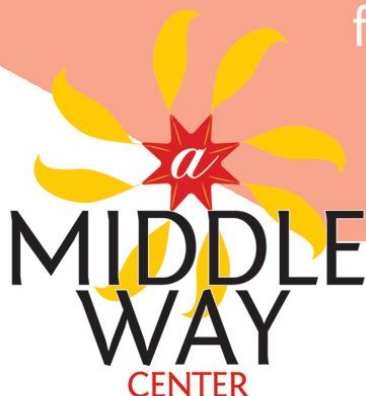


Bondage, Freedom, and Interconnection

The Twelve Links of
Dependent Arising

“ When there is grasping,
The existence of a grasper arises.
If there were no grasping
One would be liberated.
There would be no
further becoming. ”



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Chapter Twentysix of Arya Nagarjuna's *Root Verses on the Middle Way*:
Analysis of the Twelve Links

पुनर्भावाय संस्कारानविद्यानिवृत्तस्त्रिधा ।

अभिसंस्करुते यांस्तैर्गतिं गच्छति कर्मभिः ॥१

punarbhavāya saṃskārānavidyānivṛtastridhā ।
abhisamskurute yāṃstairgatiṃ gacchati karmabhiḥ ।। 1

26.1

Obstructed by ignorance,
One creates the threefold karmic predispositions
That lead to rebirth.
Because of these karmic acts
He or she takes rebirth.

As we near the end of the text as a whole, the Nagarjuna takes up the important subject of the "twelve links of dependent origination," the causal chain which in the forward direction ensnares us in samsara and the reversal of which liberates us into nirvana. Having spent twenty-five chapters negating the most cherished beliefs of the Buddhist orthodoxy, it is interesting indeed that Nagarjuna chooses at the end to affirm that we do indeed experience samsara due to these causal links and that nirvana is possible by undoing what we've done.

Since we by now thoroughly understand the emptiness side of things, we can at last consider the other side of the coin. Everything is empty – very much including the process of dependent origination itself, the emptiness of which Nagarjuna assumes rather than belabors in this chapter. But things do exist – as dependently originating phenomena. Emptiness and dependent origination are two ways of talking about the same thing, as has been stated clearly, "Whatever arises dependently is what is called emptiness." (24.18).

The process starts with ignorance, here particularly meaning the innate (as opposed to learned or intellectually acquired) belief in self-existence – the root of all our suffering. Ignorance gives rise to one or another of the "threefold karmic dispositions," referring either to our tendency to act, speak, and think ignorantly, or to virtuous, nonvirtuous, and neutral actions performed out of ignorance. In either case, it is because of these karmic acts that we are forced to take rebirth.

विज्ञानम् संनिविशते संस्कारप्रत्ययं गतौ ।

संनिविष्टेऽथ विज्ञाने नामरूपं निषिच्यते ॥२

vijñānaṁ saṁniviśate saṁskārapratyayaṁ gatau ।
saṁniviṣṭe 'tha vijñāne nāmarūpaṁ niṣicyate ॥ 2

26.2

Dependent on the karmic predispositions

Consciousness enters that new rebirth.

When consciousness has entered,

Name and form are instilled.

Due to (1) ignorance we create (2) karma, here in the sense of the “predispositions” or “propensities” (samskaras) toward further ignorant actions – this is what is sometimes termed “immature” or “unripened” karma. Karmic predispositions leave their imprints or potencies on (3) the consciousness, the continuum that carries these karmic tendencies into the future where they will ripen as positive or negative experiences. The third link is divisible into a) “causal consciousness” (referring to consciousness at the time the karmic seed has been planted), and b) “resultant consciousness,” which is the consciousness conditioned by previously created karma at the time of conception into a new rebirth. Causal consciousness arises at the moment that the karmic action ceases and turns into the karmic predisposition, and continues right up to just before the moment of conception in the new rebirth. Together with ignorance and karma, causal consciousness forms the projecting causes of the new birth. Resultant consciousness, the first of the projected effects of karma, is the consciousness that arises when the connection to the new rebirth is made at the moment just after conception.

Resultant consciousness lasts only up to the point where the next link, 4) “name and form” (nama rupa) arises. “Name and form” refers to the five “groups,” “heaps,” or “aggregates” (skandhas) that form the basis upon which the person is imputed. “Name” points to the four groups of the mind (feelings – pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral; the ability to discriminate between things seen, heard, felt, smelt, tasted, or thought; the consciousnesses of what is seen, heard, felt, smelled, tasted, and thought; and the grouping of other mental factors or karmic (samskaras)). “Form” refers to the aggregate physical parts comprising the body and here specifically the earliest stages of the foetus, but it also implies all of material reality – anything “with form.”

