ‘intellectually liberated’. What this means exactly would involve some speculation, but we may understand that some people have liberated minds in the sense of being pacified and free from attachment, anger, agitation and so forth, while others have liberated intellects in the sense of being insightful and free from faulty views, miscomprehension and so forth. In any case, the Buddha refers according to this text to the *citta* and the *paññā* as different *indriyas*, which supports my thesis that mind and intellect are the two integral ‘parts’ of human consciousness according to early Buddhism, and that they are qualitatively different. Referring to *citta* and *paññā* as *indriyas* also supports my interpretation of the dual compound *cetovimutti-paññāvimutti* as being syntactically similar.

To sum up our findings so far, we can see in these passages a consistent philosophy of mind in which the human psyche is divided into two faculties, one of emotion or affection,

¹⁶⁴ The words seems to be addressed to Māra, and the ‘forms’ must be temptations, challenges or illusions he conjures up and throws at the adept, trying to prevent him or her from achieving liberation.

¹⁶⁵ *Eso ce, bhante, maggo esā paṭipadā pañcannaṃ orambhāgiyānaṃ saṃyojanānaṃ pahānāya, atha kiñcarahi idhekacce bhikkhū cetovimuttino ekacce bhikkhū paññāvimuttino 'ti? 'Ettha kho panesāhaṃ, ānanda, indriyavemattataṃ vadāmi'ti.*

and one of cognition or intellection. We can also see how different techniques of cultivating these two faculties have been devised, one pacifying the feelings, the other clarifying the thoughts. Briefly explained, the path to liberation in early Buddhism is a twofold inner cultivation: 1) *samādhi* or meditational concentration creates *samatha* or pacification of the *citta* or ‘emotional mind’; and 2) *sati* or ‘mindfulness’ creates *vipassanā* or ‘clear insight’ of the *paññā* or intellect.¹⁶⁶

3.5 *Saññāvedayitanirodha* and *cetovimutti-paññāvimutti*

The basis of *citta* and *paññā*, of feeling and thought, is consciousness. Without consciousness, there is no mental activity. This is how early Buddhism explains consciousness within the model of the causal chain of twelve conditions. Consciousness has various functions connected to the faculties of *citta* and *paññā*, yet they all occur *in consciousness*. It is this human consciousness that keeps the wheel of *saṃsāra* rolling, and it must therefore be stopped for liberation to take place. As we have seen (cf. section 2.7), *nibbāna* is reached by stopping the conscious activity of *saññā* and *vedayita*. This is called *saññāvedayitanirodha*, or ‘the cessation of cognition and feeling’. *Saññā* has been variously translated as perception, apperception, ideation (Schmithausen 1996) and cognition (Harvey 1995).¹⁶⁷ *Vedayita* means ‘sensation, experience’ (compare with *vedanā*), and is pleasant, unpleasant or neither (M.i.292). I would argue that the human psyche is understood as having two main faculties in the early Buddhist philosophy of mind, and that *saññā* refers to the activity or content of *paññā* or intellect, while *vedayita* refers to the activity or content of *citta* or mind as the seat of emotions.¹⁶⁸ Both these kinds of activities must be stopped or brought to cessation for *nibbāna* to be realised. We will thus investigate further references to the *nirodha* of *viññāṇa* in the Nikāyas (see section 1.5 on *viññāṇa*).

A frequently quoted explanation for the result of the cessation of consciousness is SNp 1036-37. The Buddha is asked by Ajita: ‘...mind and body, dear sir, please tell me this when asked: where does this cease? This question that was asked, Ajita, I can answer it! As

¹⁶⁶ Gombrich (Gombrich 1998 115) has provided a schematic presentation of these two methods or paths.

¹⁶⁷ Schmithausen (Schmithausen 1981 224) points out that the Mahāmālukya Sutta (AN 9.36) ‘...explicitly states that attainment [of Liberating] Insight [is only possible] so far as one dwells in meditative absorption involving ideation (*yāvataṅkaṃ saññāsamāpattiṃ tāvatā aññāpaṭivedho*).

¹⁶⁸ *Vedayita* is the pp. of *vedeti* and is given the meaning ‘felt, experienced’ by PED p. 648. The verb *vedeti* has a twofold meaning: either ‘to know’ intellectually, or with reference to general feeling ‘to experience’ (PED p. 648).

