

## NOTES FROM 2013 SIX REALMS STUDY SESSIONS

The Wheel of Life depicts *samsara*, the world of birth and death, of unenlightened existence. The wheel is held by Yama, Lord of the Underworld, who symbolizes the inevitability of death and the impermanence of all things. At the centre is the engine room, the motor which keeps the wheel revolving.

“At the core of the Wheel of Life, circling endlessly, are the driving forces of greed (*raga*), hatred (*dosa*) and delusion (*moha*), represented by a red cock, a green snake, and a black hog, each one biting the tail of its neighbour, to indicate their inter-connectedness. These are the forces that perpetuate our estrangement from ourselves and that keep us bound to the wheel.” —Mark Epstein

The six realms make up the inner part of the wheel, divided by six spokes. They are the six realms of existence into which the unenlightened are reborn.

The outer rim depicts the twelve links of dependent origination, which describe the process by which one stays in the cycle of birth and death (see Appendix to these notes).

Three ways of viewing the Six Realms

1. As actual locations that you are reborn into after death
2. As physical places on earth (worn torn regions, places of famine, haunts of the rich . . . )
3. As mental/emotional states (we can pass through all six realms in the course of a single day)

### Overview

“According to the Buddhist worldview, unenlightened life is basically an aimless wandering through various states of being, called the six realms. The six in ascending order are the realms of hellish existence, hungry ghosts, beasts, fighting demons, human beings, and heavenly beings. They are found here and now when we experience moments of insufferable anguish and pain

(realm of hell), when we are driven by unquenchable and uncontrollable desires (realm of hungry ghosts), when we fail to live by ethical and moral guidelines (realm of beasts), when we are driven by violent fits of jealousy (realm of fighting demons), when we abide by social norms (realm of human beings), when we demonstrate extraordinary flashes of unselfishness (realm of heavenly beings). These realms are neither merely psychological nor purely physical states, but they are felt realities in our everyday life.” —Taitetsu Unno

*Sutra of Sublime Dharma of Clear Recollection:*

Beings in hell suffer from hell-fire,  
Pretas suffer from hunger and thirst,  
Animals suffer from being eaten by each other,  
Humans suffer from having a short life,  
Asuras suffer from wars and quarrels,  
And the gods suffer from their own complacency.  
In samsara there is never a pinpoint of happiness

The Great Master of Uddiyana says:

It is said that in samsara there is not as much  
As a pinpoint’s worth of happiness to be found.  
But should one happen to find just a little,  
It will contain the suffering of change.

“Western psychology has done much to illuminate the six realms. Freud and his followers insisted on exposing the animal nature of the passions; the Hellish nature of paranoid, aggressive and anxiety states; and the insatiable longing of what came to be called oral craving (which is depicted in pictures of the Hungry Ghosts). Later developments in psychotherapy brought even the upper realms into focus. Humanistic psychotherapy emphasized the “peak experiences” of the God Realm; ego psychology, behaviourism, and cognitive therapy cultivated the competitive and efficient ego seen in the Realm of the Jealous Gods; and the psychology of narcissism was specifically about the questions of identity so essential to the Human Realm.” —Mark Epstein

## Hell Realm

### The Eighteen Hells

- The Eight Hot Hells: The Reviving Hell, The Black-Line Hell, The Crushing Hell, the Howling Hell, The Great Howling Hell, The Heating Hell, The Intense Heating Hell, The Hell of Ultimate Torment (Avici Hell)
- The Neighbouring Hells, which include: the pit of hot embers, the swamp of putrescent corpses, the plain of razors, the forest of swords, the hill of sharp iron trees
- The Eight Cold Hells: The Hell of Blisters, The Hell of Burst Blisters, The Hell of Chattering Teeth, The Hell of Lamentations, The Hell of Groans, The Hell of Petal-like Cracks, The Hell of Lotus Like Cracks, The Hell of Great Lotus-like Cracks
- The Ephemeral Hells, where you can be crushed between rocks, or trapped inside a stone, frozen in ice, cooked in boiling water or burnt in fires

“The mind in the grip of anger and hatred produces the karma of a life in hell. What suffers in that hellish state is the mind, our mind. Hellish appearances, beings who attack or kill us, the environment, and all the suffering that afflicts us in that realm are productions of our own mind conditioned by our karma.”  
—Kalu Rinpoche

