

The mind is a cycle of an *aathmic* and an *anaathmic* process

According to Prof. Y. Karunadasa, Buddha has stated that an arising *citta* is not the same as the one that is ceasing. Does this mean that a *citta* undergo change during its perceived existence or is it that the identity of the arising and ceasing *cittas* are not the same? Early Theravadins thought that it was the latter for they did not believe there was a decaying (*jarataa*) phase to the risen *citta*. They saw change not as a transformation of the same *citta* from one stage to another but as the replacement of one *citta* by another. This view has been put forward by the Theravadin in defense of Ven. Nagarjuna's criticism to the theory of moment where he posit that a *citta* existing on its own even for a moment meant that it carried an *aathma* which is against Buddha's teaching. Theravadin's replied by stating that the arising *citta* is not the same one that perishes implying that there is no *aathma* carried through. While this answer was sufficient to evade Ven. Nagarjuna's criticism it didn't explain in what sense that an arising *citta* could be connected to the ceasing *citta* for such comparison to be made. This issue needs to be resolved.

Prof. Nalin De Silva has proposed an alternative view of the theory of moment in opposition to Ven. Nagarjuna's onslaught. He suggests that the mind and the *citta* are causally co-dependent. That is a *citta* existed not on its own but only relative to the mind and vis-à-vis. It is due to the limited sensitivity of the untrained human mind that it assigns a "moment" to the *citta*. In his view a *citta* undergo change during its momentary existence. In effect this means that a *citta* possesses an *aathma* momentarily. But this is not a problem (and cannot be helped) since *citta* is a creation of the mind which as a whole is associated with an *aathma*. While this story is consistent it seemingly opposes the early Theravadins view that rising and ceasing *citta* are not the same. However I think this is merely a question of difference in the approach to the same ontology. In fact the cyclic relationship between *citta* and the mind could be used to explain the early Theravadin view.

I propose that at the most fundamental level the concept of mind is the result of a cyclic relationship between an *aathmic* process (A) and an *anaathmic* process (N). I am using the term *anaathmic* loosely to represent a set of events that are discontinuous. Here discontinuity means that events are not related to each other (i.e. no *aathma* connects them) and not there is a gap between the events. The *aathmic* process is taken to be continuous in this sense. This dependency is depicted in Figure 1. The processes A and N are causally co-dependent i.e. A and N do not exist independently. Without N, A does not have a length in some space. Conversely, without A, discontinuous events in N cannot be separated in some space i.e. they cannot be placed in a line one after the other if not for A. Via the cyclic relationship these two processes create a space that wouldn't have existed otherwise! The term *anaathmic* process is justified because if we can imagine a situation where events in N existed independently it would be the closest we could get to *anaathma* conceptually.

A thought moment is defined by two events: a beginning (x) and an end (y) in A. This identification in A is possible because of the process N. Conversely the two events are connected in N because of A. Neither of the processes is possible without the other.

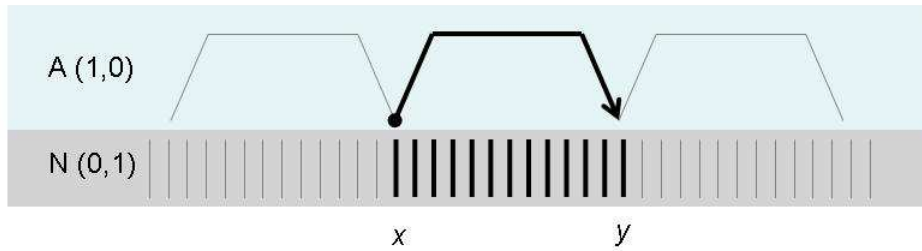


Figure 1. Cyclic relationship between the *aathmic* (A) and *anaathmic* (N) process depicted in the states (1,0) (top) and (0,1) (bottom).

The processes A and N cannot be viewed as separate entities. However The cyclic relationship between them allows us to consider the dynamics of a thought moment under four different existential states: A exist (1,0), N exist (0,1), both exist (1,1), and none exist (0,0)*. Since both A and N are co-dependent, none existence of one entity could only mean that the other is not “visible” to the one that exist. So when we look at the state (1,0) what we see is A as a result of N but without actually noticing N existed. Similarly (0,1) state is N as a result of A but without actually noticing A existed. Therefore Figure 1 is a depiction of states and not the individual processes.

So in the *aathmic* mode, that is state (1,0), we see the mind to be continuous from x to y, and in the *anaathmic* mode, that is state (0,1), we see the mind to be discontinuous

We could identify *citta* as either the *aathmic* process (A) or the *anaathmic* process (N). If viewed as the *aathmic* process we will see it continually changing from *uppada* (x) to *bhanga* (y). If viewed as the *anaathmic* process we see two different *cittas* at the beginning and at the end of a thought moment. So when early Theravadins claimed that the ceasing and the rising *citta* are not the same they viewed the mind in the (0,1) state. They may not have recognized the connection between these two events exerted by the cyclic relationship.

With regard to the *citta*-mind cyclic relationship proposed by Prof. Nalin De Silva, here when we identify *citta* as one process the mind become the other and vis-à-vis. What we identify as *citta* and mind are interchangeable. In either case we refer to the cyclic relationship between an *aathmic* and an *anaathmic* process.

-Janaka Wansapura.

*In mode (1,1) both A and N exists but we are not able to separate them. In mode (0,0) none exist but should not be confused with *shunya* as it is only a state (place holder) like the others. It may be called *shunyathawa*.