to where mind and body ceases without remainder: with the cessation of consciousness, in this place it ceases.¹⁶⁹ In the twelvefold causal chain, *viññāṇa* is caused by *saṅkhāra* or ‘constructing activities’ which can be understood as a subconscious layer in which karmic results are stored as imprints, which themselves become volitions (*cetanā*) that decide new actions (Hamilton 1996 73). *Viññāṇa* is said to be of six kinds: of eye, of ear, of nose, of tongue, of body and of mind. Consciousness cannot operate without the organ (*indriya*). *Nāma-rūpa* is in short ‘mind and body’. *Nāma* (name) is further explained as ‘feeling’, ‘perception’, ‘intention’, ‘contact’ and ‘attention’ (Hamilton 1996 121-135). *Rūpa* (form) is described as the four great or physical elements, and the body made of these. Turning this causal wheel backwards (e.g. D.ii.55), as Gotama did during the first week after his enlightenment (Wayman 1997 16), will create the result described in the passage just quoted: whatever is being created or conditioned by consciousness will disappear if consciousness itself stops, and it is even said that this stopping or cessation is ‘without remainder’ (*asesa*), meaning that nothing is left. Yet it is obvious that the mind and body of Gotama did not vanish into thin air when he became enlightened, so what does this actually mean? Early Buddhism explains this by introducing the idea of two kinds of *nibbāna*, namely *sa-upadi-sesa-(pari)nibbāna* (*nibbāna* with remainder) and *an-upadi-sesa-(pari)nibbāna* (*nibbāna* without remainder).¹⁷⁰ The Buddha explains the relation between the two in Brahmajāla Sutta (D.1):¹⁷¹ ‘The body of the Tathāgata, bhikkhus, stands with the leash that bound it to existence cut. As long as his body stands, gods and men shall see him. But with the breakup of the body and the exhaustion of the life-faculty, gods and men shall see him no more.’¹⁷²

We will continue exploring what ‘cessation of consciousness’ means. In SNp 740-41, we read: ‘Whatever suffering arises in the world, all is caused by consciousness. With the cessation of consciousness, there is no arising of suffering. Knowing this danger, that suffering is caused by consciousness, with the stilling of consciousness, one is wishless,

¹⁶⁹ ‘*Nāmarūpaṇca mārisa; Etaṃ me puṭṭho pabrūhi, Katthetaṃ uparujjhati*. ‘*Yametaṃ pañhaṃ apucchi, ajita taṃ vadāmi te; Yattha nāmaṇca rūpaṇca, asesam uparujjhati; viññāṇassa nirodhena, etthetaṃ uparujjhati*. Translated by Ānandajoti Bhikkhu (1999, revised, May 2007). The text and translation, together with detailed notes and discussions, may be found in multiple formats on the translator’s website, Ancient Buddhist Texts. Used by kind permission of Bhikkhu Ānandajoti. Prepared for SuttaCentral by Bhikkhu Sujato. First Added: 2016-08-16. Last Modified: 2016-08-16. Available at <https://suttacentral.net/en/snp5.2>, accessed 02.11.16.

¹⁷⁰ For a discussion of these two kinds of *nibbāna*, see: Collins 2010 39-41.

¹⁷¹ *Ucchinnabhavanettiko, bhikkhave, tathāgatassa kāyo tiṭṭhati. Yāvassa kāyo ṭhassati, tāva naṃ dakkhanti devamanussā. Kāyassa bhedaṃ uddham jīvitapariyādānā na naṃ dakkhanti devamanussā.*

¹⁷² Translated from the Pali by Bhikkhu Bodhi. Digital Transcription Source: BPS Transcription Project. Extracted from *The All-embracing Net of Views: The Brahmajāla Sutta and its Commentaries*, translated and introduced by Bhikkhu Bodhi. (BP209S). First published 1978. Second printing 1990. Second edition 2007. Available at www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/dn/dn.01.0.bodh.html, accessed 02.11.16.

quenched.’¹⁷³ This passage describes the cessation of consciousness as the same as *nibbāna* (*parinibbuto* p.p. of *pari-ni-√vā* - ‘to be quenched’ means ‘who has become *nibbāna*-ised’). One would expect *nibbāna* to be realised when the first *nidāna* in the causal chain (i.e. *avijjā*) is removed, so to make sense of this we must either conclude that the preceding *nidānas* of *avijjā* and *saṅkhāra* are here included in *viññāṇa* (they can be understood as deeper or subconscious layers of consciousness, or the substratum of consciousness), or that it is possible to break free from the causal chain at any link, at least from the link of consciousness. In S.iii.55, *viññāṇa* when liberated is described as attaining *nibbāna*.¹⁷⁴

If a monk abandons passion for the property of consciousness, then owing to the abandonment of passion, the support is cut off, and there is no base for consciousness. Consciousness, thus unestablished, not proliferating, not performing any function, is released. Owing to its release, it stands still. Owing to its stillness, it is contented. Owing to its contentment, it is not agitated. Not agitated, he [the monk] is totally unbound right within. He discerns that ‘Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.’¹⁷⁵

It is clear from this passage that it is desire which makes consciousness cling to the five personality factors and thus perpetuates cyclic existence (*samsāra*) through rebirth; when desire disappears, consciousness loses its base. When it is unestablished, it does not proliferate or function. Released from this ‘normal human’ consciousness, it becomes still, and being still, there is contentment and agitation is gone. And this is liberation.