“The hell realm is pervaded by aggression. This aggression is based on such a perpetual condition of hatred that one begins to lose track of whom you are building your aggression towards as well as who is being aggressive towards you. There is a continual uncertainty and confusion. You have built up a whole environment of aggression to such a point that finally, even if you were to feel slightly cooler about your own anger and aggression, the environment around you would throw more aggression at you. . . . Traditionally aggression is symbolized by the sky and earth radiating fire. The earth turns into red hot iron and space becomes an environment of flame and fire. There is no space to breathe any cool air or feel coldness. Whatever you see around you is hot, intense, extremely claustrophobic.” —Chögyam Trumpa

“From a psychodynamic perspective, the Hell Realms are vivid descriptions of aggressive and anxiety states; beings are seen *burning* with rage or *tortured* by anxiety. They do not recognize their torturers as products of their own minds, however. They believe themselves to be tortured by outside forces over which they have no control. At the same time that they are completely dominated by their rage or anxiety, they are cut off from those same emotions. They do not see that those unwanted forces are their own, and they are therefore imprisoned in a cell of their own making. The Bodhisattva of Compassion is sometimes inset into the Hell Realm holding a mirror or a purifying flame, indicating that this suffering can only be alleviated by seeing the unwanted emotions in the mirror.” —Mark Epstein

“One day when I was taking a bath with my mother, she asked that the water be made hotter and had the maid add wood to the fire. Gradually my skin began to prickle with the heat and the iron bath-cauldron began to rumble. Suddenly I recalled the descriptions of the hells that I had heard and let out a cry of terror that resounded through the neighbourhood. From this time on I determined to myself that I would leave home to become a monk.” —Hakuin

### Hungry Ghost Realm

“The pretas have mouths no bigger than the eye of a needle. Even were they to drink all the water in the great oceans, by the time it had passed down their throats, which are as narrow as a horse hair, the heat of their breath would have evaporated it. Even if they were somehow to swallow a little, their stomachs, which are the size of a whole country, could never be filled. Even if – finally – enough to satisfy them were to get into their stomachs, it would burst into flames during the night and burn their lungs, their heart, and all their entrails. When they want to move, they cannot lift their gigantic bellies with their grass-like limbs, and this causes them immense suffering. . . . In summer, even the moonlight feels hot and burns them; in winter, even the sun feels cold. These sensations torment them terribly. . . . The principal causes of rebirth as a preta are stinginess and opposing the generosity of others.” —Patrul Rinpoche

“If our mind falls prey to greed or covetousness, the karma that results is birth as a hungry ghost. In this state, we can never get what we want, nor can we enjoy food or drink, which we desperately crave as hungry ghosts. We are always lacking and wanting, yet completely unable to satisfy our desires, and we suffer from hunger, thirst, and constant intense frustrations.”

—Kalu Rinpoche

“In the *preta* or hungry ghost realm fundamentally you feel poor . . . there is always some sense of inadequacy. . . . The hungry ghost is always hungry. And the struggle to satisfy his hunger is very painful since it is so hard to swallow what he eats. Food, of course, symbolizes anything you may want – friendship, wealth, clothes, sex, power, whatever.” —Chögyam Trumpa

“The Hungry Ghosts are probably the most vividly drawn metaphors in the Wheel of Life. Phantom-like creatures with withered limbs, grossly bloated bellies, and long, thin necks, the Hungry Ghosts in many ways represent a fusion of rage and desire. Tormented by unfulfilled cravings and insatiably demanding of impossible satisfactions, the Hungry Ghosts are searching for gratification for old unfulfilled needs whose time has passed. They are beings who have uncovered a terrible emptiness within themselves, who cannot see the impossibility of correcting something that has already happened. Their ghostlike state represents their attachment to the past. . . .The Bodhisattva of Compassion appears in the Realm of Hungry Ghosts carrying a bowl filled with objects symbolic of spiritual nourishment. The message is clear: Food and drink will not satisfy the unfulfilled need of this realm. Only the non-judgemental awareness perfected by the Buddha offers relief.” —Mark Epstein

### Animal Realm

The Animal Realm is the last of the three lower realms. In Theravada Buddhism it is considered one of the three bad destinations and is even lower than the ghost realm. While the Hell and Hungry Ghost Realms can appear to us as conceptual destinations, perhaps existing in another dimension and removed from our daily existence, we have a direct connection with the Animal Realm, especially as many of us spend some of our time in the company of cats and dogs. There is a deep, age-old, bond between animals and humans.

