

GIULIANO GIUSTARINI

A Note on *Salāyatanas* in Pāli *Nikāyas**

The Six Sense-doors in the Path to Salvation

The sensorial experience takes on a central valence in the thought of early Buddhism and can be viewed somehow as a crossroad, a place where the path to bondage and the path to freedom begin to diverge. The first path is supported by ignorance (*avijjā*), while the second one is supported by the tools of the contemplative practice (*sati-sampajañña*).¹ The specific areas of the experiential reality where the *sati-sampajañña* dyad operates are represented by the four *satipaṭṭhānas*. Each *satipaṭṭhāna* activates the process of conversion from suffering (*dukkha*) to liberation (*vimutti*). The *Nikāyas* illustrate categories of the experiential reality that could seem different from the typical method of *satipaṭṭhānas*. These categories, joined with an intentional use of the meditative lexicon, actually represent contemplative practices that can lead to the cessation of existential suffering (*dukkhanirodha*). In this regard, the six sensorial spheres (*salāyatana*) constitute an especially fertile ground for the cultivation of *sati-sampajañña*.

In the *Nikāyas*, the *salāyatanas* are mostly listed among the links (*nidāna* or *paccaya*) of the dependent origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*). Each modality of experiencing passes through the sense-organ (eye, *cakkhu*, ear, *sota*, etc.), the consciousness of experience (*viññāṇa*), the contact (*phassa*) and the feeling (*vedanā*). These stages constitute a neutral ground where either the suffering-bounded conditioning can operate and reinforce itself, or the process of

* The present work was originally a chapter of my doctoral dissertation (*La funzione di sati nel buddhismo Theravāda: un'analisi dei testi*; Università degli Studi di Torino, 2005). I would like to express my gratitude especially to Mario Piantelli, my supervisor, and to Francesco Sferra for providing several and precious advices on the work. I am also grateful to Corrado Pensa, Claudio Cicuzza, Margaret Cone and Samira Coccon for their suggestions and comments on an earlier version of this article.

¹ *Sati* and *sampajañña* (mindfulness and understanding) together represent a practically inseparable binomial, indicating one factor of attention-wisdom.

liberation can take place. In this paper I am going to examine the factors behind the two opposite processes, their nature and their consequences.

In order to observe these two possible routes, we will consider some texts that explicitly deal with the contemplative practice, and others where the practice is hidden behind an analytical description of the Buddhist doctrine. The relation between the meditative tools and the *saḷāyatanas* is quite obvious in *Mahāsaṭṭhipahānasutta* (D: II, 289-315) and in the *Satipaṭṭhānasutta* (M: I, 55-63), where the sensorial spheres are the subject of the contemplative practice in the area of the *dhammānupassanā*, i.e. the fourth *satipaṭṭhāna*. Subtler though significant examples are in the *Mahāsaḷāyatanikasutta* (M: III, 287-90), in the *Mahātaṇhāsāṅkhayasutta* (M: I, 256-71), in the *Chabbisodhanasutta* (M: III, 98-104) and in the *Chappāṇakopamasutta* (S: IV, 198-200), just to name a few. These *suttas* describe a different context from *satipaṭṭhānas*, and yet they purposely adopt the same specific meditative lexicon of D (II, 289-315) and M (I, 55-63). By carefully comparing the two groups of texts, what comes out is the opportunity to study not only the *saḷāyatanas*, but the whole phenomenal reality, in the light of the deep interconnection between the conceptual categories, the meditative practice and the soteriological aim of the Buddhist teachings.

The methodological criterion I am going to apply in this comparison is a study of the texts according to the semantic valences of specific terms and recurring formulas. In fact, the aim of the formulas in the *Nikāyas* is not only to help memorize the text through their frequent reiteration: the formulas reveal an important evocative function. The insertion of the formula in the various contexts offers definite references to doctrinal aspects which, otherwise, would be easily missed. Such aspects should look very familiar to a *bhikkhu* accustomed to the Pāli scriptures. In my opinion, this interpretative criterion might offer new and interesting prospects for the study of the *Nikāyas* literature. In the specific case of the *saḷāyatanas* – as we shall see – it is possible to find precious elements to a better understanding of the meditative lexicon and to draw a clearer picture of *paṭiccasamuppāda*. As a main reference text, I am going to adopt the *Mahāsaḷāyatanikasutta* of the *Majjhima-nikāya*.

The Representation of the Paṭiccasamuppāda in the Mahāsaḷāyatanikasutta

The *Mahāsaḷāyatanikasutta* (M: III, 287-90; hereafter Ms) deals about the six sense-doors and their relation to the dynamics of suffering (*dukkha*) and dependent origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*). Essentially, the structure of the text and the formulas which are used here are very similar to the standard ones in Buddhist *Nikāyas*. However, the Ms, compared with other *suttas*, presents some specific contents. In order to make such specific aspects clear and to examine the same contents in different contexts, it is necessary to proceed

through a synthesis of the *sutta*, followed by a philological, comparative analysis of the key terms.

In Ms the Buddha, after the usual introductory formulas, talks about the six sense-doors (*salāyatana*) and the origin of pain. He first emphasizes the ordinary inability to understand the nature of the sense-organs, beginning with the eye: «Monks, not knowing, not seeing the eye as it actually is» («*cakkhum, bhikkhave, ajānaṃ apassaṃ yathābhūtaṃ*»; M: III, 287). Then he mentions the ‘non understanding’ of the object perceived, *i.e.* the visual form («*rūpe ajānaṃ apassaṃ yathābhūtaṃ*»), the ‘non understanding’ of the visual consciousness («*cakkhuvīññānaṃ*»), of the contact between these elements, which actually constitutes the visual experience («*cakkhusamphassaṃ*»), and of the pleasant, unpleasant or neutral feeling that springs from the visual experience («*yam idaṃ cakkhusamphassapaccayā uppajjati vedayitaṃ sukhaṃ vā dukkhaṃ vā adukkhamasukhaṃ tam pi ajānaṃ apassaṃ yathābhūtaṃ*», «Not knowing, not seeing as it actually is the pleasant, unpleasant, neutral feeling arising from the visual contact»; *ibid.*).

After exposing the stages of conditioning, the Buddha mentions their consequences: «The individual who falls into that process is infatuated with [*sā-rajjati*] the visual organ, the object he sees, the visual consciousness, the visual contact, and the feeling – either pleasant, unpleasant or neutral – that arises from the visual contact. For this infatuated, attached, confused [*sārattassa saṃyuttassa sammūlhasa*] individual, the aggregates of attachment head toward future increase [*āyatim pañcupādānakkhandhā upacayaṃ gacchanti*]». This statement is thus explained: thirst (or craving) for a future existence («*taṇhā ... ponobbhavikā*»), accompanied by *nandi* and *rāga* – two terms that remind to *taṇhā* and *upādāna* and that are often translated as passion and delight – increases («*pavaḍḍhati*»). Because of the accumulation of thirst, bodily and mental pains («*daratha*»), torments («*santāpa*») and distresses («*parilāha*») grow. That is called the experience – in the physical and mental realms – of *dukkha* («*so kāyadukkhaṃ pi cetodukkhaṃ pi paṭisaṃvedeti*», «He experiences either bodily suffering or mental suffering»). This same sequence recurs in the other classes of sensorial experience: *sota*, *ghāna*, *jivhā*, *kāya*, *mano*. The whole universe of perception is examined by applying the same criterion, from the primary condition of ignorance through the involvement-identification with the contents of experience to the arising and perpetuating of *dukkha*.

After these short and yet thorough descriptions of suffering and its causes, the *sutta* introduces the opposite process. The basic factor of suffering is replaced by its contrary factor: instead of «*ajānaṃ apassaṃ yathābhūtaṃ*» we find «*jānaṃ passaṃ yathābhūtaṃ*», instead of the ignorance that entangles the mind – and the body – in the experience of pain, we find the knowledge that liberates from the dynamics of suffering. Here, the whole lexicon adopted in the previous description is reformulated with the corresponding opposite or

negative terms: he is infatuated / he is not infatuated (*sārajjati / na sārajjati*), for the one who is infatuated / for the one who is not infatuated (*sārattassa / asārattassa*), increase / decrease (*upacayaṃ / apacayaṃ*), craving increases / craving passes off (*taṇhā ... pavaḍḍati / taṇhā pahiyati*), etc. The conclusion of the process is a bodily-mental experience of ease, happiness («*sukhaṃ*»).

At this point the Buddha states that for the person who has made this overturn of perspectives (from *ajānaṃ* to *jānaṃ*, from *dukkha* to *sukha*), the thirty-seven wings of awakening («*bodhipakkhiya*») come to a perfect accomplishment («*bhāvanāpāripūriṃ gacchanti*»). The maturation of these factors goes along with the harmonious development («*yuganandha*») of calm («*samatha*») and insight («*vipassanā*»).²

In the next passage, the development of the healthy factors is expounded in four phases: understanding, cultivation, letting go and fulfilment. This subdivision ends every single contemplation of the sense-doors and finally ends the whole Buddha's sermon.

Avijjā and paññā

Ms locates in the six sense-doors the specific area of *paṭiccasamuppāda* where ignorance can take root. In this area, either pain can arise or wisdom can operate and lead to ease and eventually to liberation. In «*ajānaṃ apassaṃ yathābhūtaṃ*» there is the basic condition of attachment, confusion and pain. The absence of understanding entangles the sensorial experience in the conditioning process that culminates in pain, bodily and mental discomfort: «*so kāyadukkhaṃ pi cetodukkhaṃ pi paṭisaṃvedeti*» («... and he experiences either bodily or mental suffering»; M: III, 288).