Exercise for Class One

For the next week, spend at least fifteen minutes each day reviewing the first four links of the chain of “dependent origination.” Concentrate on the ways you identify with your body (“form”) and your mind (“name”). Think about the different and alternating ways you sometimes believe you *are* your body (“I *am* sixty years old”; “I *am* six feet tall”; etc.) and sometimes you identify with your mind and its functions (“I *am* smart, dumb, clever, dim, etc.”; “I *am* sad, happy, angry, jealous, etc.”)

At the end of each fifteen minute session, contemplate on the fact that who we really are is a “name” in a different sense: *just* a name we place over the variety of ever-changing physical and mental parts due to our karmic “propensities” or memories.

Finally, every day make a list of new karmic imprints you could begin creating that would improve your self-conception or self-image (your “name” or understanding of yourself).

Chapter Twentysix: Analysis of the Twelve Links

निषिक्ते नामरूपे तु षडायतनसंभवः ।

षडायतनमागम्य संस्पर्शः संप्रवर्तते ॥३

niṣikte nāmarūpe tu ṣaḍāyatanasambhavaḥ ।
ṣaḍāyatanamāgamyā saṁsparśaḥ saṁpravartate ॥ 3

26.3

When name and form are instilled,
The six seats of the senses arise.
When the six seats of the senses having come about,
Contact arises.

The period of the reborn person in the womb depicted by the term “name and form” continues until the embryo begins to develop the sense organs. From name and form comes 5) what are called here the six “seats of the senses” (ayatanas) – the five physical sense organs and the mental faculty. This is the period in the life of the embryo when the sense organs are developing but not yet functioning.

To be more exact, however, it must be observed that the mental sense power (“the mind”) and the tactile sense power (“the body”) already exist in a subtle form from the first moment of the new life (as “name and form”); the other four sense organs develop a bit later. They are grouped together here as the “six seats of the senses” to indicate that at this point all have arisen.

In any event, while the “seats of the senses” are necessary for sensation to occur, it is not until 6) contact with the objects of sense, that the sense organs are activated and actually sense something. Nagarjuna explains contact more thoroughly in the next two verses.

Chapter Twentysix: Analysis of the Twelve Links

चक्षुः प्रतीत्य रूपं च समनवाहारमेव च ।

नामरूपं प्रतीत्यैवं विज्ञानं संप्रवर्तते ॥४

cakṣuḥ pratītya rūpaṁ ca samanvāhārameva ca ।
nāmarūpaṁ pratītyaivam vijñānaṁ sampravartate ।। 4

26.4

Form and apprehension of form

Depend on the eye.

Just so does consciousness

Arise in dependence on name and form.

In this verse and the next, Nagarjuna fills out what contact entails. Here he notes that once a sense organ has come about (he uses the eye as an example), a sense object (here a visible “form”) and an awareness or “apprehension” (samanvahara) of that form are made possible. This latter is sort of a technical term for a previous moment of consciousness that can act as the immediate cause for another moment of consciousness – the consciousness of a visible object, in this example – and is seemingly different from the “main mind” consciousness which acts as the second link in the chain of dependent origination.

The consciousness or awareness mentioned in this verse is produced through three conditions (pratyaya, cf. Nagarjuna 1.4, above). The first is called “object condition” (alambana pratyaya), an observable object one could be conscious of. The second is termed “dominant” or “ruler condition” (adhipati pratyaya) the sense power (e.g., the ability to see) that “rules over” the consciousness connected to that power (e.g., the consciousness of seeing). Third, there is the “just preceding condition” (anantarya pratyaya), in this verse also known as “apprehension” the moment of consciousness that occurred just before the consciousness of something else.

So it is that Nagarjuna ends the verse by noting that consciousness (being aware of seeing something) arises dependently on “name” (here pointing to something mental, i.e., the immediately preceding moment of consciousness that “flops over” into the consciousness that one is seeing something – the “just preceding condition”) and “form” (the eyeball or “ruler condition” and the visible sense object or “object condition”, both of which are physical).

संनिपातस्त्रयाणां यो रूपविज्ञानचक्षुषां ।

स्पर्शः स तस्मात्स्पर्शाच्च वेदना संप्रवर्तते ॥५

saṁnipātastrayāṅāṁ yo rūpavijñānacakṣuṣāṁ ।
sparśaḥ sa tasmātsparśācca vedanā saṁpravartate ।। 5

26.5

Contact is the conjunction of the three:

Form, consciousness, and the eye.