¹⁷³ *Yaṃ kiñci dukkhaṃ sambhoti, sabbaṃ viññāṇapaccayā; viññāṇassa nirodhena, natthi dukkhassa sambhavo. Etamādīnavaṃ ñatvā, dukkhaṃ viññāṇapaccayā; viññāṇūpasamā bhikkhu, nicchāto parinibbutoti.* Translated by Bhikkhu Sujato. This translation was edited by Bhikkhu Sujato as part of the full translation of the Sutta Nipāta with commentary prepared from a draft handwritten and typed manuscript of Laurence Khantipalo Mills in 2015. The project was managed by Laurence’s students Michael Wells and Gary Dellora, and initial digitising of the text was by Sean Read. Full text is available at <https://suttacentral.net/downloads>, accessed 02.11.16.

¹⁷⁴ *Rūpadhātuyā ce, bhikkhave, bhikkhuno rāgo pahīno hoti. Rāgassa pahānā vocchijjatārammaṇaṃ patiṭṭhā viññāṇassa na hoti. Vedanādhātuyā ce, bhikkhave... saññādhātuyā ce bhikkhave... saṅkhāradhātuyā ce bhikkhave... viññāṇadhātuyā ce, bhikkhave, bhikkhuno rāgo pahīno hoti. Rāgassa pahānā vocchijjatārammaṇaṃ patiṭṭhā viññāṇassa na hoti. Tadappatiṭṭhitam viññāṇam avirūḷham anabhisaṅkhaccavimuttaṃ . Vimuttattā titham. Tithattā santusitam. Santusitattā na paritassati. Aparitassam paccattaññeva parinibbāyati. ‘Khīṇā jāti, vusitaṃ brahmacariyaṃ, kataṃ karaṇīyaṃ, nāparaṃ itthattāyā’ ti pajānātī’ ti.*

¹⁷⁵ ‘Udana Sutta: Exclamation’ (S 22.55), translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu. *Access to Insight (Legacy Edition)*, 30 November 2013, available at www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn22/sn22.055.than.html, accessed 02.11.16.

In the Āneñjasappāya Sutta (M.ii.261), the *viññāṇa* of a *bhikkhu* is similarly said to attain *nibbāna*:¹⁷⁶

There is [however] the case where a monk, having practised in this way - ‘It should not be, it should not occur to me; it will not be, it will not occur to me. What is, what has come to be, that I abandon’ - obtains equanimity. He does not relish that equanimity, does not welcome it, does not remain fastened to it. As he does not relish that equanimity, does not welcome it, does not remain fastened to it, his consciousness is not dependent on it, is not sustained by it [does not cling to it]. Without clinging/sustenance, Ananda, a monk is totally unbound. ‘For one knowing in this way, seeing in this way, monk, there is the immediate ending of fermentations.’¹⁷⁷

A passage which seems to support the idea that *nibbāna* is a state of consciousness¹⁷⁸ - a revolutionised, enlightened or liberated state of mind - is D.i.233:¹⁷⁹ ‘Consciousness without feature, without end, luminous all around: Here water, earth, fire and wind have no footing. Here long and short, coarse and fine, fair and foul, name and form are all brought to an end. With the cessation of [the activity of] consciousness each is here brought to an end.’¹⁸⁰

How is it, then, that the Arhat can function after *nibbāna*? How can he continue life with a ‘stopped’ consciousness? A passage in S.ii.66 explains it thus:¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁶ *Idhānanda, bhikkhu evaṃ paṭipanno hoti: ‘no cassa, no ca me siyā; na bhavissati, na me bhavissati; yadatthi, yaṃ bhūtaṃ—taṃ pajahāmi’ti. Evaṃ upekkhaṃ paṭilabhati. So taṃ upekkhaṃ nābhinandati, nābhivadati, na ajjhosāya tiṭṭhati. Tassa taṃ upekkhaṃ anabhinandato anabhivadato anajjhosāya tiṭṭhato na taṇhissitaṃ hoti viññāṇaṃ na tadupādānaṃ. Anupādāno, ānanda, bhikkhu parinibbāyati’ti.*

¹⁷⁷ ‘Āneñjasappaya Sutta: Conducive to the Imperturbable’ (MN 106), translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu. *Access to Insight (Legacy Edition)*, 30 November 2013, available at <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.106.than.html>, accessed 02.11.16.

¹⁷⁸ For a discussion of this, see Harvey, Peter (1989): ‘Consciousness Mysticism in the Discourses of the Buddha.’ In: *The Yogi and the Mystic: Studies in Indian and Comparative Mysticism* (Durham Indological Series). Karel Werner (ed.). London: Curzon Press, p. 82-102.

¹⁷⁹ *Viññāṇaṃ anidassanaṃ, anantaṃ sabbatopabhaṃ; Ettha āpo ca pathavī, tejo vāyo na gādhati. Ettha dīghaṇca rassaṇca, aṇuṃ thūlaṃ subhāsubhaṃ; Ettha nāmaṇca rūpaṇca, asesam uparujjhati; Viññāṇassa nirodheṇa, etthaṃ uparujjhati’ti.*

¹⁸⁰ ‘Kevatta (Kevaddha) Sutta: To Kevatta’ (DN 11), translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu. *Access to Insight (Legacy Edition)*, 30 November 2013, available at www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/dn/dn.11.0.than.html, accessed 02.11.16.