“Wild animals live in constant fear. They cannot eat a single mouthful of food without being on their guard. They have many mortal enemies, for all animals prey on each other and there are always hunters, beasts of prey and other threats to life. Hawks kill small birds, small birds kill insects, and so on, continually amassing evil actions in an endless round of killing and beings killed.” —Patrul Rinpoche

“The mind can also fall under the sway of blindness, mental dullness, and stupidity, which cause birth as an animal. There are a great many animal species: wild animals, domestic animals, and so on. All of them experience different forms of suffering, such as being eaten alive, struggling against one another, or being subservient and abused.

The Hell, Hungry Ghost and Animal Realms make up the lower-realm states. Among them, the most favourable is the animal state. But even in that state, it is very difficult to awaken love and compassion and impossible to practice Dharma.” —Kalu Rinpoche

“The animal realm is associated with stupidity: that is, preferring to play deaf and dumb, preferring to follow the rules of available games rather than redefine them. . . . In animal ignorance you have a certain style of relating to yourself and refuse to see that style from other points of view. . . . The animal mentality is extremely stubborn.” —Chögyam Trungpa

“The Animal Realm is the realm of instinctual gratification, of biological drives of hunger and sexuality. In the Tibetan cosmology, its distinctive characteristic is stupidity. The Bodhisattva image inset into this dimension is shown holding a book, which represents the capacity for thought, speech and reflection that is lacking in our animal natures.” —Mark Epstein

One of the ways we confirm our kinship with all life, and one of the ways we can ease the suffering in the world, is not to eat the flesh of animals.

Mahakashyapa asked the Buddha: “Why is it that the Thus Come One does not allow eating meat?” The Buddha replied, “It is because the eating of meat extinguishes the seeds of great compassion.” —*Mahaparinirvana Sutra*

## Asura Realm

Asuras are demigods, or semi-blessed beings. They are powerful, yet fierce and quarrelsome, and like humans, they are partly good and partly evil. In Japan, an asura (Jap. ashura) is often shown with three faces and six arms, with the side faces often expressing the violent warrior aspects associated with the asura's Hindu origin. With the asura's arrival to Japan in the 6th century from Korea and China, the deity was adopted as a guardian deity of Buddhism. It is said that asuras have the blessings of heaven but lack the virtuous qualities of devas.

“In Buddhist legends the devas are perpetually being attacked by the asuras, beings of great physical prowess and violent ambition who seek to conquer them and take control of their domain. The two sides can be read as symbolizing alternative political philosophies against enemies. The asura leaders favour rule by force and retaliation against enemies; they rationalize aggression and extol the ethic of “might makes right”. Sakka (the ruler of the devas), in contrast, stands for rule by righteousness, patience towards aggressors, and the compassionate treatment of wrongdoers.” —Bikkhu Bodhi

“Those who constantly seek revenge become asuras. For instance, if someone uses one sentence to scold you, you retort with two sentences to put him down. If someone hits you with one fist, you smash him back with both of yours. In general, you want to pay back double, and by acting that way when you fight, you quickly become an asura. “—Hsuan Hua

“The pleasures and abundance enjoyed by the asuras, the demigods, rival those of the gods. However, from previous lives they have a strong propensity for envy, quarrelling and fighting. The effect of these past negative actions is that no sooner do they take their present form than they start to experience intense feelings of envy.” —Patrul Rinpoche

“Karma that is very positive overall but mixed with jealousy causes birth in the jealous god realm. This is a happy state endowed with many powers and pleasures but, because of the force of jealousy, there are constant struggles and conflicts. Jealous gods oppose gods who are their superiors and quarrel among themselves.” —Kalu Rinpoche

“The dominant characteristic of the jealous god or *asura* realm is paranoia. If you are trying to help someone who has an asura mentality, they interpret your action as an attempt to oppress them or infiltrate their territory. . . . The asura mentality is associated with wind, speeding about, trying to achieve everything on the spot, avoiding all possibilities of being attacked. It is constantly trying to attain something higher and greater. —Chögyam Trumpa