And from contact

Arises feeling.

Contact is the consequence of the coming together of a sense object (e.g. a visible form), an awareness or consciousness of the sense object (e.g., an awareness of “seeing”), and the sense organ that both depend on (e.g., the eye). As it occurs before feeling, it is mere sensation. But it is a sensation of the quality one perceives in the object of sensation. It involves the ability to discriminate (one of the five skandhas that make up the mind-body complex) between different kinds of sights, scents, sounds, etc., and thus said to be of three kinds: the sense object is apprehended as pleasant, unpleasant or neutral.

When 6) contact occurs, 7) feelings are made possible. An agreeable feeling arises from the sensation of contact with what is regarded as pleasant object, a disagreeable feeling from an unpleasant object, and a feeling of indifference from a neutral object.

So it is that 4) name and form (including the “resultant consciousness”), 5) the six seats of the senses, 6) contact, and 7) feelings are propelled by 1) ignorance, 2) karma, and 3) consciousness (specifically, the “causal consciousness”). 1)-3) function as the cause (ignorance inspires action which leaves an imprint on or predisposition in the consciousness), 4)-7) serve as the effect (the karmic imprint left on the consciousness of the last life results in the body and mind one is reborn with, together with the sense organs, that then are forced by karma to have the kind of sensations (“contact”) and feelings they do).

Exercise for Class Two

Every day for the next week spend fifteen minutes or more reviewing links five through seven in the chain, especially focusing on the “emptiness of the three spheres” (the fact that there is no perceiving subject without a perceptible object, no perceptible object without a subject perceiving it, and neither one without an act of perceiving).

Once you have the principle of interdependence clear, bring to mind an annoying person in your life. Get in touch with your ignorant sense that the annoying person just *is* annoying – from their own side, independent of your perception of them. Then apply the wisdom: there can be no annoying person until and unless you are *annoyed*. Resolve to try not to get annoyed by this person any longer, and then see if they still can be an “annoying person!”

वेदनाप्रत्यया तृष्णा वेदनार्थं हि तृष्यते ।

तृष्यमाण उपादानमुपादत्ते चतुर्विधं ॥६

vedanāpratyayā tṛṣṇā vedanārthaṁ hi tṛṣyate ।
tṛṣyamāṇa upādānamupādatte caturvidhaṁ ।। 6

26.6

Dependent on feeling, there is craving.
One craves on account of the feeling.
Because of the craving, one grasps
To the fourfold kinds of grasping.

From feeling comes 8) craving or attachment (trishna) – the desire not to be separated from pleasurable feelings and the wish to have unpleasant feelings end. This is why Nagarjuna says “One craves on account of the feeling” – we desire the continuation of the pleasant feelings we have and the discontinuation of the unpleasant ones. Implicit here is the idea that there is no end to our satisfaction of the craving involved. No matter how many pleasant experiences we have, it’s never enough; and no matter how few unpleasant experiences we have, one is too many and seems almost intolerable.

Craving comes in three varieties: a) we crave sense pleasures; b) the “craving of fear” is the desire to be free of unpleasant experiences and feelings; and c) the “craving for life” which occurs at the time of death, related to the grasping to the ego and the fear of its extinction.

Craving leads to 9) grasping, an even more intense form of desire, or craving done over and over again. Four varieties of grasping are mentioned, referring to: a) grasping to the sense objects of desire (kama upadana), b) grasping to the idea of a real self (atma upadana), c) grasping to morality and conduct (shila vrata upadana), e.g. the belief in and practice of extreme asceticism, but also arrogance and pride regarding one’s morality and ethical conduct, and d) grasping to views (drishti upadana, grasping to wrong views such as denying karma and rebirth, or to any philosophical viewpoint at all (see below, 27.30, where Nagarjuna pays homage to the Buddha “who out of compassion taught the true dharma in order to bring about the abandoning of all viewpoints”)).

Chapter Twentysix: Analysis of the Twelve Links

उपादाने सति भव उपादातुः प्रवर्तते ।

स्याद्धि यद्यनुपादानो मुच्येत न भवेद्भवः ॥७

upādāne sati bhava upādātuḥ pravartate ।
syāddhi yadyanupādāno mucyeta na bhavedbhavaḥ ॥ 7

26.7

When there is grasping,
The existence of a grasper arises.
If there were no grasping
One would be liberated.
There would be no further becoming.