¹⁸¹ *Yato ca kho, bhikkhave, no ceva ceteti no ca pakappeti no ca anuseti, ārammaṇametaṃ na hoti viññāṇassa tṭhiyā. Ārammaṇe asati paṭiṭṭhā viññāṇassa na hoti. Tadappa-tiṭṭhite viññāṇe avirūḷhe nāmarūpassa avakkanti na hoti. Nāmarūpanirodhā saḷāyatananirodho ... pe ... evametassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa nirodho hoti’ti.*

But, bhikkhus, when one does not intend, and one does not plan, and one does not have a tendency towards anything, no basis exists for the maintenance of consciousness. When there is no basis, there is no support for the establishing of consciousness. When consciousness is unestablished and does not come to growth, there is no descent of name-and-form. With the cessation of name-and-form comes cessation of the six sense bases.... Such is the cessation of this whole mass of suffering.¹⁸²

Harvey (Harvey 1989 6) comments on this that ‘stopped’ consciousness can occur during life; it is the same as ‘unsupported’ consciousness and is not equivalent to non-existent consciousness. The simple explanation for how the Arhat can continue life after reaching *nibbāna* is that he or she lives without *āsavas*, which is not a condition for human life: it is not necessary to be filled with desire or ignorance to be a human being. When the influences of desire and ignorance are gone, this simply means that he or she lives without attachment to anything which is constructed (*saṅkhata*), and without confusion regarding what is real (*nicca*) and what is not (*anicca*).

3.6 Progressive cultivation

There is evidence that there are several stages of mental cultivation or progress on the path. In the Upādānapariṣvatta Sutta (Sutta on the Phases of the Clinging Aggregates) (S.iii.58-61) the Buddha explains that there are two kinds of people who fully understand the four noble truths in relation to each of the five personality factors, those who are still ‘practising’ (*paṭipannā*),¹⁸³ and those who are ‘liberated without grasping, well liberated, consummate ones’¹⁸⁴ (Harvey 1995 85-87). There seems to be a differentiation between those who are ‘liberated’ (*vimutta*) and those who are ‘well liberated’ (*suvimutta*),¹⁸⁵ reflecting whether one is still practising liberation or has attained liberation in the sense of having reached the *akuppā cetovimutti* or ‘unshakeable mind liberation’. As we have briefly discussed (see Part

¹⁸² Bhikkhu Bodhi (2000): *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha*, Wisdom Publications, available at <https://suttacentral.net/en/sn12.39>, accessed 02.11.16.

¹⁸³ ‘*Ye hi keci, bhikkhave, samaṇā vā brāhmaṇā vā evaṃ viññāṇaṃ abhiññāya, evaṃ viññāṇasamudayaṃ abhiññāya, evaṃ viññāṇanirodhaṃ abhiññāya, evaṃ viññāṇanirodhagāminiṃ paṭipadaṃ abhiññāya viññāṇassa nibbidāya virāgāya nirodhāya paṭipannā, te suppaṭipannā. Ye suppaṭipannā, te imasmim dhammavinaye gādhanti.*’

¹⁸⁴ ‘*Ye ca kho keci, bhikkhave, samaṇā vā brāhmaṇā vā evaṃ viññāṇaṃ abhiññāya, evaṃ viññāṇa-sa-muda-yaṃ abhiññāya, evaṃ viññāṇanirodhaṃ abhiññāya, evaṃ viññāṇanirodhagāminiṃ paṭipadaṃ abhiññāya viññāṇassa nibbidā virāgā nirodhā anupādā vimuttā, te suvimuttā. Ye suvimuttā, te kevalino. Ye kevalino vaṭṭaṃ tesam natthi paññāpanāyā’ti.*’

¹⁸⁵ We may compare the meaning of *vimutti* to the wide range of meanings of *paññā*.

1), there are four different stages of practicants on the noble path with varying degrees of attainment of the eight limbs.

3.7 *Cetovimutti-paññāvimutti* and *ubhatobhāgavimutti* (‘twofold liberation’).

The phrase *cetovimutti-paññāvimutti* occurs dozens of times in the Nikāyas.¹⁸⁶ It is often as a part of the standardised phrase ‘...*bhikkhu āsavānaṃ khayā anāsavaṃ cetovimuttiṃ paññāvimuttiṃ diṭṭheva dhamme sayaṃ abhiññā sacchikatvā upasampajja viharati*’, which may be translated as ‘a monk by the destruction of the *āsavas* has, by himself, known and realised and continues to abide here, in this visible world, in that liberation of mind, that liberation of intellect, which is freedom from *āsavas*’. We can see here again the connection between the liberation of mind and the destruction of the *āsavas*; *nibbāna* is *anāsava*, the highest state immediately following after *saññāvedayitanirodha*, when (the grasping of) feelings and thoughts cease. We can also see an addition to this phrase in the last paragraph of the Mahānidāna Sutta (D.ii.55) describing what happens after the *bhikkhu* has gone through the eight meditation stages (*vimokkha*): ‘... when through the cessation of the *āsavas* he enters and remains in the *āsava*-free mind-liberation [*cetovimutti*] and intellect-liberation [*paññāvimutti*], having directly known it and realised it in the here and now, he is said to be a monk released in both ways [*ubhatobhāgavimutto*].’¹⁸⁷ This dual concept of liberation as a complete emancipation of both faculties of the human psyche, of both the centre of feeling and the centre of thought, must have been so established in early Buddhist philosophy that it was given its own designation of ‘liberation of both parts’ (taking *ubhato* as a genitive) ‘liberation in both ways’ (taking *ubhato* as a locative) or ‘liberation from both parts’