In a nutshell, we are talking about a formula frequently used in the *Nikāyas* to indicate the absence of understanding, the not-knowing (*avijjā*), *i.e.* the first link of *paṭiccasamuppāda*. This formula is described as a harmful attitude, in antithesis to the contemplative approach suggested by «*jānaṃ passaṃ yathābhūtaṃ*». The negative formula is equivalent with *avijjā*, the deepest root of suffering (*dukkha*), vice versa the positive formula is equivalent with *paññā*, which is pre-eminent among the factors of liberation. Let us examine some examples. In the *Mahāsāropamasutta* (M: I, 191-97) the expression «*jānaṃ passaṃ viharāmi*» is the same as saying *ñānadassana*, another equivalent for *paññā* (or *vijjā*): *paññā* has the twofold quality of knowing and seeing, *i.e.* it is a knowledge based upon contemplation.³ The same twofold approach is obvi-

² In the *Yuganaddhasutta* (A: II, 156-57), the harmonious development (*yuganaddha* or *yuganandha*) of *samatha* and *vipassanā* is described as one of the three possible developments of the meditative path. The other two modes are the development of *samatha* followed by *vipassanā*, and the development of *vipassanā* followed by *samatha*.

³ Swearer (1972: 368) acknowledges this twofold activity as the element that differentiates *paññā* from the conventional knowledge: «... salvation-knowledge or *paññā* is described as a

ous in the dyad *sati-sampajañña*. In the *Dutiyasāriputtakotṭhikasutta* of the *Abyākatasamyutta* – which, like the Ms, is included in the *Salāyatanavagga* (S: IV, 386-87) – the formula «*ajānato apassato yathābhūtaṃ*» describes the delusion with regard to the five *khandhas*, while its contrary, «*jānato passato yathābhūtaṃ*», indicates the contemplation of arising (*samudaya*) and ceasing (*nirodha*) of each aggregate, *i.e.* the profound understanding of impermanence. An identical terminology describes the contemplation of the Four Noble Truths in the *Saccasamyutta* (S: V, 434), where the salvific value of such modality is emphasized: «... *jānato passato āsavānaṃ khayo hoti ...*» («... to the one who knows, who sees [pain, the cause of pain, the end of pain, the path that leads to the end of pain], there is the extinction of defilements»; Sujato 2001: 165).

In the *suttas* that expound *satipaṭṭhānas*, the knowing-seeing nature of *paññā* is highlighted by the function of *sati-sampajañña* and by the reiterated use of the affixed word *-anupassin*, the verb *pajānāti* and the locution ‘*ñāṇamattāya patissatimattāya*’. The same emphasis is present in the *Saṅgāravasutta* of the *Samyutta-nikāya* (S: V, 121-26), where the expression «*yathābhūtaṃ na pajānāti*» alternates with «*yathābhūtaṃ na jānāti na passāti*», and «*yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti*» alternates with «*yathābhūtaṃ jānāti passāti*»; moreover, in this *sutta* the negative formula is described as the abiding in a mind-state affected by the five hindrances (*nivaraṇa*): «... *kāmarāgapariyuṭṭhitena cetasā viharati ... byāpādapariyuṭṭhitena cetasā viharati ... thina-middhapariyuṭṭhitena cetasā viharati... uddhaccakukkuccapariyuṭṭhitena cetasā viharati ... vicikicchāpariyuṭṭhitena cetasā viharati*» («He abides in a mind-state affected by sense-desire ... aversion ... sloth and torpor ... restlessness ... doubt»). Therefore, the five hindrances would be direct manifestations of *avijjā*, whereas the contemplation of experience is accomplished by – and leads to – a mind free from *nivaraṇas*. The *Nikāyas* offer several accounts of the abandoning of hindrances, which is explained as a prerequisite to enter *samādhi* and reach the *jhānas*.⁴ But from the point of view of the *Saṅgāravasutta*, such assertion is put in a different light and the discrepancy between *samādhi* and *sati-sampajañña* is remarkably softened. This assumption helps us to discern the dynamics of *paṭiccasamuppāda*, as well as to understand the very function of *sati-sampajañña*. In fact, if we consider the nature of *nivaraṇas* and of their respective antidotes (Nyanaponika Thera 1961: 5-6), we come to the conclusion that such antidotes are also prerequisites of *sati-sampajañña*. We can then look at a meditative process similar to a kind of ascending spiral: 1) the dyad *sati-sampajañña* is simultaneously cultivated with

‘seeing-knowing’ (*ñāṇadassana*). Since what is seen is radically other than what is ordinarily perceived, the vision aspect of *paññā* must also be radically other than the modes of knowledge appropriate to the mundane world».

⁴ Cf. for instance M: I, 118-22, M: III, 88-99.

antidotes to the *nivaraṇas* (*mettā*, *saṃvara*, etc.); 2) this practice supports the abandoning of hindrances (*nivaraṇa-pahāna*) and the consequent recollection (*samādhi*); 3) the practitioner, having at his disposal a more refined *sati-sampajañña*, purified from hindrances and strengthened by *samādhi*, can now submit *saḷāyatanas* to an ‘objective’ contemplation (*jānaṃ passaṃ yathābhūtaṃ*). The very observation of sensorial experience rests on a certain degree of *samādhi*. Thus *samādhi*, though not explicitly mentioned in Ms, has a significant role in the undoing of *paṭiccasamuppāda* and suffering. Furthermore, this perspective helps to see the way *sati-sampajañña* is a fruit of the abandoning of the *nivaraṇas* as well as a device for that abandoning at the same time, this way holding together the two extremes of the previously described spiral. Behind this seeming paradox, it is possible to notice the way the *Nikāyas* refer to different levels of the factors of awakening. The refinement and the power of the factors of awakening increase as they interact with one another.⁵

The Relationship between Ignorance and Attachment

Due to the misunderstanding of the sense experience, there is thirst-craving (*taṇhā*) while *upādānakkhandhas* increase, *i.e.* the self-view increases. Basically, *upādānakkhandhas* are the sense of identification with (*ahaṃ asmi*)⁶ and appropriation of (*upādāna*) the five *khandhas*: an ordinary person is identified both with each aggregate and with the totality of the aggregates. Such delusion is not merely an intellectual mistake, but it is deeply rooted in sense-experience. What is being conveyed here through the expression «*ajānaṃ apassaṃ yathābhūtaṃ*», and which elsewhere is called *avijjā*, implies a level of ignorance that is much deeper than the level of doctrinal views (*diṭṭhi*). As a matter of fact, it embraces the whole experience with its variety of features. It is no accident that in Ms, contrary to what happens in other *suttas*,⁷ there are no instructions about contemplating sensory perception through the criterion of *tilakkhaṇa*, *i.e.* by seeing *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anattā*. In fact, the Buddha here does not ‘suggest’ a view of existence but, rather, he invites to actually

⁵ «... the spiraling loop of the factors of Awakening continually feeds back on itself ...» (Thanissaro 1996: 160).

⁶ Norman (1990: 206) notices that «the Buddha’s ability to reject the idea that the *khandhas* are *attā* depends upon his audience knowing that *attā* is, by definition, *nicca* and *sukha*. If it were, then we should not suffer disease (which is *dukkha*), and if the *rūpa*, etc. were *attā* then it would be ‘ours’ and we should have full control over it. All this proves that the *khandhas* are not *attā*, they are *anattā*, ‘non-*attā*’».

⁷ Cf. the *Cūḷarāhulovādasutta* (M: III, 277-80), the *Samphassasutta* of the *Rāhulasamyutta* (S: II, 246-47), the *Dutiyasamuggāhasappāyasutta* (S: IV, 24-26) and the *Rāhulovādasutta* of the *Saḷāyatanasamyutta* (S: IV, 105-6). These texts illustrate the same pattern adopted in the *Anat-talakkhaṇasutta* for the investigation of *khandhas* (S: III, 66-68).

know the nature of visual, auditory, gustatory, tactile and mental experience, ‘the way it is’ (*yathābhūtaṃ*). In the *Sallekhasutta* (M: I, 40-46) it is explicitly said that contemplation of the way reality is allows the *bhikkhu* to overcome self-view. In this case the meditator contemplates the object of experience as it actually is, thus abandoning the viewpoint (*diṭṭhi*) that leads him to identify with the object experienced:

Netam mama, nesoham asmi, na me so attā'ti, evam etaṃ yathābhūtaṃ sammapaññā passato evam etāsaṃ diṭṭhinaṃ pahānaṃ hoti, evam etāsaṃ diṭṭhinaṃ paṭinissaggo hoti (M: I, 40).

If the object is seen with right wisdom as it actually is, thus ‘This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self’, then the abandoning of these views, the letting go of these views, takes place [in him].⁸

A further analysis of the formula «*ajānaṃ apassaṃ yathābhūtaṃ*» shows that not only does it describe the role of *avijjā* in the conditioning process, but it also implies the second link of *paṭiccasamuppāda*, namely *saṅkhāra*. Indeed, the compound *yathābhūtaṃ* refers to a view that is without distortion and, at the same time, without reactivity. Sue Hamilton (2000: 79) illustrates the contemplation of sensory experience ‘the way it is’ as a perception void of «volitional activities» (*saṅkhāra*): «I can simply register the touch (or whatever is the relevant sensation) and see that it is what it is simply in the factual sense». Therefore, contemplation is the factor that defuses the mechanism of reactivity (*saṅkhāra*).⁹ Boisvert (1995: 144) locates such reversal of *paṭiccasamuppāda* in the transition from *saññā* to *paññā*:

When sensations are observed with equanimity, *saññā* is no longer active and craving is not generated. When the habit pattern of the mind is broken and sensations are perceived as impermanent, they are no longer approached as desirable or undesirable. In fact, having replaced *saññā* by wisdom (*paññā*), one does not react to the sensations, and new *saṅkhāra* cannot arise.

This reflection highlights a primary aspect of Buddhism: knowledge is the pre-eminent factor of liberation. Yet, in order for it to be liberating, it has to become a refined knowledge, purified from defilements, able to penetrate reality and to unravel with no distortion the object perceived. The emphasis on knowledge as a crucial factor of liberation may suggest that Buddhist teachings require to know ‘something’ that was previously unknown. This idea has often oriented Buddhist studies to the ‘objects’ – *i.e.* to the heterogeneous Buddhist doctrinaire system – in search of the essential features of early Buddhism.

⁸ The view of a separate self is called *sakkāyadiṭṭhi*.