Craving tends to focus on objects and experiences one perceives in the present – what we want and don't want in the here and now. But grasping entails also a desire that projects into the future – a wish that in the future one will continue to have what one desires and not have what one does not desire. This future orientation of grasping leads to the next link, "becoming."

In this verse, Nagarjuna reminds us of what he has extensively proven earlier (in Chapters 6 and 16): When there is desire or grasping, there will also be an idea of someone who is desiring and grasping – a grasper who exists dependently on the grasping. Grasping to anything – to objects of desire, to philosophical viewpoints, or even grasping to nirvana and enlightenment – will also entail a grasping to the self or agent who is grasping.

And, our author declares here, were there no grasping one would be free. This seems obvious once one says it! Grasping is the opposite of liberation; when we grasp, we put ourselves in prisons of our own making. Without grasping – to pleasant or unpleasant objects, as if they had those qualities innately; to the pleasant or unpleasant feelings these misunderstood objects seem to evoke; and most importantly, to the subject of the experiences and the feelings, the grasper, as if the self existed as unitary, independent and unchanging thing – without grasping, we would be liberated. "There would be no further becoming" if there were no grasping. One who sees deeply and directly that things are empty of self existence is no longer compelled by ignorant desire, craving, attachment, and grasping.

Exercise for Class Three

This week, use your meal times to reflect on the sequence in the chain of “dependent origination” highlighted in this class: from contact to feeling to craving to grasping. As you taste your food notice how you move from contact (“I’m tasting something”) to feeling (“This tastes good!” or “This tastes bad!”) to craving (“I like this and want more” or “I don’t like this and do not want more”) to grasping (“I must have another bite!” or “I can’t bear eating more of this”).

Chapter Twentysix: Analysis of the Twelve Links

पञ्च स्कन्धाः स च भवो भवाज्जातिः प्रवर्तते ।

जरामरणदुःखादि शोकाः सपरिदेवनाः ॥८

pañca skandhāḥ sa ca bhavo bhavājjātiḥ pravartate ।
jarāmarañaduḥkhādi śokāḥ saporidevanāḥ ॥ 8

26.8

Becoming entails the five groupings,
And from becoming arises
Birth, old age, death, suffering and the rest.
Grief, joined together with lamentation,

But if there is 9) grasping, the next link of the chain will arise: 10) becoming (bhava). The tenth link, "becoming," is said to be an example where the name of the effect is given to the cause. When the karmic potential depicted in the second link ("karmic predispositions") has been nourished by 8) craving and 9) grasping – like a seed that has been watered and given sunlight -- it is fully empowered into the activated karma called 10) "becoming" (bhava). This link refers especially to the moment just before a new rebirth where the activated karma impels a new "becoming" into a new "existence" which is the effect of this cause. Becoming functions as the cause for the body and mind (the five "groupings" or "aggregates") of the next life. As matured or ripened action, "becoming" is sometimes said to refer to two different sorts of karma: actions of body and speech, which have brought about a physical result in the form of the new body; and actions of the mind which have resulted in the new mind.

By this point we realize that the twelve links can be viewed not just sequentially but in several different ways. 1) Ignorance in a past life leads to 2) action (karma, here in the sense of a karmic potential, a samskara) which is imprinted on 3a) the (causal) consciousness. When the conditions are present – that is, when there is 8) craving and 9) grasping – the karmic potential is activated in 10) the "becoming" stage – which is said to produce 3b) the (resultant) consciousness which takes residence in a new body and mind, the five aggregates, which are the same as 4) name and form. The following are then made possible by having a body and mind: 5) the sense organs, 6) contact, and 7) feelings. And to complicate things even more, there also can't be 8) craving, 9) grasping, and 10) becoming without a previously existing 4) name and form, 5) sense organs, 6) contact, and 7) feelings!

Chapter Twentysix: Analysis of the Twelve Links

दौर्मनस्यमुपायासा जातेरेतत्प्रवर्तते ।

केवलस्यैवमेतस्य दुःखस्कन्धस्य संभवः ॥९

daurmanasyamupāyāsā jāteretatpravartate ।
kevalasyaivametasya duḥkhaskandhasya sambhavaḥ ॥ 9

26.9

Irritation and agitation,
They all arise from birth.
This is how the entirety
Of the suffering groupings comes into existence.