¹⁸⁶ Gombrich (Gombrich 1998 112) understands the pair of compounds *cetovimutti-paññāvimutti* as syntactically different, resolving the first member (*ceto*) of *cetovimutti* as a genitive (‘release of the mind’), and the first member (*paññā*) of *paññāvimutti* as instrumental (or ablative) ‘release through insight’. I argue in this thesis that this pair of compounds expresses the same thing (as does Gombrich regarding the ultimate reference of both compounds: ‘There is only one release...’ Gombrich 1998 112), namely that liberation has been reached in respect to both the affective part of the human psyche, i.e. the mind (*citta*), and the cognitive part of the same, i.e. the intellect (*paññā*). These two compounds are hence to be understood as grammatically similar, either genitives (‘liberation of the mind’ and ‘liberation of the intellect’), locatives (‘liberation in the mind’ and ‘liberation in the intellect’), or ablatives (‘liberation from the mind’ and ‘liberation from the intellect’). There can be no release through *paññā* unless *paññā* itself has been released from *avijjā*, the point being that ‘ignorant insight’ is an absurdity. The intellect must be purified or cultivated until the ignorance has been removed before it can serve as an instrument or faculty for the highest truth revealing insight (*yathābhūta-dassana*). Showing that there are pairs of compounds with syntactical variations in the Nikāyas (Gombrich 1998 108-12) does not in any way prove that *cetovimutti-paññāvimutti* also has syntactical variation; it only proves that it is possible.

¹⁸⁷ ‘*Āsavānaṃca khayā anāsavaṃ cetovimuttiṃ paññāvimuttiṃ diṭṭheva dhamme sayaṃ abhiññā sacchikatvā upasampajja viharati, ayaṃ vuccatānanda, bhikkhu ubhatobhāgavimutto.*’

(construing *ubhato* as ablative), referring to *citta* and *paññā* as ‘parts’ of consciousness.¹⁸⁸ Designating *citta* and *paññā* as *bhāgas* or ‘parts, portions’ supports my thesis that *citta* and *paññā* are the *faculties* or *centres* of consciousness according to early Buddhism, and that various *functions* such as *saññā*, *vedanā*, *vitakka*, *vicāra*, *cetanā*, *papañca* and so forth are divided between them, even though *citta* and *paññā* certainly, being interconnected, also work together.¹⁸⁹

Another identification of desire as the defiling quality of *citta* and ignorance as the defiling quality of *paññā* is found at Nettipakaraṇa 40 of the Khuddaka Nikāya. A lengthy description differentiating between the bound or dependent mind (*nissitacitta*) on the one hand, and the free or independent mind (*anissitacitta*) on the other, connects liberation from *rāga* or ‘desire’ (synonymous with *kāma*) with *cetovimutti*, and liberation from ignorance (*avijjā*) with *paññāvimutti*:¹⁹⁰ ‘...it should be explained that the independent mind is (caused) by the desire free mind liberation and the ignorance free intellect liberation’ (‘...*anissitacittā rāgavirāgāya ca cetovimuttiyā avijjāvirāgāya ca paññāvimuttiyā niddisitabbā*’).

In Peṭakopadesa 39, *cetovimutti-paññāvimutti* is considered the 10th power of the Tathāgata:¹⁹¹ ‘*Cetovimutti* is *āsava* free with regard to *kāmāsava* and *bhavāsava*, while *paññāvimutti* is *āsava* free with regard to *avijjāsava* and *diṭṭhāsava*. The knowledge of the real nature of these two liberations is called knowledge of the cessation of *āsavas*. It is the

¹⁸⁸ Gombrich has shown how *ubhatobhāgavimutto* (and other forms of being ‘liberated’) has been taken out of context in a listing of seven types of liberation: ‘...almost every feature of the list of seven types can be traced back to scholasticism in this sense: a dependence upon words, at the cost of disregarding what those words were originally intended to describe’ (Gombrich 1996 106-7). Gombrich (Gombrich 1996 111) calls *ubhatobhāgavimutti* ‘an obscure concept’, which it is not, according to my interpretation.

¹⁸⁹ It must be noted that, notwithstanding the clear identification of *cetovimutti-paññāvimutti* with *ubhatobhāgavimutto* in the Mahānidāna Sutta, there are other definitions of *ubhatobhāgavimutto* which explain it differently, see Gombrich 1996 106-7.