⁹ On the meanings of the term *saṅkhāra*, see Johansson (1978: 41-56); Boisvert (1995: 91-106); Payutto (1995: 76 n. 18); Hamilton (1996: 66-81).

On the contrary, the heart of *Nikāyas*' philosophy is to be found in the radical change of the perception of reality. As we have seen above, Boisvert synthesizes such change in the replacement of *saññā* with *paññā*. According to this perspective, the Buddha's teaching does not concern 'what' to know, but 'how' to know.¹⁰ This way, the danger of getting entangled in the trap of views (*ditṭhi*), which are a form of impurity (*āsava*), is avoided. As Cicuzza (2001: 318, n. 1) notes, this danger is stressed in the *Brahmajālasutta* (D: I, 1-46):

Il primo buddhismo era una dottrina empirica ed il criterio della conoscenza era l'osservazione diretta. Ogni altro tentativo di imbrigliare la realtà in teorie razionali era, secondo il Buddha, destinato a fallire e a vincolare l'uomo in una fitta rete (qui chiamata *brahmajāla*, la «rete di Brahmā» ...), che non lo lasciava libero di cercare la vera via d'uscita al *saṃsāra*, ovvero l'avere consapevolezza della realtà così com'è, impermanente, priva di un sé permanente e colma di sofferenza.¹¹

Therefore, the switch from *saññā* to *paññā* can be seen as a metamorphosis of the cognitive mode. The starting point is a form of discriminating knowledge, which Sue Hamilton (1996: 57) describes as follows: «...*Saññā* has a discriminatory or identificatory function which is in effect one of 'naming'. This in turn leads on to the various thought processes (*vitakka*) of *saṃsāric* existence, and a separated or manifold way of interpreting our experiences».

To a different degree, *paññā* is defined in the *Nikāyas* as an immediate instrument to penetrate the law of impermanence and to extinguish suffering: «...*udayatthagāminiya paññāya... nibbedhikā sammādukkhakkhayagāmini*».¹² Sue Hamilton (*ibid.*: 93) suggests that the difference is to be found in the semantic function of the prefix: «The prefix *pa*, however, suggests an intensification of *ñā*, to know, giving us a meaning such as 'to know completely', or 'to know qualitatively better'».¹³ It is perhaps not hazardous to say that the prefix

¹⁰ About this issue, Sue Hamilton (1996: 69) is even more 'radical': «The achieving of Nirvana involves 'seeing things as they really are' (*yathābhūtam*), but exactly what things really are is never described by the Buddha: only the way to achieve such insight oneself is described».

¹¹ The reflection of Cicuzza, among other things, sheds light on the actual equivalence between *yathābhūtam pajānāti* and the understanding of *tilakkhaṇa*.

¹² D: III, 237, D: III, 268; M: I, 356, M: II, 95, 129; S: V, 197-200 (this is the explicit definition of *paññindriya*; the five *indriyas* are *saddhā*, *virīya*, *sati*, *samādhi* and *paññā*), S: V, 392, 395, 402; A: III, 1-3 (this is the first *Vitthatasutta* of the *Āṅguttara-nikāya*, which illustrates *paññā-bala*; the *sekkhabalas*, sharing three factors with the *indriyas*, are *saddhā*, *hiri*, *ottappa*, *virīya* and *paññā*), A: III, 10-11 (this is the second and last *Vitthatasutta* of the *Āṅguttara-nikāya*, which describes *paññābala* as *bala*; the list of the five *balas* is the same as the list of *indriyas*), A: III, 53 (here we find the definition of *paññādhana*; the five *dhanas* are *saddhā*, *sīla*, *suta*, *cāga* and *paññā*), A: III, 65 (this *sutta* comments five adjectives – *padhāniyaṅga* – of the *bhikkhu*: *saddha*, *appābhāda*, *asaṭha*, *āraddhavirīya*, *paññavanta*), A: II, 152-56; A: IV, 4 (*paññā* as one of the seven *balas*: *saddhā*, *virīya*, *hiri*, *ottappa*, *sati*, *samādhi* and *paññā*), A: IV, 111, 234, 285, 352-57, A: V, 15, 25-28, 91; Ud 36-37. Gethin (2001: 119) translates the formula: «noble, penetrating and that leads to the true destruction of suffering».

¹³ See also Ergardt (1977: 12).

pa in the formula *yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti* has been intentionally used in order to suggest that contemplation is indeed knowledge supported by recollection.

The presence of *salāyatana*s immediately after *saṅkhāras* is not a mere description of the next passage of the dependent origination, but a further elucidation of the nature of *avijjā*: not just an intellectual misunderstanding of the existence, but something ‘active’, that affects every aspect of the individual (Gethin 1998: 150). The *Salāyatana*samyutta provides several illustrations of how the contemplation of the *salāyatana*s – and actually every contemplation described in the *Nikāyas* – transcends the merely conceptual dimension of the intellect. An obvious example is found in the *Samugghātasārūppasutta* (S: IV, 21-24), where the method of uprooting every conceptual imagination (*sabbamaññītasamugghātasārūppa*) is described. Such approach consists in not adding imagination and thought to any of the six sense-doors. Thanks to the absence of a conceptual interpretation, attachment to the sensorial experience does not arise («*so evaṃ amaññamano na ca kiñci loke upādiyati*»),¹⁴ nor does arise the following affliction («*anupādiyam na paritassati*»), and one individually experiences *nibbāna* («*paccataññeva parinibbāyati*). Still in the *Salāyatana*samyutta, the same method is oriented to freeing oneself from the arrow (*salla*), that in this case is synonymous with *ejā*.¹⁵ The presence of *ejā* in these instructions for the contemplation of *salāyatana*s clarifies the meaning of the expression «*...na maññati...*» in this meditative technique. Here, thought is seen as the realm of conceptual fancies: the mind (*citta*) is not aware of the way experience is, but is lost in judgments, in comparisons, and therefore in the twofold habitual dynamic of grasping–rejecting the object experienced. Accordingly, the arrow (*salla*) consists in a shift of the mind (*citta*) from the stability of mindfulness¹⁶ to the restlessness of identification-attachment. In the *Samugghātasārūppasutta*, identification is described as an act of wrapping sense-experience with a layer of concepts and reveries, indicated by the verb *maññati*.

Non-identification with thought is very effectively expounded in the *Dantabhūmisutta* (M: III, 128-37), and it is connected to the very practice of *satipaṭṭhāna*: «*ehi tvam bhikkhu, kāye kāyanupassi viharāhi... vedanāsu... mā ca kāmupasaṃhitam vitakkaṃ vitakkesi*» («Come you, *bhikkhu*, abide contemplating the body in the body, feelings in feelings... and do not think any

¹⁴ In the *Mahāsati*paṭṭhānasutta (D: II, 289-315), a similar formula is often reiterated: «*anissito ca viharati na ca kiñci loke upādiyati*» («And he is free, and does not attach to anything in the world»). That indicates the immediate fruit deriving from the practice of *satipaṭṭhāna*.

¹⁵ S: IV, 64-66. On the metaphor of the arrow, see below the references to the *Sallasutta* (S: IV, 207-10).

¹⁶ The term *sati* is frequently associated with the adjectives *upaṭṭhitā* (stable, steady) and *asamuṭṭhā* (non-confused). M: I, 21, 185-91, M: II, 93; S: IV, 125; A: I, 148, A: II, 14; Iti 119-20. In a later text, the *Nettipakaraṇa*, the locution «*upaṭṭhitā sati asamuṭṭhā*» is equalized to *vipassanā* (Netti 88).

thought connected with sensorial pleasures»; M: III, 136). In this case, «*kā-mupasaṃhita vitakka*» seems to be synonymous with the dyad «*ejā... na maññati*»: thought (*vitakka*) is what directs and feeds the seduction (*ejā*) of sensorial gratifications (*kāma*).

Conceptual imagination as a hindrance to the meditative path is also present in the *Dhātuvibhaṅgasutta* (M: III, 237-47), where the arrow is unequivocally defined *maññāsava* or *maññita*. (M: III, 246). It is fundamental to note that the *Dhātuvibhaṅgasutta* (*ibid.*) specifies the contents of the conceptual construction, that would be nothing but the identification with the self: «‘I am’ is a construing (imagination), ‘I shall be’ is a construing, ‘I shall not be’ is a construing...» («*‘ayamahamasmi’ti maññitam etaṃ, ‘bhavissan’ti maññitam etaṃ, na bhavissan’ti maññitam etaṃ*»). Significantly, we find the same explanation in the *Yavakalāpisutta* of the *Saḷāyatanāsaṃyutta* (S: IV, 200-3), where the reiteration of the identical formulas «I am, I shall be, etc.» is applied not only to *maññita*, but also to *iñjita* (shaking), to *phandita* (spasm, throb), to *papañcita* (complication, mental proliferation, obsession) and to *mānagata* (conceiving, pride). Thus, the conceptual faculties, although basically neutral, if not examined by a contemplative practice can get easily entangled in the identification with an independent self and in the consequent suffering.¹⁷

Turning to Ms, the fact itself that misunderstanding results in a mental as well as a physical discomfort, seemingly refers to a deeply rooted conditioning. The emphasis is not on an ideological perspective, but on the tool of knowledge. Knowledge purifies the field of experience from defilements – namely *taṇhā*, *upādāna*, *nandi*, etc. The issue of knowledge and ignorance plays a leading role in this *sutta*. In other words, *avijjā* here does not mean ignoring the Four Noble Truths in a doctrinal sense, but, rather, in an existential sense. That is to say, *avijjā* is an absence of intuitive, deep knowledge of the dynamics that contribute to suffering and of those that loosen and finally undo the knot of *dukkha*. There is a strong, close, immediate link between ignorance and attachment. Behind *taṇhā* and *upādāna* there is an unconscious choice, and that choice is *avijjā*, expressed in Ms by the formula «*ajānaṃ apassaṃ yathābhūtaṃ*» («not knowing and not seeing the way things are»). The indissolubility of this bond is highlighted in all the *Nikāyas*. As proof of that, two extremely important texts, namely the *Brahmajālasutta* and the *Mahānidānasutta*, indicate the contemplative approach as the method that liberates from attachment (*anupādāvimutta*).¹⁸

¹⁷ A right way to relate to the dynamic of thoughts is suggested by the Buddha in the *Dvedhāvittakkasutta* (M: I, 114-18). Here the Buddha tells how his practice before awakening dwelled on the quality of thoughts (*vitakka*), fostering healthy thoughts, *i.e.* thoughts tied with ‘letting go’ (*nekkhamavitakka*), and abandoning thoughts tied with hindrances (*kānavitakka*, *byāpādavitakka*, etc.). The meditative factors implied in this practice are condensed in the formula «*appamattassa ātāpino pahitattassa*» («attentive, ardent, resolute»).