“The Realms of the Gods and the Jealous Gods are separated by a fruit-laden “wishing tree”, over whose fruit the Jealous Gods are fighting. These beings, which embody the ego’s aggressive striving, are trying to garner the fruits of the Gods through relentless competitive force. They represent the energy that is needed to overcome a frustration, change a situation, or make contact with a new experience. . . . The Bodhisattva of Compassion appears in this locale wielding a flaming sword, symbolic of discriminating awareness. The presence of this sword reinforces the point that this aggressive nature of ego is not seen as the problem; this energy is in fact valued and is necessary in the spiritual path . . . . The Bodhisattva of Compassion urges the Jealous Gods to redirect their aggression, destroying and assimilating the unawareness that keeps them estranged from themselves.” —Mark Epstein

### Human Realm

“Humans suffer from the three fundamental types of suffering (the suffering of change, suffering upon suffering, suffering in the making), and also from the four great streams of suffering: birth, old age, sickness and death. Other human sufferings are the dread of meeting hated enemies or of losing loved ones, and the suffering of not getting what one wants or of encountering what one does not want.” —Patrul Rinpoche

“The human condition is the first (or second) of the higher-realm existences. Humans are practically the only beings endowed with the necessary conditions for spiritual progress, as well as the faculties that allow the practice and understanding of Dharma. However, being human does not guarantee spiritual progress.” —Kalu Rinpoche

“Passion is the major occupation in the human realm. Passion in this sense is an intelligent kind of grasping in which the logical reasoning mind is always geared towards the creation of happiness. . . . The essence of the human realm is the endeavour to achieve some high ideal. . . . The human mentality places a strong emphasis on knowledge, learning and education, on collecting all kinds of information and wisdom. The intellect is most active in the human realm. There is so much going on in your mind as a result of having collected so many things and having planned so many projects. The epitome of the human realm is to be stuck in a huge traffic jam of discursive thought. You are so busy thinking that you cannot learn anything at all. The constant churning out of ideas, plans, hallucinations and dreams is a quite different mentality from that of the god realm. There you are completely absorbed in a blissful state, a kind of self-stuck sense of satisfaction. In the jealous god realm you are completely drunk on competitiveness; there is less possibility of thought happening because your experiences are so strong that they overpower you; hypnotize you.” —Chögyam Trungpa

“The Human Realm is the realm of the search for self, the central concern of the relatively recent psychology of narcissism and in some way the abiding concern of all creative activity. The Bodhisattva of Compassion appears in this domain in the form of the historical Buddha, Shakyamuni, an Indian prince of the fifth century B.C., who is depicted with the alms bowl and staff of an ascetic engaged in the accepted Buddhist strategy of the search for identity. The central predicament of the Human Realm is that we do not really know who we are. . . . From the Buddhist perspective, the Human Realm is not just about the false self but is also about the possibility of transcendent insight into the true nature of self.” —Mark Epstein

“...among the countless life forms in the universe, human life is most fertile because we can use our intelligence to transmute a wide range of experience, to purify our minds and to cultivate virtue. According to Buddhist cosmology, humans have a spectrum of experience no other sentient beings have. From joy to misery, it is all in the human realm. The gods may have greater joy and greater powers, but they are locked into experiences of happiness and pleasure, which limit their potential for spiritual maturation. Beings in miserable states of existence are locked into experiences too narrow to be

very fruitful. Humans have the whole range – from facsimiles of hell, such as concentration camps, to earthly facsimiles of heaven, and everything in between.” —B. Alan Wallace

### Heavenly Realm

In the Heavenly Realm you can experience states of bliss, states in which you feel an oceanic oneness with the universe. But such states are not lasting.

“The devas forget the true nature of life, the limitation of their existence, the suffering of other beings . . . They do not know that they live only in a state of temporary harmony, which comes to an end as soon as the causes, which led them to this happy state, are exhausted.