This verse continues on from the last one. With a body and mind projected from 10) becoming, the activated tainted karma, there will be suffering in the form of the next links: 11) birth (meaning conception), and from it 12) old age (keeping in mind that the aging process begins the moment after conception) and death. Old age and death are here lumped together in a single link because there are instances when death occurs immediately after birth without aging.

While both birth, on the one hand, and aging and death on the other are characterized by suffering, in between these two bookends there is also suffering, here depicted as grief (shoka), lamentation (paridevana), irritation (daurmanasya), and agitation (upayasa). "All arise from birth," says Nagarjuna.

Nagarjuna concludes the survey of twelve links of dependent origination by saying this is how our "suffering groupings" (duhkha skandhas) come into being. By implication, it is not the five groupings per se that are the problem; it is the fact that they are characterized by, and also productive of, suffering.

Many read the twelve links presented here as actually extending over three different lifetimes: Links 1)-3a) (ignorance, creation of karmic predispositions, and causal consciousness) occur in a past life; links 3b)-10) (resultant consciousness, name and form, the sense organs, contact, feeling, craving, grasping, and becoming) are located in the present life; and 11)-12) (birth, old age and death) happen in a future life.

Chapter Twentysix: Analysis of the Twelve Links

संसारमूलान् संस्कारानविद्वान् संस्करोत्ययतः ।

अविद्वान् कारकस्तस्मान्न विद्वान्स्तत्त्वदर्शनात् ॥१०

saṁsāramūlān saṁskārānavidvān saṁskarotyayatḥ ।
avidvān kārakastasmānna vidvānstattvadarśanāt ।। 10

26.10

The karmic predispositions
Are the root of samsara,
And one who is ignorant creates karmic predispositions.
Therefore the one who is ignorant is a doer of action,
But the wise one is not
Due to the perception of reality.

Studying the links in their forward progression leads to an understanding of the first Worthy Truth: the stressful nature of life. Taken in reverse order, one gets to the second Worthy Truth: suffering is caused. 12) Old age and death are caused by 11) birth, which is caused by 10) becoming, and so on back to 2) karmic action, which is caused by 1) ignorance.

In the last several verses of this chapter, Arya Nagarjuna points to the way out of suffering through a reversal of the causal sequence. In this verse, Nagarjuna notes that the karmic predispositions, which instigate the process of cyclical existence and thus act as the the “root of samsara,” are themselves impelled by ignorance. “The one who is ignorant is a doer of action (karaka),” meaning an actor who creates karma when acting – who sets into motion the sequence of events, and the attendant suffering, that we’ve reviewed in this chapter.

Nagarjuna here provides the alternative: someone who has deeply and directly “perceived reality” (tattva darshana) and gains the wisdom that comes from that transformative experience, becomes someone who is not a “doer of action,” and therefore begins to unravel the skein of self-perpetuated suffering.

What has the wise person (we are talking here about a person who has become an Arya or “stream-enterer”) perceived deeply and directly about reality that has the power to stop the repeated planting of karmic potentials impelled by ignorance? They see –

again, deeply, directly, in a way that totally changes them – that things are empty, like a dream or an illusion, of being what they appear.

They fully understand the emptiness of the three spheres: the subject, object, and the interaction between the two – all are empty of existing in any other way than as projections. When the belief in independently existing subject, objects, and actions is destroyed by the perception of reality as it is, there is no longer an identification with the subject, an attachment to the way the object appears, and an ignorant way of acting vis-a-vis that object.

Chapter Twentysix: Analysis of the Twelve Links

अविद्यायां निरुद्धायां संस्काराणामसंभवः ।

अविद्याया निरोधस्तु ज्ञानेनास्यैव भावनात् ॥११

avidyāyām niruddhāyām saṁskārāṇāmasambhavaḥ ।
avidyāyā nirodhastu jñānenāsyaiḥ bhāvanāt ।। 11

26.11

When there is a cessation of ignorance
The karmic predispositions do not arise.
And the cessation of ignorance comes about
Because of the practice of this with wisdom.

The third Worthy Truth is that suffering can be put to an end. When 1) ignorance is replaced by wisdom, then 2) one no longer creates that karmic potentialities that require the unfolding of the other links of the chain, ending in repeated birth, old age, and death.

The fourth Worthy Truth is that there is a method for putting an end to suffering. 12) Old age and death stopped when 11) birth is stopped, on back to the stopping of 2) karmic action which ceases when 1) ignorance comes to an end.