¹⁸ D: I, 17, 22, 24, 29, 39, D: II, 69-70.

In Ms, the connection between ignorance, attachment and suffering is also expressed by the verb *sārajjati*, ‘to grasp’, ‘to attach to’, ‘to be entangled in’. Its related term *rāga* is close to *taṇhā*, *nandi* and *upādāna* and points to an unhealthy relation with sense experience. The chief factor of contemplation (*«jānaṃ passam yathābhūtaṃ»*) or, to the contrary, of confusion (*«ajānaṃ apassam yathābhūtaṃ»*), for each sense is focused on the perceptive organ (eye, ear, etc.), on the object perceived (forms, sounds), on the consciousness (*viññāṇa*) which is related to the specific perception (eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, etc.), on sense contact (*samphassa*), on pleasant, unpleasant or neutral feeling (*«...vedayitaṃ sukhaṃ vā dukkhaṃ vā adukkhamasukhaṃ vā...»*). If sense activity is obscured and conditioned by confusion/ignorance, the mind gets entangled in it. Conversely, if sense activity is understood, observed the way it is, the mind does not attach to it.

A non-grasping, detached mind (*virattacitta*) is a liberated mind. In a way, by observing the action of ignorance and attachment on the six sense-doors we can define the nature of the whole liberating process. Rather than a mere annihilation of the harmful factors that bond the mind to suffering, such process is a release from ‘identification with/attachment to’ sense-experience and, ultimately, with/to the five aggregates of existence (*khandha*).

The Paṭiccasamuppāda in a Contemplative Perspective

In Ms, the emphasis on sense-experience is associated with a discussion on *paṭiccasamuppāda*. This discussion appears to be quite short if compared with others in early Buddhist literature.¹⁹ Here indeed, the chain of dependent origination includes *avijjā (ajāna/apassa) – salāyatana – upādāna (upādānakkhandha) – dukkha*. The reversal point is represented by the shift from *avijjā* to *vijjā*; the area where such a deep revolution takes place is the sense experience (*salāyatana*). The field of the *salāyatana*s (and, similarly, the *khandhas*) is affected by the basic either wholesome or unwholesome factors through a process that can be synthesized in three stages: *avijjā – rāga – dukkha*. In the opposite sense, we have *vijjā (paññā) – virāga – vimutti*. These stages respectively represent the starting point, the junction and the final destination of two opposite paths. The first stage establishes the very nature of the path, either conditioning or salvific. This way, it determines the junction too, namely the nature of the perceptive activity, and the final destination. *Avijjā* causes experience to be defiled by attachment (*rāga*) and thus bound to the resulting suffering (*dukkha*). By virtue of *paññā* there is non-attachment (*virāga*), and therefore liberation (*vimutti*). The simplicity of this map allows to move more easily through the various descriptions of *paṭiccasamuppāda*.

¹⁹ Cf. for example the *Mahānidānasutta* (D: II, 54-71), one of the various texts that expound the division of *paṭiccasamuppāda* in twelve links.

More specifically, the expression «*jānaṃ passam yathābhūtaṃ*», equivalent to *paññā*, proves that this short classification of *paṭiccasamuppāda* has a meditative function. Beginning just with the semantic significances of this expression, it is possible to recognize the observation of *saḷāyatanas* as a contemplative path in itself, containing all of the four *satipaṭṭhānas*, although reformulated in a different light.

A contemplative and soteriological perspective of *paṭiccasamuppāda* and, above all, of *saḷāyatanas*, requires a short analysis of the relation between the comprehension of sense experience and the typical tools of the path to freedom, *i.e.* the thirty-seven ‘wings to awakening’ (*bodhipakkhiya*). The *bodhipakkhiyas*, which in Ms follow naturally the contemplation of *saḷāyatanas*, represent a consistent whole of factors to be cultivated. The set of thirty-seven *bodhipakkhiyas* is in turn divided in seven smaller classifications. The close relation between the thirty-seven factors implies the presence of all of them, even when the *suttas* only mention one or a few.²⁰ The study of Ms, by virtue of a comparison to the *Ānāpānasatisutta* (M: III, 78-88), allows a closer look at the relation between *bodhipakkhiyas*.

In the *Ānāpānasatisutta* are quoted two classifications of *bodhipakkhiyas*, namely the four foundations of mindfulness and the seven factors of awakening. The sequence of *bodhipakkhiyas*, ending with the liberation born from knowledge (*vijjāvimutti*), is initially set in motion by the practice of contemplating the breath (*ānāpānasati*):

Ānāpānasati, bhikkhave, bhāvitā bahulikata, mahapphalā hoti mahānisaṃsa. Ānāpānasati, bhikkhave, bhāvitā bahulikata, cattāro satipaṭṭhāne paripūreti. Cattāro satipaṭṭhānā, bhāvitā bahulikata, satta bojjhaṅge paripūrenti. Satta bojjhaṅgā, bhāvitā bahulikata, vijjāvimuttiṃ paripūrenti (M: III, 82).

O monks, mindfulness of in-and-out breathing, [if] practised and frequently cultivated, is of great fruit, of great benefit. Mindfulness of in-and-out breathing, [if] practised and frequently cultivated, brings to fulfilment the four foundations of mindfulness. The four foundations of mindfulness, [if] practised and frequently cultivated, bring to fulfilment the seven factors of awakening. The seven factors of awakening, [if] practised and frequently cultivated, bring to fulfilment liberation arising from knowledge.²¹

The sequence is very similar to the one described in the *Kuṇḍalīyasutta* of the *Bojjhaṅga Saṃyutta* (S: V, 72-5). Yet, in that *sutta* the beginning of the sequence is not the contemplation of breathing, but a practice of non-reactivity to *saḷāyatanas*. Even though in the *Kuṇḍalīyasutta* there is no standard con-

²⁰ The reciprocal influence of the *bodhipakkhiyas* is broadly discussed in Thanissaro (1996), and Gethin (2001).

²¹ Cf. the *Ānandasutta* of the *Ānāpānasati Saṃyutta* (S: V, 328-33), where the crucial agent of the process is called *ānāpānasatisamādhī*.

templation of sense experience – as in Ms – still, it is worth noting that the right approach to *salāyatana*s is an essential prerequisite to *satipaṭṭhāna*s and *bojjhaṅga*s.

If we now turn to the *Ānāpānasatisutta*, we see that contemplation of the breathing – actually one of the meditative techniques of *satipaṭṭhāna*s – introduces the four *satipaṭṭhāna*s, and then the seven *bojjhāṅga*s, delineating a twofold relationship between *ānāpānasati* and the *bodhipakkhiya*s: *ānāpānasati* is the prerequisite of the *bodhipakkhiya*s – here condensed in the seven *bojjhāṅga*s – and, at the same time, it belongs to *bodhipakkhiya*s, being *sati* the first quality of the *bojjhāṅga*s and being the *satipaṭṭhāna*s a set included in the *bodhipakkhiya*s. According to Gethin (2001: 59), the passage reveals an identity of functions between *ānāpānasati* and the four *satipaṭṭhāna*s; from such identity the causal nexus leading to the *bojjhāṅga*s would arise:

... in the *Ānāpānasati-sutta* watching the breathing is not only a preliminary of the *satipaṭṭhāna*s, it actually is the *satipaṭṭhāna*s. [...] In many ways, then, the *Ānāpānasatisutta* is simply an expanded and full illustration of just how the Buddhist path consists in the abandoning of the *nivaraṇa*s, establishing the *satipaṭṭhāna*s, and developing the *bojjhāṅga*s.

We already discussed above the crucial role of *sati* in abandoning the *nivaraṇa*s. What seems to be more relevant in the present context is the relation of a single meditative approach to the whole contemplative practice and especially to the salvific path represented by the list of *bodhipakkhiya*s.²² In several aspects, this twofold relation is present in Ms too. The analysis of the text has shown so far how in this *sutta* the Buddha expounds a real contemplative practice, a training of the mind (*cittabhāvanā*), rather than a mere description of the human condition. In addition, such practice can be easily identified with each one of the *satipaṭṭhāna*s.²³ Last but not least, this practice is inserted in a reversal process of the dependent origination embodied by the *bodhipakkhiya*s and ending in liberation (*vimutti*). In Ms – as in the *Ānāpānasatisutta* – the contemplative approach, regardless of the subject chosen, is in itself sufficient to achieve liberation. It is possible because the contemplation of a single subject conveys all the *bodhipakkhiya*s: pulling one cord, the whole meditative practice (*cittabhāvanā*) unties.²⁴

The two *suttas* – viz. Ms and *Ānāpānasatisutta* – are supported by some mutual factors applied in different contexts. The exploration of the breath in

²² According to Gethin (2001: 57-58), the foundation of this equation is to be found in «...the essential unity of the four *satipaṭṭhāna*s...». Cf. S: V, 325.

²³ Cf. the example above from the *Kuṇḍaliyasutta*.

²⁴ That is explicitly stated about the practice of mindfulness of the body (*kāyagatāsati*). Cf. M: III, 88-99).

the *Ānāpānasatisutta* is not dissimilar to the exploration of the sense-doors in Ms. Still, the *Ānāpānasatisutta* reads:

Dīghaṃ va assasanto 'dīghaṃ assasāmi'ti pajānāti, dīghaṃ vā passasanto 'dīghaṃ passasāmi'ti pajānāti, rassaṃ va assasanto 'rassaṃ assasāmi'ti pajānāti, rassaṃ vā passasanto 'rassaṃ passasāmi'ti pajānāti.