They live, so to say, on the accumulated capital of past good deeds without adding any new values. They are gifted with beauty, longevity and freedom from pain, but just this lack of suffering, of obstacles and exertion, deprives the harmony of their existence of all creative impulses, all spiritual activity and the urge for deeper knowledge.” —Lama Govinda

“The gods enjoy perfect health, comfort, wealth and happiness all their lives. However, they spend their time in diversions and the idea of practicing Dharma never occurs to them. Throughout their lives, which may last a whole kalpa, they do not have that thought even for an instant. Then, having wasted their whole life in distraction, they are suddenly confronted with death. . . . There are five signs that foreshadow the death of a god. His body’s inherent brilliance, usually visible from a league of several miles distant, grows dim. His throne, upon which he never before felt weary of sitting, no longer pleases him; he feels uncomfortable and ill at ease. His flower garlands, which before had never faded however much time passed, wither. His garments, which always stayed clean and fresh however long he wore them, get old and filthy and start to smell. His body, which never perspired at all before, starts to sweat. When these five signs of approaching death appear, the god is tormented by the knowledge that he, too, is soon going to die.” —Patrul Rinpoche

“The realm of the gods is not particularly painful, in itself. The pain comes from the eventual disillusionment. You think you have achieved a continually blissful state, spiritually or worldly; you are dwelling on that. But suddenly something shakes you and you realize that what you have achieved is not going to last forever. Your bliss becomes shaky and more irregular, and the thought of maintenance begins to reappear in your mind as you try to push yourself back into the blissful state. But the karmic situation brings you all kinds of irritations. . . . You cannot stay in this realm of the gods forever.” —Chögyam Trungpa

“The Bodhisattva of Compassion appears in the God Realm holding a lute, thus signifying the musical pleasures of that dimension, but also alerting those in this realm to the sounds of the Buddha’s teachings, waking them, as it were, from their slumber or trance. Their pleasures are temporary, sounds of the lute: they are forgetting the suffering of others; they are resting on their laurels and will one day fall from grace.” —Mark Epstein

#### APPENDIX: The Twelve Links of Dependent Co-arising (an investigation into the why and how of suffering)

- (1) In dependence upon ignorance (illusion of self) mental tendencies arise
- (2) In dependence upon these karmic energies (formations) consciousness arises
- (3) In dependence upon (dualistic) consciousness, the psycho-physical organism arises
- (4) In dependence upon the psycho-physical organism (body/mind), the sixfold sense-activity arises
- (5) In dependence upon the six-fold sense activity, contact (impressions) arises
- (6) In dependence upon contact (of the senses with their objects), feelings arise
- (7) In dependence upon feelings, craving (lit. thirst) arises
- (8) In dependence upon craving, clinging arises
- (9) In dependence upon clinging, the subconscious process of becoming arises
- (10) In dependence upon the process of becoming, rebirth arises
- (11) In dependence upon rebirth;

(12) old age (decay) and death arise, accompanied by sorrow and grief  
–*The Psychological Attitude of Early Buddhist Philosophy*, Lama Govinda

Depicted on Tibetan 'Wheel of Life' mandala, (around the rim of the wheel):

(1) Ignorance (*Avijjā*): A blind man = inability to see the truth, mistaking the unreal for the real (two basic kinds of ignorance – of causation, relative truth, and of emptiness, ultimate truth).

(2) Karmic formations (*Saṅkhārā*): A potter = creating pots (containers that shape our future experience) from the formless materials of life

(3) Conditioned consciousness (*Viññāṇa*): A monkey = restless swinging from object to object, karmic urges

(4) Identification, mind and body (*Nāma-Rūpa*): Men in a boat = our form transporting our karmic inheritance

(5) Six Senses (*Salāyatana*): House with six windows = the sense faculties (windows) in our form (house)

(6) Contact (*Phassa*): Lovers embracing = sense impressions, created by sense organs and sense data

(7) Feelings, sensations (*Vedanā*): Man with eye pierced by an arrow = contact produces subjective feelings (pleasant, unpleasant and neutral) that blind us

(8) Craving, desire (*Taṇhā*): Man drinking = insatiable thirst caused by agreeable sensations (3 kinds of craving – for sensory stimulation, becoming, and annihilation)

(9) Grasping, attachment (*Upādāna*): Monkey clinging unhappily to a fruit tree = unable to let go, to break free

(10) Becoming (*Bhava*): Pregnant woman = bonds of life strengthened by attachment

(11) Birth (*Jāti*): Woman giving birth (always seen as the beginning of death)

(12) Old age and death (*Jarā Marana*): An old man (walks towards death burdened by his attachments)

Not a linear progression but cyclic, having no beginning or end. Any two links across the 12 also connect; “when there’s birth there’s mind-and-body”, “when there’s contact there’s becoming” etc. The 12 links can also be seen as the same process described in three different ways, and distributed over three existences. 1-2 correspond to the past, and describe the process in broad strokes, 3-10 the present existence, and present it psychologically, while terms 11-12 describe the future life as a physiological phenomenon.

