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**Note.** See also the author’s related paper entitled ‘Andersonian Realism and Buddhist Empiricism’, published in the on-line journal *The Northern Line*, No. 13, October 2012, pp 2–13, as well as in the journal *The Sydney Realist*, No. 25, March 2013, pp. 6–15.

# **Self as illusion and mind as feeling**

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‘All formations are transient; all formations are subject to suffering; all things are without a self.’

‘Therefore, whatever there be of form, of feeling, perception, mental formations, or consciousness, whether past, present, or future, one's own or external, gross or subtle, lofty or low, far or near, one should understand according to reality and true wisdom: ‘This does not belong to me; this am I not; this is not my Self.’ Buddha, from the *Anguttara Nikaya* and *Samyutta Nikaya*.

‘What has chiefly to be emphasised, however, is that the observation of minds, the knowledge of them in propositions, requires the rejection of the “unitary” view of mind, the conception of it as having only one character and being self-contained in that character. This is a rationalist, “unspeakable” view. If we are to have any dealings with minds, we must be able to consider how they act in different situations, i.e., to consider them as having complex characters and activities, as being divisible and determinate.’ John Anderson (‘Empiricism’).

## **General introduction**

The purpose of this article is to interpret some of the key ideas and teachings of Buddhism---in particular, so-called ‘early Buddhism’---in light of the philosophy of *situational realism* expounded by the Scottish-Australian philosopher and educator John Anderson (1893-1962), being a system of philosophy that sets forth ‘a thoroughly pluralist view in which there is not only an unlimited multiplicity of things to which the single logic of events applies but anything whatever is infinitely complex so that we can never cover its characteristics in a single formula or say that we “know all about it”’ (Anderson, 1958: 55).

First, there is a brief description of the salient features of John Anderson’s uncompromisingly ‘direct realist’ philosophy both generally and as respects the human mind, more particularly, his ‘theory of mind as a complexity of feelings, passions or emotions’ (Watts, 1982: 212). Secondly, some of the more distinctive psycho-philosophical ideas of early Buddhism are interpreted in terms of Anderson’s philosophy of propositional (or situational) realism, with the two theories being compared and contrasted along the way.

## **John Anderson’s situational realism**

John Anderson developed a systematic theory of philosophy which has been variously called, among other things, ‘Australian realism’, ‘Sydney realism’, and ‘Andersonian realism’. Anderson himself described his theory as ‘propositional or situational realism’ (Anderson, 1962[1962]: 169). The central

thesis or doctrine of Anderson's theory of philosophy is that there is a single way, mode or order of being---that of *occurrence*---namely, that which is conveyed when we say that a proposition is true. This one way of being---the so-called 'propositional nature of reality'---consists of ordinary things, that is, 'occurrences in space and time' (also known as 'states of affairs' and 'situations'). This one way of being (the 'conditions of existence') is that of the 'situation,' or fact---that is, *something being the case* in one space-time. More than anything else, this view of the nature of reality is the essence of Anderson's spatio-temporal (situational) account of existence.

Further, whatever exists is a situation located in *context* (that is, a thing is, under certain conditions, a situation), with the latter affecting that situation. Situations are necessarily 'complex'---one cannot know a thing *simpliciter*---with each situation consisting of 'things' ('terms') having both connections ('relations') and distinctions with other 'things' as well as internal differentiation.

Every question---that is, every assertion that takes something to be the case in reality---is a simple issue of truth or falsity, there being no different degrees, grades or kinds of truth. In addition, the occurrence of any situation is totally independent of the relation of being known, observed, etc, by some knower or observer. Logic, that is, traditional propositional logic, is 'the theory of the conditions of existence or of the characters of things as real' (Anderson, 1980: 147), and concerns the general 'forms' of the world---the very forms of reality---*not* the so-called rules of reasoning.

The key elements of Anderson's systematic and thoroughgoing theory of realist philosophy are:

- *situationality*---that is, whatever exists ('facts') is 'real,' and are complex 'occurrences' or 'situations' in complex relationship to other situations, all existing in the *one* space-time, and belonging to the *one* order of being, 'governed' by the categories (that is, existing under certain conditions); thus, all things exist in situations---each single situation being 'a thing partaking of a form'---which are 'complex,' there being no so-called 'simples,' and nothing less than the situation, each such situation involving numerous differences and relations, being 'a *multum in parvo* plurally related' (James, 1920[1909]: online);
- *plurality*---that is, at any 'point' in space-time there is a plurality of space-time interacting situations or occurrences ('complexes' of facts), governed by the categories, with there being literally countless, indeed, an infinite number of infinitely complex and interacting pluralities, exhausting the whole of reality, and subsisting in one space-time (such that there is *nothing* but such facts), but *not* as 'one vast instantaneous co-implicated completeness' (James,