Breathing in long, he really knows that he is breathing in long, or breathing out long, he really knows that he is breathing out long. Or breathing in short, he really knows that he is breathing in short, or breathing out short, he really knows that he is breathing out short (M: III, 82-88).

Such description of contemplation of the breath is preceded by the formula «*so satova assasati, satova passasati*» («mindful he breaths in, mindful he breaths out»)²⁵ The presence of *pajānāti* explains the function of *sati* and can be rightly defined 'a verbal form' of *sati*.

In the Ms, the expression «*jānaṃ passaṃ yathābhūtaṃ*» seems to suggest an identical contemplative modality. To pay attention to the alternation of long (*dīgha*) and short (*rassa*) breath is equivalent to an observation of the process without interfering with it, that is to say, to observe the breath – or the experience – «the way it is» (*yathābhūtaṃ*). Consequently, the Ms shows itself an in-depth analysis of the practice of *satipaṭṭhānas*, just like the *Ānāpānasatisutta* and the *Kāyagatāsatisutta*. These texts illustrate distinct meditative practices that share a lack of reactivity. Just like the conditioning (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) gathers the momentum of a reactive confusion, in the same way the liberating process takes root in a contemplative activity that is – as much as possible – void of reactivity. In the *Nikāyas*, the best performer of such function is *upekkhā*, generally translated with 'equanimity'.

This relation between *upekkhā* and the contemplation of the *saḷāyatanas* is thoroughly described in the *Saḷāyatanavibhaṅgasutta* (M: III, 215-22), which enumerates two categories of *upekkhā*: ordinary equanimity (*gehasitā upekkhā*) and equanimity resting on 'letting go' (*nekkhammasitā upekkhā*). Both categories are in turn subdivided into six kinds of equanimity, one for each sense-door, and are described by the same contemplative lexicon that we have been analyzing so far (*viditvā... yathābhūtaṃ sammapaññāya passato...*). The presence of the factor sheds light on the contemplation of the *saḷāyatanas* in the reference of *vedanā*. As we have seen above, the study of contemplation of sense experience involves – in terms of *vedanānupassanā* – an interesting synthesis of the *paṭiccasamuppāda*: lack of contemplation (*avijjā*) → reactivity

²⁵ The formula generally recurs in the accounts of *ānāpānasati*, for instance in the two almost identical versions of the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhānasutta* (D: II, 289-315) and *Satipaṭṭhānasutta* (M: I, 55-63), in the *Mahārāhulovādasutta* (M: I, 420-26), in the *Ekadhammasutta* of the *Ānāpānasati Saṃyutta* (S: V, 311-2), and in the *Girimānandasutta* (A: V, 108-12).

(*saṅkhāra*) → unconscious habits (*anusaya*) → suffering (*dukkha*).²⁶ The reversal of the process can be summarized in the following sequence: contemplation (*sati-sampajañña*) → equanimity (*upekkhā*) → ease (*sukha*), experienced in virtue of freedom from craving and aversion. Two very similar perspectives emerge from comparing the *Chachakkasutta* (M: III, 280-87) with the *Chappāṇakopamasutta* (S: IV, 198-200): in the first of these *suttas* we find the application on the *salāyatana*s of *sati-sampajañña* associated with *upekkhā*,²⁷ in the second one, the contemplative work on sense experience makes use of the dyad *sati-sampajañña* associated with *saṃvara*. The two terms – viz. *upekkhā* and *saṃvara* – indicate an inner attitude which is opposite to the peculiar reactivity (*saṅkhāra*) of the *paṭiccasamuppāda*.

As it has been previously observed, the expression «*janaṃ passaṃ yathābhūtaṃ*» itself (or «*yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti*») indicates a contemplative approach as well as a lack of reactivity. Similarly, the formula «*upekkhako sato sampajāno*» defines the two sides of an equanimous, non-reactive contemplation. This attitude to *salāyatana*s is described in the *Chabbisodhanasutta* as a sticking to the bare experiencing, without adding anything: «*diṭṭhe diṭṭhavādītā, sute sutavādītā, mute mutavādītā, viññāte viññātavādītā*» (M: III, 29-30; «In what is seen it must be said what is seen, in what is heard it must be said what is heard, in what is touched it must be said what is touched, in what is cognized it must be said what is cognized»).²⁸ The expression is equivalent to abiding in a dimension characterized by *upekkhā*, *sati* and *sampajañña*, and not corrupted by that blind reactivity (*avijjā* – *saṅkhāra*) from which polluting factors (*rāga*, *taṇhā*, *upādāna*, etc.) proliferate. In the *Chabbisodhanasutta*, the accomplishment of such contemplative state is equivalent to liberation.

Mindfulness and Experience in the Pāli Canon

The influence of *sati-sampajañña* on the *salāyatana*s is also described in the *Kimsukopamasutta* (S: IV, 191-95), the *Chappāṇakopamasutta* (S: IV, 198-200) and in the *Mahātāṇhāsāṅkhayasutta* (M: I, 270-71). In the first *sutta* the human body is represented through the allegory of the town, whose doors coincide with the sensorial bases, that are protected by mindfulness.²⁹ In the

²⁶ Nyanaponika Thera (1970: 62) defines *anusayas* as «...deeply engrained habitual tendencies of an unwholesome nature».

²⁷ The same approach is described in the *Indriyabhāvanāsutta* (M: III, 297-302).

²⁸ See also D: III, 232, A: II, 246 and A: IV, 307. In the *Cūḷaniddesa* (Cnidd IV, 18) the expression «*diṭṭhe diṭṭhavādītā, sute sutavādītā, mute mutavādītā, viññāte viññātavādītā*», broadly commented, is preceded by the expression «*upekkhako viharati sato sampajāno*» («he abides equanimous, aware, fully mindful»). Cf. Ergardt (1977: 14).

²⁹ «*Cha dvārā'ti kho, bhikkhu, channetaṃ ajjhattikānaṃ āyatanānaṃ adhivacanaṃ 'Dovāriko'ti kho, bhikkhu, satiyā etaṃ adhivacanaṃ*» (S: IV, 191-95; «The six doors are a metaphor of the six senses, the watcher of the doors, o monk, is a metaphor of mindfulness»). In the *Visuddhi-*

Chappānakopamasutta the six senses are compared to six animals that want to run to their own habitats but are tied with a strong rope to a strong post fixed in the ground. The post fixed in the ground is an image for the mindfulness immersed in the body.³⁰

In the *Mahātaṇhāsāṅkhayasutta*, mindfulness of the body is the compass for orientation in the contemplation of *saḷāyatanas*. The terminology used is quite similar to the one adopted in the *Kiṃsukopamasutta* and in the *Chappānakopamasutta*, but in the *Mahātaṇhāsāṅkhayasutta* is inserted in a broader framework. The *Mahātaṇhāsāṅkhayasutta* is one of those *suttas* – like the *Dantabhūmisutta* (M: III, 128-37) and the *Gaṇakamogallānasutta* (M: II, 266-III, 7), just to name two – that condense the whole liberating path. In the *Mahātaṇhāsāṅkhayasutta*, the stages of the route consist in faith-trust («*saddhā*»), evoked by the standard formula) → letting go («*pahāna*», here used as a synonym for *nekkhamma*) → love and compassion for every living being («*dāyapanno sabbapānabhūtāhitanukampi viharati*») → ethics («*sīla*») → restraint («*saṃvara*») → mindfulness-discernment («*sati-sampajañña*») → letting go of hindrances («*nīvaraṇappahāna*») → meditative states («*jhāna*») → equanimity («*upekkhā*», a quality that arises in the developing of the *jhānas*) → mindfulness applied to the body («*kāyagatāsati*») → boundless mind («*appamānacitta*») → liberation («*vimutti*»).

Even though the thorough description of the liberating process denotes a remarkable difference between the *Mahātaṇhāsāṅkhayasutta*, on the one hand, and the *Kiṃsukopamasutta* and the *Chappānakopamasutta* on the other hand, it is possible to recognize one more criterion of distinction between the *Kiṃsukopamasutta* on the one hand, and the *Mahātaṇhāsāṅkhayasutta* and the *Chappānakopamasutta* on the other hand. Such criterion is based on the identification of the contemplation of the *saḷāyatanas* with a specific *satipaṭṭhāna*.

Actually, the contemplation of the sense-doors expounded in the *Kiṃsukopamasutta* is a synthesis of the meditative lexicon that presents several analogies with the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhānasutta* (D: II, 290-315): the elements described and their mutual interaction can be effectively placed in the outline of the *dhammānupassanā*.

magga (XV, 16), the six sense-spheres are compared to an empty village, while the body is imaged as a village with thirty-two families (*ibid.* VIII, 701), and birth, aging and death are thieves sneaking in the village (*ibid.* XVI, 58); these examples are quoted in Collins (1982: 290).

³⁰ «*Daḷhe khile vā thambhe vā'ti kho, bhikkhave, kāyagatāya satiyā etaṃ adhivacanaṃ*» (S: IV, 198-200; «The post fixed in the ground, o monks, is a metaphor of mindfulness immersed in the body»). The *sutta* ends with a Buddha's call – very similar to the analogous formula used in the *Kāyagatāsatisutta* (M: III, 88-99) – to the practice of contemplation of the body: «*Tasmātiha vo, bhikkhave, evaṃ sikkhitabbaṃ 'kāyagatā no sati bhāvitā bhavissati bahulikatā yānikatā anuṭṭhitā paricitā susamaraddhā'ti. Evañhi kho, bhikkhave, sikkhitabban'ti*» (S: IV, 200); «Therefore, monks, you should train yourselves as it follows: 'Mindfulness directed to the body will be cultivated, it will be made vehicle, home, it will be constantly practised, increased, exercised, well established».