¹⁹⁰ ‘*Tattha katamā niddesasandhi? Nissitacittā akusalapakkhena niddisitabbā, anissitacittā kusalapakkhena niddisitabbā. Nissitacittā kilesena niddisitabbā, anissitacittā vodānena niddisitabbā. Nissitacittā saṃsārappavattiyā niddisitabbā, anissitacittā saṃsāranivattiyā niddisitabbā. Nissitacittā taṇhāya ca avijjāya ca niddisitabbā, anissitacittā samathena ca vipassanāya ca niddisitabbā. Nissitacittā ahirikena ca anottappena ca niddisitabbā, anissitacittā hiriyā ca ottappena ca niddisitabbā. Nissitacittā asatīyā ca asampajaññena ca niddisitabbā, anissitacittā satīyā ca sampajaññena ca niddisitabbā. Nissitacittā ayoniyā ca ayonisomanasikārena ca niddisitabbā, anissitacittā yoniyā ca yonisomanasikārena ca niddisitabbā. Nissitacittā kosajjena ca dovaccassena ca niddisitabbā, anissitacittā vīriyārambhena ca sovacassena ca niddisitabbā. Nissitacittā assaddhiyena ca pamādena ca niddisitabbā, anissitacittā saddhāya ca appamādena ca niddisitabbā. Nissitacittā asaddhammassavanena ca asaṃvaraṇena ca niddisitabbā, anissitacittā saddhammassavanena ca saṃvarena ca niddisitabbā. Nissitacittā abhijjhāya ca byāpādena ca niddisitabbā, anissitacittā anabhijjhāya ca abyāpādena ca niddisitabbā. Nissitacittā nīvaraṇehi ca saṃyojanīyehi ca niddisitabbā, anissitacittā rāgavirāgāya ca cetovimuttiyā avijjāvirāgāya ca paññāvimuttiyā niddisitabbā. Nissitacittā ucchedadiṭṭhiyā ca sassatadiṭṭhiyā ca niddisitabbā, anissitacittā saupādisesāya ca anupādisesāya ca nibbānadhātuyā niddisitabbā. Ayaṃ niddesasandhi. Tenāha āyasmā mahākaccāyano “neruttamadhippāyo”ti.*

¹⁹¹ *Tattha cetovimutti dvīhi āsavehi anāsavā kāmāsavena ca bhavāsavena ca, paññāvimutti dvīhi āsavehi anāsavā diṭṭhāsavena ca avijjāsavena ca, imāsaṃ dvinnaṃ vimuttīnaṃ yathābhūtaṃ ñāṇaṃ, idaṃ vuccati āsavakkhaye ñāṇaṃ. Dasamaṃ tathāgatabalaṃ.*

tenth power of the *tathāgata*.’ *Anāsava* is, as we have pointed out, a designation of *nibbāna*. The removal of the *āsavas* from the mind is the ‘*nibbāna*-isation’ of the mind.

There is also a pair of adjectival compounds *suviṃuttacitto-suviṃuttapañño* (‘of well liberated mind, of well liberated intellect’), obviously modelled after the *cetovimutti-paññāvimutti* pattern, occurring a few places in the Nikāyas, and which is explained in AN.v.31-32¹⁹² (listed as two of ten *ariyāvāsas* or ‘abodes of the noble ones’):¹⁹³

And how is a bhikkhu well liberated in mind? Here, a bhikkhu’s mind is liberated from lust, hatred, and delusion. It is in this way that a bhikkhu is well liberated in mind. And how is a bhikkhu well liberated by wisdom? Here, a bhikkhu understands: ‘I have abandoned lust, cut it off at the root, made it like a palm stump, obliterated it so that it is no more subject to future arising; I have abandoned hatred... abandoned delusion, cut it off at the root, made it like a palm stump, obliterated it so that it is no more subject to future arising.’ It is in this way that a bhikkhu is well liberated by wisdom.¹⁹⁴

Following what has become convention, Bhikkhu Bodhi understands the last member of the compound *suviṃuttapañño* as an instrumental construction, giving it the meaning ‘well liberated by wisdom’.¹⁹⁵ I would, however, see both these paired compounds as syntactically similar and meaning ‘whose mind is well liberated, whose intellect is well liberated’, or ‘of well liberated mind, of well liberated intellect’. But liberated from what? Not the *āsavas* as expected, but the related *kilesas* or obstacles, here represented by the three main ones, namely lust, hatred and delusion. The explanation given in this *sutta* shows that the actual liberation from lust, hatred and delusion has in fact already happened *to the mind* (i.e. *citta*); post facto this liberation the intellect *understands* (*pajānāti*, the verbal form of *paññā*) it, confirming it through intellectual analysis or observation. The reason why the intellect can have this insight is that it is liberated from ignorance, represented by *moha* or confusion in this account with

¹⁹² *Kathaṇca, bhikkhave, bhikkhu suviṃuttacitto hoti? Idha, bhikkhave, bhikkhuno rāgā cittaṃ vimuttaṃ hoti, dosā cittaṃ vimuttaṃ hoti, mohā cittaṃ vimuttaṃ hoti. Evaṃ kho, bhikkhave, bhikkhu suviṃuttacitto hoti. Kathaṇca, bhikkhave, bhikkhu suviṃuttapañño hoti? Idha, bhikkhave, bhikkhu ‘rāgo me pahīno ucchinnamūlo tālavatthukato anabhāvaṅkato āyatim anuppādadhammo’ ti pajānāti, doso me pahīno ... pe ... ‘moho me pahīno ucchinnamūlo tālavatthukato anabhāvaṅkato āyatim anuppādadhammo’ ti pajānāti. Evaṃ kho, bhikkhave, bhikkhu suviṃuttapañño hoti.*

¹⁹³ The ten *ariyāvāsas* are also found at D 3.269.