And how do we put an end to ignorance? Through “practice” (bhavana, a term that can also be translated as “meditation”). We must study how things do exist (dependently) and do not exist (independently). Informing ourselves about reality is the first part of practice. We must then contemplate what we’ve learned, wrestling with our resistance to the truth, and practicing in the sense of trying to break the cycles of suffering we continually are trapped in. Finally, we meditate on the truth of emptiness and dependent origination such that they become fully internalized. The ultimate form of this deep meditation on the nature of reality is the one mentioned in the last verse.

Chapter Twentysix: Analysis of the Twelve Links

तस्य तस्य निरोधेन तत्तन्नाभिप्रवर्तते ।

दुःखस्कन्धः केवलोऽयमेवं सम्यग्निरुध्यते ॥१२

tasya tasya nirodhena tattannābhipravartate ।
duḥkhaskandhaḥ kevalo 'yamevaṁ samyagnirudhyate ॥ 12

26.12

Because of the cessation of these earlier links,
The later ones cannot arise.
This whole mass of suffering
Is completely stopped.

Dependent origination – the process that creates and recreates our suffering – is itself dependent on ignorance, and ignorance is the belief that things don't exist dependently. Which is also to say that they are empty of existing on their own.

The ignorance that sets the system into motion is ignorance of the system itself! None of the twelve links exists independently; each depends on the others. Because things exist dependently, they are empty. And because we are ignorant of the dependent nature of all things, we suffer through the cycle over and over again.

At the foundation is ignorance – thinking things exist in ways that they don't, and failing to understand that things exist in the way they do. When ignorance ceases, the whole edifice of suffering comes down like a house of cards.

ADDENDUM

From Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra*

अविद्यास्मितारागद्वेषाभिनिवेशाः पञ्च क्लेशाः ॥

avidyāsmitārāgadveṣābhiniveśāḥ pañca kleśāḥ॥

The five mental afflictions are ignorance, self-centeredness, greed, aversion, and grasping. (2.3)

अविद्या क्षेत्रम् उत्तरेषां प्रसुप्ततनुविच्छिन्नोदाराणाम् ॥

avidyā kṣetram uttareṣāṃ prasuptatanuvicchannodārāṇām॥

Ignorance is the field for the subsequent ones, whether they are dormant, dwindling, interrupted, or active. (2.4)

अनित्याशुचिदुःखानात्मसु नित्यशुचिसुखात्मख्यातिरविद्या ॥

anityāśuciduḥkhānātmasu nityaśucisukhātmakhyātirvidyā॥

Ignorance is asserting that impermanent things are permanent, impure things are pure, things that bring dissatisfaction will bring satisfaction, and things that do not have essences do. (2.5)

दृग्दर्शनशक्तयोर् एकात्मतेवास्मिता ॥

ḍṛgdarśanaśaktyor ekātmatevāsmitā॥

Self-centeredness is attributing an essence to both the perceiver and what is perceived. (2.6)

सुखानुशयी रागः ॥

sukhānuśayī rāgaḥ॥

Greed attaches itself to what is regarded as pleasant. (2.7)

दुःखानुशयी द्वेषः ॥

duḥkhānuśayī dveṣaḥ॥

Aversion attaches itself to what is regarded as unpleasant. (2.8)

स्वरसवाही विदुषोऽपि तथारूढऽभिनिवेशः ॥

svarasavāhī viduṣo'pi tathārūḍha 'bhiniveśaḥ॥

And grasping then comes about naturally, even for the wise. (2.9)

Exercise for Class Four

Every day this week, review the simplified version of the chain of dependent origination from the *Yoga Sutra*: 1) ignorance (*avidya*) leads to 2) *asmita* (“self-centeredness” or thinking that things, people, and events have some inherent nature of being pleasant or unpleasant on their own), which leads to 3) craving, either positively (“I want that!,” greed or *raga*) or negatively (“I don’t want that!,” aversion or *dvesha*), which then results in grasping (*abhinivesha*): “I must have it,” or “I must get rid of it.”

Then spend some time each day getting in touch with your own dissatisfaction in life. What is it you want that you don’t have, and what is it that you do have that want to rid yourself of? Knowing that “likeable” and “dislikeable” things, people, and events are not so from their own side, think about ways you could create the karma for having more “likeable” things in your own life by providing such things to others, and fewer “dislikeable” things in your own life by restraining yourself from doing, saying, or even thinking negative things about others.

Finally, spend a few minutes each day to reflect on whether or not you actually *already* have some version of what you think you want in life, and are *already* free of what you think you need to get rid of.