On the contrary, the *Chappānakopamasutta* and the *Mahātaṇhāsāṅkhasutta*, though dealing directly with the relation *sati* – *salāyatana*s, make explicit references to the practice of *kāyagatāsati* (*kāyānupassanā*) but no reference to the *dhammānupassanā*. This kind of body-contemplation, focused on the six sense-doors, is found neither in the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhānasutta* nor in the other descriptions of the whole practice of *satipaṭṭhāna*s. Indeed, it is parallel to the practice illustrated in Ms.

We also need to consider that the *Mahātaṇhāsāṅkhasutta* and the *Chappānakopamasutta* share, in addition to the contemplation of *salāyatana*s based on mindfulness of the body, other interesting elements of the meditative practice: for instance, a common use of *saṃvara* in the contemplation of the body, and the same distinction between the ‘bounded’ mind (*parittacitta*) and the ‘boundless’ mind (*appamāṇacitta*). The term *saṃvara* indicates a factor of control – or, better, of balance – of the mind, that allows to be untangled in the midst of sense experience, and is often associated with the locution «*indriyesu guttadvāro*» («watcher of the sense-doors»), to underline the protection of the senses in the sense experience.³¹ So, this quality works directly to the cultivation of *sati-sampajañña*, operating as a shield to protect the sense-doors from defilements and allowing a more limpid observation. The opposition is equivalent to the antithesis *dukkha/sukha* portrayed in Ms.

As we have previously seen, the conditioning perpetrated by ignorance, reactivity and attachment can start either at the level of the object perceived, or of the perceptive consciousness, or of the feeling experienced. In this latter stage, the alternative route leading to liberation is a contemplative modality coinciding exactly with the second *satipaṭṭhāna*, i.e. the *vedānānupassanā*.

In the *Chachakkasutta* the *salāyatana*s are the laboratory where the *vedānānupassanā* is practiced. When feelings arise, the choice is between reactivity and contemplation. Reactivity to pleasant (*sukha*) feeling strengthens the unconscious tendency to attachment (*rāgānusaya*); reactivity to unpleasant (*dukkha*) feeling strengthens the unconscious tendency to aversion (*paṭighānusaya*). In this pattern, even contemplation of neutral (*adukkhamasukhaṃ*) feeling is important. If not contemplated, the habit to confusion, to ignorance (*avijjānusaya*) increases.

Therefore, Ms seems to play a definitely relevant role in the framework of the *Nikāyas*: it is no less than the detailed explanation of an aspect of *satipaṭṭhāna*s that would otherwise be quite dark. In addition, the opportunity to interpret the whole in the light of *satipaṭṭhāna*s makes this *sutta* an instrument of primary importance to understand the connection between thought and meditative process in early Buddhism. Yet, it is not enough: a closer examination of the Ms reveals one more possible contribution that this text can give to

³¹ The term *indriya* is a frequent synonym for *salāyatana*. Cf. the *Indriyabhāvanāsutta* (M: III, 297-302).

the understanding of the meditative lexicon of the *Nikāyas*. In fact, although the contemplation of the *saḷāyatana*s is included in the *dhammānupassanā*, it is yet to be considered – for its analogies with the *kāyānupassanā*, with the *vedanānupassanā* and with the *cittānupassanā* – an alternative approach to the *satipaṭṭhāna*s. The sense-doors, being the accesses to the body, are the only way to activate *kāyanupassanā* (S: IV, 191-95). Similarly, just like it is apparent in the Ms, they represent what makes the arising of *vedanā* possible. Finally, it is in virtue of the contemplation of the six sense-doors that the actual mood of *citta* can be observed (Harvey 1995: 116-21, 187). The equivalence relation between *ānāpānasati* and *satipaṭṭhāna*, which Gethin (2001: 59) notices in the *Ānāpānasatisutta*, can be applied to the exposition of the *saḷāyatana*s as well.

The factor of *sati* plays a crucial role in several texts³² and it seems to affect, directly and indirectly, the whole thought in the *Nikāyas*. Interpreting the nature of sensory experience in the light of *sati* is not only possible, but even indispensable if we want to have a glimpse of the meaning and especially the purpose of the Ms and of the *suttas* related to it. As the practice of the *satipaṭṭhāna*s is an instrument for the deliverance from toxic factors (*akusala-dhamma* – *kilesa*), so the philosophical speculation in the *Nikāyas* – and, in some respect, in the Abhidhamma literature – has to be seen, to the extent it is affected by the practice of *sati*, in a salvific perspective.

Such reflections stress the importance for Buddhist studies to trace the speculative plots of the *Nikāyas* back to the soteriological purposes they imply. No doubt, *suttas* expatiate about the individual, his origin and his false lasting – the most articulated descriptions of the *paṭiccasamuppāda* are definitely effective in this regard – drawing a very interesting map of the human microcosm. But the real purpose of this map is cultivation of the mind (*citta-bhāvanā*) and, in the ultimate analysis, liberation (*vimutti*). It is not an accident that in texts like the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhānasutta* the whole structure of Buddhist thought is the specific subject of contemplative practice. According to Collins (1982: 116), this means that *dhammas* are «as both elements of the normative system and objects of experience in meditation». This statement can be further developed: it is also true that those same elements, *i.e.* the whole doctrinaire system of *Nikāyas*, would not be the way they are if they did not arise from the very meditative framework which they are directed to. To paraphrase what has been already deduced above, it is the quality of knowing (*pa-jānāti*) that determines – or uncovers – the nature of the object perceived.³³

The relation between philosophical speculation and meditative practice, that is obvious in Ms, leads to a reassessment of some assumptions of early Buddhism, starting from the view of *tilakkhaṇa*. It is not sufficient to observe

³² As an example, in the *Mahāparinibbānasutta* (D: II, 71-168), where the Buddha, to illustrate the nature of refuge, expounds the practice of *satipaṭṭhāna*s in a nutshell.

³³ In the first place, the threefold characteristic (*tilakkhaṇa*) of any phenomenon (*dhamma*).

that teachings on *tilakkhaṇa*, as Collins correctly deduces,³⁴ represent a tool for the deliverance of the individual. The influence of *sati-sampajañña* on these teachings ‘re-defines’ them, that is to say, ascribes them a significance – and not only a function – closely related to the contemplative and soteriological dimensions.

If we restrict the study of *tilakkhaṇa* and *paṭiccasamuppāda* to the analysis of their own peculiar conceptual frameworks, we risk to get stuck in conflicting interpretations of the fundamental principles of early Buddhism. This is a frequent occurrence for Buddhist scholars, because the doctrinal expositions of the Pāli Canon, when set apart from a salvific and contemplative perspective, can seem to be lacking in a satisfactory logical coherence. The contradictions that arise from comparing several *suttas* may suggest that these *suttas* were compiled at different times or that they are the outcome of diverging traditions. Sometimes the contradiction is obviously a deliberate paradox, with a specific semantic function.

And yet, we can legitimately wonder if these are the only directions to follow. In this regard, the contemplative and salvific perspective of the *paṭiccasamuppāda* offers two interesting elements: firstly, we can better understand the meditative lexicon of the *Nikāyas*, and, secondly, we are in a sense compelled to admit that the *paṭiccasamuppāda*, just like the other Buddhist conceptual categories, is formulated in accordance with a cognitive process that revolves around the dyad *sati-sampajañña*. In other words, it is not hazardous to affirm that, in a contemplative view, some of the outward contradictions are more compatible than they seem to be according to an analytic-comparative method. Therefore, it is fundamental to study the nature and the function of *sati-sampajañña*, to observe its interaction with the other *bodhipakkhiyas*, and to show how, in virtue of this interaction, the cessation of defilements occurs.

The Levels of Knowledge in the Mahāsaḷāyatānikasutta

In Ms the salvific path consists of four dimensions mutually related. In each dimension, a specific function is applied to the *dhammas* through *abhiññā*: understanding («*parijānāti*»), letting go («*pajahati*»), cultivating («*bhāveti*») and realizing («*sacchikaroti*»). There are specific *dhammas* in any of these dimensions.

The process begins with the *dhammas* that, by virtue of *abhiññā*, have to be understood («*pariññeya*»). These are the five aggregates of attachment-appropriation («*pañcupādānakkhaṇḍha*»). Then we find the *dhammas* that are to be abandoned through *abhiññā*. These are: ignorance or confusion («*avijjā*») and thirst for existence («*bhavataṇhā*»). The third dimension consists of *dhammas* that are to be cultivated by virtue of *abhiññā*. They are: stillness and

³⁴ «... the Buddhist doctrine of not-self as a soteriological strategy» (Collins 1982: 12).

insight («*samatha*» and «*vipassanā*»). The classification ends with the *dhammas* that are to be realized («*sacchikātabba*») by virtue of *abhiññā*, that are knowledge («*vijjā*») and liberation («*vimutti*»).

It is helpful to consider these dimensions not as a time sequence, but as simultaneous aspects of contemplative practice, though the fourth dimension – *i.e.* the realization of knowledge and liberation – would suggest the opposite. Actually, the pattern, from this point of view, presents some analogies with the standard pattern of the four noble truths («*ariyasacca*»): here liberation is not at the end of the classification, but it precedes the exposition of the four noble truths. The reason for that is to be found in right view and right aspiration («*sammādiṭṭhi*» and «*sammāsankappa*») that work as a compass in the *citta-bhāvanā*. It is important that the practitioners have clear in mind the goal of the path and that they operate to such realization in any stage of the practice. From that we can deduce that *vimutti* is not only illustrated as a final result, but also as something that, to a certain degree, has to be experienced in the practice.

The first dimension is indeed a '*khandhānupassanā*', a contemplation of the aggregates similar to the practice expounded in detail in the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*. The verb *parijānāti* is synonymous with *pajānāti*, that plays the contemplative function in the meditative lexicon of the *Nikāyas*. In the *Majjhésutta* of the *Aṅguttara-nikāya* (A: III, 400) it appears in symbiosis with *abhijānāti*, just like in Ms, and it operates on the contemplation of *phassa*, *vedanā* and *taṇhā*³⁵. In the *Salāyatanasāmyutta* (S: IV, 30), instead, *parijānāti* is applied to contemplation of the six sense-doors, according to the pattern of the four dimensions illustrated above. It is interesting to note that what we can define as a '*salāyatanānupassanā*', here is explicitly performed by the parameter of *tilakkhaṇa*, in accordance with the typical contemplative approach of the *khandhānupassanā*. Another interesting example is given by the *Pariññeyyasutta* (S: V, 435-36), where the four contemplative dimensions are focused on the four noble truths, proving the versatility of this meditative method.