¹⁹⁴ Translated by Bhikkhu Bodhi (2012), *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha*, Wisdom Publications, available at <https://suttacentral.net/en/sn12.39>, accessed 02.11.16.

¹⁹⁵ *Pañña* is the adjectival form of *paññā*, meaning ‘of wisdom, endowed with wisdom’ (according to the PED p. 389), to my understanding meaning ‘of well liberated intellect’.

kilesas instead of *āsavas*.¹⁹⁶ The expression *sato sampajāno* (mindful and fully knowing) is commonly used to describe the practitioner who has cultivated the intellect to a higher function of mindfulness. This complete or clear awareness of the liberation occurring in the mind seems to be exactly the same process as we have seen in the version of the enlightenment event with *vimuttasmim* (section 3.2). There is the actual liberation of the mind (through meditation), and a simultaneous understanding that liberation has happened, an *accompanying witnessing awareness*. This seems to be the synergy of *citta* and *paññā* during *bodhi* or enlightenment. Seeing how the liberation process is accompanied by a witnessing awareness observing what is happening does, however, raise some intriguing questions about the exact role of *paññā*. Does *paññā* have two functions in the liberation process, the first that of an active agent comprehending the four truths and so forth, and the second that of a spectator passively observing the *citta* or mind being liberated from the *āsavas*, watching as *nibbāna* occurs? Is it even witnessing itself as it is being emancipated from ignorance? Can this second witnessing function be compared to the concept of *sākṣin* (witness self) in Advaita or *puruṣa* as *dṛṣṭr* (seer) in Sāṅkhya-Yoga?

¹⁹⁶ In Itivuttaka 1.14 (Avijjānīvaraṇa Sutta), for instance, *avijjā* and *moha* are used interchangeably.

Conclusion

By exploring the connection between 1) *samatha* (calm) created by *samādhi* (concentration) as the *bhāvanā* (cultivation) of *citta* (mind) resulting in the removal of the *āsavas* (influences) of *kāma* (desire) and *bhava* ([desire for] existence) and resulting in *cetovimutti* (mind liberation),¹⁹⁷ and 2) the connection between *vipassanā* (insight) created by *sati* (mindfulness) as the *bhāvanā* (cultivation) of *paññā* (intellect) resulting in the removal of the *āsavas* of *avijjā* (ignorance) and *diṭṭhi* (opinion) resulting in *paññāvimutti* (intellect liberation), this thesis claims to have found an underlying, bipartite division of the human consciousness into an affective part (referred to in this thesis as ‘mind’) and a cognitive part (referred to in this thesis as ‘intellect’). As we have seen, the *citta* and the *paññā* are referred to as either ‘parts’ (*bhāgas*) or ‘faculties’ (*indriyas*). This underlying structure of human consciousness can offer explanations for three issues in early Buddhism explored in this thesis:

1) The reason why there are two different versions of the story of the Buddha’s enlightenment

There is one account of the story of the Buddha’s enlightenment centring on desire¹⁹⁸ as the ultimate cause of suffering (the account of the four noble truths¹⁹⁹ e.g. the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta at S.v.420), and another on ignorance (the account of the twelvefold chain of dependent origination, e.g. the Mahānidāna Sutta at D.ii.55). This thesis postulates that the ‘desire narrative’ refers to the *citta* or mind part of human consciousness and is thus based on affection or emotion, while the ‘ignorance narrative’ refers to the *paññā* or intellect part and is thus expressed in an analytical language. These two approaches are not always separate but can be seen to come together in various ways throughout the teachings of early Buddhism, e.g. in the account of the four noble truths, where the premise is suffering, clearly an experience belonging to the *citta* or affective aspect of the psyche, while the four

¹⁹⁷ *Kāma* may be called the primary *āsava* of the *citta*, as it is sometimes mentioned without *bhava*, which may then be considered secondary. Similarly, *avijjā* is clearly the primary *āsava* of the *paññā*, while *diṭṭhi* is a later addition.

¹⁹⁸ ‘*Idaṃ kho pana, bhikkhave, dukkha-samudayaṃ ariya-saccaṃ: Yāyaṃ taṇhāponobbhavikā nandirāgasahagatā tatra-tatrābhinandinī, seyyathidaṃ: kāma-taṇhā, bhava-taṇhā, vibhavataṇhā. Idaṃ kho pana, bhikkhave, dukkha-nirodhaṃ ariya-saccaṃ: yo tassāyeva taṇhāya asesavirāganirodho cāgo paṭinissaggo mutti anālayo*’.