Dependent Origination or Dependent Co-arising is the teaching of emptiness. The Buddha realized that “all phenomena arise depending on conditions,” and starting with death and suffering he traced back each of the factors in the chain. The Therādvā tradition stresses the importance of moral responsibility in regards to Dependent Origination. The Mahāyāna tradition focuses on the dynamics of the interrelationships, how everything arises with everything else. Nirvana is by definition changeless, while Dependent Co-arising is the process of change or *samsara*.

“All phases of this Dependent Origination are phenomena of the same illusion, the illusion of egohood.” –Lama Govinda

The links are perhaps easiest to understand if you work backwards from the suffering of this present life:

The Bodhisatta Vipassi thought: “With what being present does aging-and-death occur? What conditions aging-and-death?” And then, monks, as a result of the wisdom born of profound concentration the realization dawned on him: “Birth being present, aging and death occurs, birth conditions aging-and-death.” Then he thought, “What conditions birth?” And the realization dawned on him: “Becoming conditions birth” . . . “What conditions becoming? . . . “Clinging conditions becoming” . . . “Craving conditions clinging” . . . “Feeling conditions craving” etc. – *Mahapadana Sutta*

The Buddha said that one who sees Dependent Origination sees the Dhamma, and one who sees the Dhamma sees Dependent Origination.

“This dependent origination is profound and appears profound. It is through not understanding, not penetrating this doctrine that this generation has become like a tangled ball of string, covered as with a blight, tangled like coarse grass, unable to pass beyond states of woe, the ill destiny, ruin and the round of birth-and-death.” – *Mahanidana Sutra*

“When this exists, that comes to be; with the arising of this, that arises. When this does not exist, that does not come to be; with the cessation of this, that ceases.” – *Culasakuludayi Sutta*

Karmic Formations. Form-creating activities. “*Samskara* (Pali *Saṅkhārā*) here is volitional action, synonymous with *cetanā* (will) and *karma* (effect-creating deed) in contradistinction to *samskara-skandha*, the group of mental formations, which, as a result of those volitional acts, become a cause of new activity and constitute the actively directing principle or character of a new consciousness . . . For character is nothing but the tendency of our will, formed by repeated actions. Every deed leaves a trace, a path formed by the process of walking and wherever such a once-trodden path exists, there we find, when a similar situation arises, that we take to this path spontaneously. This is the law of action and reaction, which we call karma, the law of movement in the direction of least resistance, i.e. of the frequently trodden and therefore easier path. It is what is commonly known as the “force of habit.

Just as a potter forms vessels out of formless clay, so we create through deeds, words and thoughts, out of the still unformed material of our life and our sense-impressions, the vessel of our future consciousness, namely that which gives it form and direction.” – Lama Govinda, *Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism*

“The chain of dependent origination is broken at the link between feeling and craving. Feeling arises necessarily because the body acquired through past craving is subject to the maturation of past karma. However, if one does not delight in feeling, craving will not have the opportunity to arise and set off reactions of like and dislike that provide further fuel for the round, and thus the round will come to an end.” – Bhikkhu Bodhi

Clinging. There are four kinds of clinging: clinging to sensual pleasures, clinging to views, clinging to rules and observances, and clinging to a doctrine of self. With the arising of craving there is the arising of clinging. With the cessation of craving there is the cessation of clinging. The way leading to the cessation of clinging is just this Noble Eightfold Path.

“Whenever you see a form, let there be just seeing. Whenever you hear a sound, let there be just hearing. Whenever you smell an odour, let there be just smelling. Whenever you taste a flavour, let there be just tasting. Whenever you experience a physical sensation, let there be just sensing. And when a thought arises, let it be just a natural phenomena arising in the mind. When it is like this, there will be no self. There will be no moving about here and there, and no stopping anywhere. That is the end of suffering.” – Shakyamuni Buddha

“Old age occasions two effects: it produces changes in faculties and provides the cause for meeting in death. Death also occasions two effects: it destroys the compounded and causes continuation through lack of perfect knowledge.”  
– *Avatamsaka Sutra*