As we have noticed above, the method matches a holistic view of *citta-bhāvanā*. Yet, it is possible to observe it in a causative perspective. The primary factor is *paññā* («*pariññeyya*»), that allows to use the meditative instruments in accordance with their specific nature: cultivation («*bhāvanā*») of the wholesome factors («*kusaladhamma*») and abandonment («*pahāna*») of the harmful factors («*akusaladhamma*»). These instruments unlock the access to a salvific view («*vijjā*») and then to liberation («*vimutti*»). The penetrating knowledge («*paññā*») permeates the whole path: it coincides with the first stage («*pariññeyya*»), it is the background of all the four stages («*abhiññā*»)

³⁵ «...*Bhikkhu abhiññeyyaṃ abhijānāti, pariññeyyaṃ parijānāti, abhiññeyyaṃ abhijānanto, pariññeyyaṃ parijānanto diṭṭheva dhamme dukkhassantakaro hoti*» («The monk perfectly knows by perfectly knowing, deeply understands by deeply understanding; the one who perfectly knows by perfectly knowing, who deeply understands by deeply understanding, he will end suffering in this very life»).

and it turns into the fourth stage («*vijjā*»). In the course of its manifestations, *paññā* does not actually change, but transforms the framework where it operates, namely the *citta*. That which changes is not knowledge-wisdom, but the ability of the mind to reach knowledge-wisdom. That is possible because the mind develops *paññā* (or *sati-sampajañña*) and lets go of the obstructions, *i.e.* *avijjā*, which is its exact antithesis, and *taṇhā*, that represents the relation between *avijjā* and sense experience.

Ergardt (1977: 12) highlights the similitude between *paññā* (*pajānāti*) and *abhiññā* (*abhiñānāti*), and places them beyond the mere intellectual function:

...it is possible to say that both the verb *pajānāti* and the verb *abhiñānāti* indicate a certain process of intense knowledge of a cognitive nature and this knowledge as verified by experience.

In the light of the passages examined and of the critical literature, the use of terms like *abhiññā*, *paññā*, *ñāṇa*, etc. seems to refer not to a knowledge to be achieved, whose content would correspond to a description of reality, but to an instrument to observe, investigate and finally reveal – *i.e.* liberate from defilements – reality itself. Defilements are factors of clouding as well as of suffering. On the other hand, knowledge in the *Nikāyas* is a vision of «the way it is», a vision that is not affected by a doctrinaire structure. In this perspective, the *paṭiccasamuppāda* is only secondarily a description of the nature of reality, and it is, above all, a framework of instructions meant for conveying the activity of *paññā* (or *sati-sampajañña*) to the reaching of *paññāvimutti*.

Kāyasukha and Cetosukha: Aspects of Liberation

The descriptions of the *paṭiccasamuppāda* that occur in the *Nikāyas* (especially in Ms) seem to allude to a mostly unconscious conditioning that entangles the person far beyond the universe of concepts. This consideration is confirmed by the distinction between *kāyadukkha* and *cetodukkha* on the one hand, and *kāyasukha* and *cetosukha* on the other hand. In fact, in the *Nikāyas* the term *kāya* does not allude always only to bodily experience; it often includes *mano*, the mind.³⁶ As a result, the reference to the *citta* is not always a mere reiteration of the mind-factor, but also implies a deeper dimension of consciousness, that is the dimension that experiences afflictions and freedom from afflictions. Maybe because of the risk to confound the *citta* with the *attā* denied by Buddhism, Buddhist studies are quite hesitant to face this matter. Yet, the most recent critical literature is paying attention to the nature of *citta* without dismissing studies on *anattā*. As a result, it is possible to recognize some features that distinguish the term *citta* from other terms conventionally translated as ‘mind’. This analysis, however confirmed by checking of the

³⁶ Harvey (1995: 117) remarks that «...*kāya* can mean more than the physical body».

texts, does not contradict the theory of *anattā* (Johansson 1969; Collins 1982; Harvey 1995; Hamilton 1996).

The question raised requires a short reflection on the semantic significances of *dukkha* and *sukha*, two of the three possible connotations of *vedanā*. The third one is the neutral (*adukkhamasukham*) feeling.³⁷ They are three inevitable manifestations of experience and – as seen above – are contemplated in Ms, too. The same terminology, adopted in two different contexts, takes on dissimilar meanings. The reactivity («*saṅkhāra*») to unease, to pleasure and to neutral feelings is the cause of unnecessary suffering which the existence is bounded to.³⁸ Therefore, in the specific pattern just examined the two terms do not refer to ordinary experience of suffering and unease but to a deeper level of experience: *dukkha* is the suffering resulting from the activity of defilements, while *sukha* is equivalent to freedom from defilements.³⁹

The term *kāyika* indicates the psychophysical faculties – *i.e.* the very sense-doors – that experience both ease and suffering. In a way, contemplation of experience sets the mind free from the various modalities of experience and it transforms the experience as well. The fact that the de-conditioning process leads to the developing of ease – both at the *kāyika* and at the *cetasika* level – shows how the ordinary psychophysical dimension is affected by *cittabhāvanā*.

That approach to *dukkha* and *dukkhanirodha* is different from the one described in the *Sallasutta*, where the ordinary suffering remains the same regardless of the spiritual practice, but the mind is not affected by *cetasika* suffering, here allegorically called the second arrow (Payutto 1994: 19-26).⁴⁰ However, the distinction between *kāyika* and *cetasika* seems to indicate two different levels of perception.

In the commentary to Ms (M-a: V, 103), *kāyika* corresponds to the five bodily sense-faculties («*pañcadvārika*»), while *cetasika* is equivalent to the mind-faculty («*manodvārika*»). This interpretation definitely sets the bodily sense spheres apart from the mental sphere and states the identity between *citta* and *mano*. That division is not so firm and clear in all the literature of *Nikāyas*, where the six senses are all part of ordinary experience. The distinction

³⁷ For instance, in D: II, 298, M: I, 293, S: II, 404.

³⁸ The *Sallasutta* (S: IV, 207-10) describes two kinds of *dukkha* through a metaphor. One is represented by the first arrow and the other one is the second arrow, caused by the reaction to experience.

³⁹ A very effective example in this regard is given by the well-known verse 203 in the *Sukhavagga* of the *Dhammapada* (Dhp 30, vv. 203-4): «*nibbānaṃ paramaṃ sukhaṃ* » («*Nibbāna* is the supreme happiness»).

⁴⁰ It is interesting to notice that the *Chachakkasutta*, mentioned above in relation to the *saḷāyatana*s, analyses the connection between *vedanā* and unconscious habits (*anusaya*) by use of the same formulas found in the *Sallasutta*. For an interpretation of this text, see Francesco Sferra, 'Sallasutta. Two Ways of Suffering. A Teaching of the Buddha on the Origin of Pain'. Paper read at the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, on 30th September 2002.

between the sensory spheres concerning the physical realm, on the one hand, and *mano*, the mind, on the other hand, is strongly emphasized by Buddhaghosa, especially by his statement in the *Visuddhimagga*, that equalizes *viññāna*, *citta* and *mano*.⁴¹

On the contrary, it is possible to find in the *Nikāyas*, a clear distinction between the sensory spheres (including *mano*) and the realm of *citta*. The overture of the *Āṅguttara-nikāya*, for instance, illustrates the cultivation of the *citta* («*cittabhāvanā*») and its purification («*parisuddhi*»), by virtue of that the *citta* is revealed as intrinsically luminous («*pabhassara*»).⁴² This view of *citta* is also present in the commentary, which instead, as we have seen, equalizes *citta* and *mano*, actually excluding the latter from the contemplation of *salāyatanas* (M-a: V, 104). The Ms, on the contrary, seems to deal with an ordinary state of happiness («*sukha*») that can be experienced at a psychophysical level, and a dimension of happiness related to the purified mind («*parisuddha*»).

In the former case *sukha* seems to refer to the experience recurring in *jhānas* (*pīti*, *sukha*, etc.),⁴³ while in the latter it seems to be a synonym for *nibbāna*. Therefore, *sukha* at a *kāyika* level could be the fruit of a kind of relaxation («*vūpasamā*, *samatha*»), *sukha* at a *cetasika* level could derive from the contemplation («*jānaṃ passaṃ yathābhūtaṃ*»)⁴⁴ of the sensorial realm («*salāyatana*»). The two dimensions are not distinct, but they arise from one meditative path, just like in the practice of *satipatthānas*.⁴⁵

Therefore the Ms, similarly to most of the *suttas*, contains an implicit exposition of the four noble truths: the first noble truth is described here as *kāyadukkha* and *cetodukkha*; the second one is represented by the locution «*ajānaṃ apassaṃ yathābhūtaṃ*» followed by the other links of the condition-

⁴¹ *Visuddhimagga* xiv.82, cit. in Boyd (1980: 36). Boyd has recourse to this passage of *Visuddhimagga* to confute the distinction between *citta* and *viññāna* made by Johansson (1965). Though we may agree that the Johansson's statement is «rather sharp», the considerations made by Boyd seem to be based on quite arbitrary scientific criterions. Actually, while Johansson mostly takes into consideration the *Nikāyas*, Boyd considers the *Nikāyas* and Buddhaghosa's works as a homogeneous tradition, disregarding the real transformations occurred in ancient Buddhist thought.

⁴² Cf. A: I, 10, 253-56, A: III, 16-19.

⁴³ The experience of ease already occurs in the first *jhāna*, and it follows the abandonment of hindrances (*pañcanivarāṇapahāna*).

⁴⁴ In the commentary (M-a: V, 103), «*ajānaṃ*» means a lack of knowledge associated with the path of *vipassanā* («*Ajānanti sahavipassanena maggena ajānanto*). This statement also explains how knowledge – as it contains a quality of insight, is indeed a contemplative, intuitive knowledge rather than a discriminating one.