¹⁹⁹ Vetter 1988 xxi.

truths about this suffering are analytical and clad in the rational language of the intellect or *paññā*. This understanding of the underlying, bipartite structure of the human psyche makes it clear why two different dimensions of the human experience are addressed differently in the canonical texts.

2) The content of *saññāvedayitanirodha*

The final stage of the *magga*, the path of meditation towards realising *nibbāna*, is called *saññāvedayitanirodha* (cessation of cognition and emotion), and its content has been extensively debated (Griffiths 1986) in the Theravāda tradition and beyond. This thesis claims that it refers to the complete cessation of clinging (*upādāna*) to the respective functions of these two faculties of the intellect and mind, namely cognition(s) (*saññā*) and emotion(s) (*vedayita*), which then results in the attainment of *nibbāna*, in this context understood as complete freedom from the attachment to and thereby the experiential impact (i.e. the power to affect or disturb) of all feelings and thoughts. Cognition and emotion are the two primary functions or general categories of *viññāṇa* or consciousness, and the attainment of liberation from these functions is explicitly referred to as the cessation of consciousness (*viññāṇanirodha*). When the attachment (*upādāna*) to these two functions stops, *nibbāna* is realised. When the functions of the consciousness of the ordinary person or *puthujjana* cease, the illusory ‘self’ will also disappear, because ‘cognition is the self of the person’ (*Saññā hi, bho, purisassa attā*), according to D.180. No cognition, no self; no self, no suffering. This is what *nirodha* or cessation means. Sariputta, the disciple of the Buddha ‘...largely responsible for developments connected with the method of discriminating insight (i.e. *paññā*)...’²⁰⁰ expressed it thus in Mahāniddeśa 42 and 118: ‘The world is dead when the mind stops’ (*Cittabhaggā mato loko*).

3) The role and status of *paññā* in relation to *nibbāna*

This thesis has also shown how the path to liberation in early Buddhism can be understood as a process of cultivation which involves every aspect of the personality, and demands the utmost dedication, as exemplified by the life of Gotama. The purpose of the cultivation of the mind is to create a mind so great (*mahaggata*), immeasurable (*appamāṇa*), radiant

²⁰⁰ Vetter 1988 xi-xii.

(*pabhassara*) and clear (*pasanna*) that the immortal can be directly known and realised in it, by it, or through it.²⁰¹ The role and status of *paññā* in relation to liberation - i.e. the realisation of *nibbāna* - are, however, a matter of interpretation. While the majority of scholars understand *paññā* to be ‘wisdom’ or ‘insight’ which is ‘liberating’ or ‘discerning’ and with which *nibbāna* is realised, I understand *paññā* to be a more complex or multivalent concept, primarily meaning ‘intellect’, and having two modalities: 1) when uncultivated or *sāsava* (‘with defilements’, i.e. ‘ignorant’), it is a cause of bondage or *samsāra*; and 2) when cultivated or *anāsava* (‘without defilements, i.e. ‘insightful’), it is a cause of or instrumental in bringing about *nibbāna*. In this second mode it is endowed with *vipassanā* or is ‘seeing’ things as they are. It thus has the complex dual role of being both that which *liberates* and that which is being *liberated*.

The role of the second, liberating modality of *paññā* in the realisation of *nibbāna* is expressed in different ways²⁰². It seems either to be: 1) a passive consciousness witnessing the process of liberation i.e. *nibbāna*-isation happening to the *citta* without having any causal or even instrumental involvement (e.g. AN.iv.173 quoted in section 3.2); or, it is 2) a causal or instrumental agent, as expressed in passages where it is described as having a direct role in liberating the *citta* from the *āsavas*, such as D.iii.230: ‘The destruction of the *āsavas* is to be realised [‘known directly’] by *paññā*’ (*āsavānaṃ khayō paññāya sacchikaraṇīyo*).

²⁰¹ When the mind is thus rid of egoism, it is also filled with *mettā*, the Buddhist virtue of compassion, usually translated as ‘loving-kindness’. This is referred to as *mettacitta* (‘having a loving mind; benevolent’) in S.9. There is also a concept of *mettā-cetovimutti* or ‘mind liberation through or of compassion’ (D.i.251, S.ii.265, A.iv.150, It.20), which shows the connection between the concepts of *cetovimutti* and *mettā*.

²⁰² As Johansson observes: “...we usually find *paññā* as the final factor before *nibbāna* and after the meditation factors, *sati* and *samādhi*” (Johansson 1969 89).

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Appendix: abbreviations

A: Aṅguttara Nikāya

D: Dīgha Nikāya

M: Majjhima Nikāya

PED: Rhys Davids, T.W. and William Stede (eds.) (1921-5). *The Pali Text Society's Pali-English Dictionary*. Chipstead: Pali Text Society.

S: Saṃyutta Nikāya

SNp: Sutta Nipāta (of the Khuddaka Nikāya)

Ud: Udāna (of the Khuddaka Nikāya)