A COMPREHENSIVE MATRIX

These are the building blocks with which we construct our world. Every action which creates karma is represented on this chart. It is meant as an exhaustive categorization of all conditioned human experience. Try examining each of these options, one at a time, and look for examples of such activity in your own life and practice. You will find that such a matrix of experience provides a generic and de-personalized way of looking at what is taking place moment by moment, which supports the investigative aspects of insight meditation. As we begin to see more clearly the arising and passing away of both mental and physical events, and see them as an expression of underlying causal patterns rather than as the agency of a stable self, it becomes easier to penetrate the web of illusions that bind us.

On one's own accord

On one's own accord

On one's own accord

On one's own accord
As a response to something

one consciously one consciously one consciously one consciously one consciously one consciously one unconsciously one unconsciously one unconsciously one unconsciously one unconsciously one unconsciously one consciously one consciously one consciously one consciously one consciously one consciously one unconsciously one unconsciously one unconsciously one unconsciously one unconsciously one unconsciously constructs a construction constructs a construction

sāmam/pare

All action can be viewed as internally or externally generated. The former comes after some inner process of remembering, planning or deciding, and often feels as if it is a choice one makes for oneself. The latter arises as a response to some impinging stimulus. It can be automatic, as with an impulsive reaction, or it can set off a series of inner associations before the response is apparent.

sampajāno/asampajāno

The word sampajano is usually translated as "clear awareness" or "clear consciousness" and plays an important role in the instructions for insight meditation found in the Foundations of Mindfulness Discourse (Satipatthana Sutta M 10). So much of our decision-making is not done with this level of clarity, however, and in fact most of the choices one makes are likely to be unconscious.

sankhāram abhisankharoti

This phrase lies at the heart of the human world-creation project. Intention has both an active component (the process of forging or making decisions) and a passive component (the results or disponsitional artifact created by the process). Buddhist literature expresses this by the image of a potter, who both creatively forms the clay in the moment, and also winds up with a kiln full of pots.

OF CONSTRUCTED EXPERIENCE

Anguttara Nikāya, 4:171

"These states, bhikkhus, are afficted by ignorance. But with the complete fading away and cessation of ignorance, there is no longer that body/speech/mind conditioned by which pleasure and pain arises in oneself. There is not longer a field, a basis, a sphere, or a cause, conditioned by which pleasure and pain arises in oneself." (A4:171)

When ignorance acts as a causal influence on the formation of intentions, the craving that necessarily comes with it ensures that every action will involve grasping and will thus formulate karmic substrates that require further rebirth and suffering. When ignorance is replaced with wisdom, as with an arahant, or with moments of insight more generally, then this karmic mechanism is undermined and there occurs a moment of freedom from such conditioning.

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conditioned by which arises conditioned by which arises

inner pleasure. inner pain. inner pleasure. inner pain.

kāya-/vacī-/mano-

These are the three modes of activity through which karma or action is produced. Bodily acts are overt behaviors (such as pulling the trigger); verbal acts involve the formulation of intentions into words that are either spoken openly or to oneself; and mental acts include almost everything else in the inner life. That such non-evident activity is also productive of karma is an important Buddhist teaching.

yam paccayā 'assa tam uppajjati

All manifestations of experience involve the arising and falling of mental states, and these states are all conditioned or caused by the influence of other states. Such interdependence accounts for complexity without agency: phenomena arise, but there is no person making it happen so. Here the causal relation is being emphasized between the quality of intention and the consequent feeling tone of experience.

ajjhattam sukham/dukkham

Pleasure and pain are the two primary modalities of the inner life. As the "end products" of the cognitive series, it is this feeling tone that so often drives our choices by pursuing pleasure and avoiding pain. Buddhist practice helps reveal the extent to which this outcome is influenced by both our level of self-awareness and the skillfulness of our understanding and attitudes towards objects of experience.