⁴⁵ Especially in the practice of contemplation of the body (*kāyagatāsati*). Cf., for instance, two versions of the *Kāyagatāsatisutta* in the *Majjhima Nikāya* (M: III, 88-99) and in the *Samyutta Nikāya* (S: IV, 359). The relation between *samatha* and *vipassanā* is efficiently described in a nutshell in the *Yuganaddhasutta* (A: II, 156-57) mentioned above.

ing; the third truth is indicated by the experience of *kāyasukha* and *cetosukha*; the fourth truth is described as the reversal of the conditioning process, started by the formula «*jānaṃ passaṃ yathābhūtaṃ*». The compound *paññāvimutti* condenses by itself the fourth and the third truth.

If we accept this parameter, we draw the following conclusions:

1. the conditioned dimension, defiled by *dukkha*, and the released dimension (*dukkhanirodha*, *nibbāna*) embrace all the realms of existence (*kāya*, *citta*);
2. the Ms places the teaching on the four noble truths in a practical framework, *i.e.* the six sense spheres;
3. the Ms and the similar *suttas* recognize the contemplative practice, synthesized by the formula «*jānaṃ passaṃ yathābhūtaṃ*», as a link between *dukkha* and *dukkhanirodha*.

The first point offers various hints to understand the nature and the function of *samādhi*, and its peculiar aspects in the releasing process. For instance, the role of calmness («*passaddhi*») in the practice of mindfulness of the breath («*ānāpānasati*»), involving both the mind and the body,⁴⁶ proves to be directly functional to liberation. Actually, the *suttas* explicitly concerned with contemplative practice describe the whole path of liberation as a gradual decontracting process.⁴⁷ In the *Nikāyas*, this work is carried out by the various forms of bodily and mental ease (*pīti*, *sukha*, *passaddhi*, *samādhi*), that are not only aspects of the deep meditative states (*jhāna*), but are also mentioned among the seven factors of awakening (*bojjhaṅga*).

The second point confirms what is already arisen from the present study, that is to say, the need to interpret the whole structure of thought expounded in the *Nikāyas* in a soteriological key. This necessity can be very effectively applied to the pattern of the four noble truths, the real – both implicit and explicit – foundation of all the teachings illustrated in the Pāli Canon. Pensa (2002), referring to a well-known teaching of the Buddha, remarks that the four noble truths are not to be found in a doctrinaire, theoretic system, but can always be observed in the very body and mind. In the *Rohitassasutta*, in fact, the Buddha unequivocally says:

Yattha kho, āvuso, na jāyati na jiyati na miyati na cavati na upapajjati, nāhaṃ taṃ gamanena lokassa antaṃ nāteyyaṃ datṭheyyaṃ patteyyan'ti vadāmi. Na cāhaṃ, āvuso, appattvāva lokassa antaṃ dukkhassa antakiriyaṃ vadāmi. Api cāhaṃ, āvuso,

⁴⁶ Contemplation of the breath is associated with bodily and mental relaxation: «*passambhayaṃ kāyasaṅkharaṃ assasissāmiti sikkhati, passambhayaṃ kāyasaṅkharaṃ passasissāmiti sikkhati* [...] *passambhayaṃ cittasaṅkharaṃ assasissāmiti sikkhati, passambhayaṃ cittasaṅkharaṃ passasissāmiti sikkhati*» (M: I, 425; «Relaxing bodily tensions he practises 'I'm breathing in', relaxing bodily tensions he practises 'I'm breathing out' [...] Relaxing mental tensions he practises 'I'm breathing in', relaxing mental tensions he practises 'I'm breathing out'»). See also M: III, 82-84, S: V, 311, 323, 330, 336.

⁴⁷ Cf. M: III, 79-99; D: II, 290-315.

imasmyevabyāmatte kaḷevare sasaññimhi samanake lokañca paññāpemi lokasamudayañca lokanirodhañca lokanirodhagāminiñca paṭipadan'ti (S: I, 62; A: II, 48-50).

I tell you, friend, that it is not possible by travelling, to reach the end of the world where one does not take birth, age, die, pass away, or reappear. But at the same time, friend, I tell you that it is impossible to reach the end of suffering without reaching the end of the world. And it is just in this very fathom-long body, friend, with its perception, thought, that there is the world, the origin of the world, the cessation of the world, and the path leading to the cessation of the world.⁴⁸

The same perspective arises in the *suttas* that describe the contemplation of the four noble truths, as the *Mahāsati-paṭṭhānasutta* (D: II, 289-315) and the *Pariññeyyasutta* (S: V, 435-36). The instrument for this work of interpretation of the *Nikāyas'* doctrinaire system in a salvific key is offered by the third point of the classification above: it is the study of the contemplative practice (*satipaṭṭhāna*, *jhāna*) that defines the value and the function of the Buddha's teachings. Every conceptual category described in the *suttas* – being the object of the verb *pajānāti* and of the formula «*jānaṃ passaṃ yathābhūtaṃ*» and promoting the peculiar activity of *sati-sampajañña* – is directly connected to *paññā*. The most obvious example, as mentioned above, is the *Mahāsati-paṭṭhānasutta*, encompassing the crucial elements of early Buddhist thought. These elements, however, are not to be seen only as objects of the meditative work, but as foundations (*-paṭṭhāna*) of the path itself, that is the true vehicle of liberation. The very object of knowing is directed to the knowing.

The Ms, as well as the other *suttas* examined, which illustrate sense-experience according to a contemplative approach, can be rightly considered as a litmus paper showing the *modus operandi* of that crucial factor that is *paññā* or, in a broader form, *sati-sampajañña*.

Giuliano Giustarini
via Napoli 96
00055 Ladispoli (RM)
giulianogiustarini@gmail.com

SOURCES AND REFERENCES

A = *Aṅguttara-nikāya*, ed. by Richard Morris, E. Hardy, 6 vols. Pali Text Society, London 1885-1910.

Cnidd = *Cūḷaniddesa*, ed. by William Stede. Pali Text Society, London 1918.

D = *Dīgha-nikāya*, ed. by T.W. Rhys Davids, J.E. Carpenter, W. Stede, 3 vols. Pali Text Society, London 1890-1911.

Dhp = *Dhammapada*, ed. by Oskar von Hinüber, K.R. Norman. Pali Text Society, London 1994-95.

⁴⁸ In the *Samyutta Nikāya* (S: I, 39) it is said that «the world is created by the mind, undone by the mind» (...*cittena niyati loko, cittena parikissati*).

- Iti = *Itivuttaka*, ed. by Ernst Windisch. Pali Text Society, London 1889.
- M = *Majjhima-nikāya*, ed. by Vilhelm Trenckner, R. Chalmers, 3 vols. Pali Text Society, London 1888-1902.
- M-a = *Majjhima-nikāya Commentary (Papañcasūdanī)*, ed. by James H. Woods, 4 vols. Pali Text Society, London 1922-1937.
- Netti = *Nettipakaraṇa*, ed. by Edmund Hardy. Pali Text Society, London 1902.
- S = *Samyutta-nikāya*, ed. by Léon Feer, 5 vols. Pali Text Society, London 1884-1898.
- Ud = *Udāna*, ed. by Paul Steinthal. Pali Text Society, London 1885.
- Boyd, James W. (1980) The Theravāda View of Saṃhāra, in Somaratna Solariya *et al.* (eds.), *Buddhist Studies in Honour of Walpola Rahula*, 29-43. London.
- Boisvert, Mathieu (1995) *The Five Aggregates. Understanding Theravāda Psychology and Soteriology*. Waterloo.
- Cicuzza, Claudio trans. (2001), *Brahmājalasutta* (Il discorso della rete di Brahmā; *Dīgha Nikāya*, 1), in Raniero Gnoli (ed.), *La rivelazione del Buddha*, I, 271-321. Milano.
- Collins, Steven (1982) *Selfless Persons: Imagery and Thought in Theravāda Buddhism*. Cambridge.
- Ergardt, Jan T. (1977) *Faith and Knowledge in Early Buddhism. An Analysis of the Contextual Structures of an Arahant-formula in the Majjhima Nikāya*. Leiden.
- Gethin, Rupert L. (1998) *The Foundations of Buddhism*. Oxford.
- (2001²) *The Buddhist Path to Awakening*. Oxford. [Or. edn. New York 1992].
- Hamilton, Sue (1996) *Identity and Experience: The Constitution of the Human Being According to Early Buddhism*. London.
- (2000) *Early Buddhism: a New Approach. The I of the Beholder*. Richmond.
- Harvey, Peter (1995) *The Selfless Mind: Personality, Consciousness and Nirvana in Early Buddhism*. Richmond.
- Johansson, Rune E. A. (1969) *The Psychology of Nirvana*. London.
- (1979) *The Dynamic Psychology of Early Buddhism*. London – Malmö.
- Norman, Kenneth Roy (1990) A Note on Attā in the Alagaddūpamasutta, in *Id.*, *Collected Papers*, II, 200-10. London.
- Nyanaponika Thera (1961) *The Five Mental Hindrances and Their Conquest. Selected Texts from the Pali Canon and the Commentaries* (Buddhist Publication Society, The Wheel Publication, 26). Kandy.
- trans. (1970) *Āṅguttara Nikāya. Discourses of the Buddha* (Buddhist Publication Society, The Wheel Publication, 155-158). Kandy.
- Payutto, Phra P. (1994) *Dependent Origination. The Buddhist Law of Conditionality*. Bangkok.
- (1995) *Buddhadhamma, Natural Laws and Values for Life*. New York.
- Pensa, Corrado (2002) *L'intelligenza spirituale*. Roma.
- Sujato, Bhikkhu (2001) *A Swift Pair of Messengers. Calm with Insight from the Buddha's Lips*. Penang.
- Swearer, Donald K. (1972) Two types of saving knowledge in the Pāli suttas. *Philosophy East and West* 22, 355-71. Honolulu.
- Thanissaro, Bhikkhu (1996) *The Wings to Awakening. An Anthology from the Pāli Canon*. Barre, MA.