1920[1909]: online);

- *causality* and *determinism*---that is, everything is continuously changing and infinitely complex---in a state of constant flux---with causation being essentially non-linear interaction at all points in a ‘causal field’, that is, a complex relation where an event (‘situation’) acts upon a ‘field’ or context to produce a certain ‘effect’ (that is, a change in the field); in addition, all situations are caused and in turn bring about other situations, and, furthermore, each thing is a cause of at least one other thing as well as being the effect of some other thing, such that every thing is explainable by reference to other things in the system, thus providing a ‘closed loop’ of explanation for all that happens or occurs; everything---more correctly, every *thing*---comes within that loop;
- *propositionality*---that is, facts are *propositional* in structure (in that there is a logical, *direct* and coterminous relationship between any proposition that something is the case and the way things actually are), and it is only in propositions that we know---and *can* know---things at all, for it is the case that *any* situation is propositionally structured (i.e., something is predicated of some subject term); in addition, anything that can be true (or ‘real’) is ‘propositional’ in that something is stated to be the case (thus bringing together logic, ontology and epistemology); further, every proposition is *contingently* (that is, not necessarily) true or false---‘logically there can be no alternative to “being” and “not being”’ (Anderson, 1962[1927a]: 5)---with no proposition being *transparently* true (because a statement that something is the case can be justified *only* by a statement that *something else* is not the case);
- the principle of *non-constitutive relations* (the doctrine of *external relations*)---that is, nothing is constituted by or is dependent upon, nor can it be defined or explained by reference to, the relations it has to other things; things (‘terms’) and the relations between them are distinct; this principle or doctrine is the fundamental basis for Anderson’s realist epistemology; and
- *empiricism*---that is, we can and do have direct knowledge of actual (‘objective’) things---or, more correctly, situations (i.e. ‘facts’)---with each such situation being both complex and on the same level of reality as any other situation that occurs (there being only one level of reality as well as one way of knowing); also, to exist is one thing, to be perceived another; ‘a realist can only be an empiricist’ (Anderson, 1962[1927b]: 27), and the empiricist ‘adopts the attitude of considering things in terms of what can be said about them’ (Anderson, 1962[1927a]: 4).

By reason of there being only *one* way of being---namely, that of occurrence---it is necessarily the case that a single logic applies to *all* things, including things pertaining to the mental realm. Indeed,

mentality ‘belongs’ to the spatio-temporal world just as much as physicality, that is, the non-mental realm (noting, of course, that all mental properties and processes are also physical). Consistent with the foregoing, Anderson’s theory of mind is entirely *physicalist*, with *all* occurrences or situations being material or physical (as opposed to ‘immaterial’ or ‘spiritual’) as well as being ‘matters of direct experience, objects of *observation*, situations’ (Anderson, 1962[1962]: 174 [emphasis in the original]). In short, nothing is ‘above’ or ‘beyond’ logic. However, as it is very much the case that any given situation is *complex*, it is necessarily the case that our study or investigation of the situation will be another *complex* situation---and this is very much the case when we come to deal with matters pertaining to the human psyche.

Finally, by reason of the foregoing, there are no so-called ‘absolutes’ or ‘ultimates’; indeed, it is impermissible to impose ‘abstractions upon Reality [sic] nor construct objects and their interconnections out of single experiences’ (Passmore, 1962: ix). In addition, the actual pluralist relation of things to each other ‘positively denies’ a conclusion that we are dealing with ‘a single system under a Designer’ (Holland, 1973: 273), the Andersonian theory of philosophy involving a system of positive atheism that has been described as being ‘more rigorous and cogent than any others’ (Holland, 1973: 271).

### **Anderson on mind as feeling, and self as illusory**

John Anderson’s systematic situational realism espouses a ‘relational and extended view of mind, in the sense that the mind consists of the person, situations in the external world (many of which may of course be physically within the individual, as when one self-consciously sees one’s own mental state ...), and relations to these situations’ (Mackay and Petocz, 2011: 41-42). As such, mental phenomena (‘processes’) are *relations* between the person in question and *external* situations, as opposed to being processes ‘in’ or ‘internal’ to the mind. We are thus dealing with ‘real’ things---*not* reifications. In addition, this view of ‘mind’ sees the mind as ‘extended’ in space-time, as opposed to being simply ‘located’ within the bodily limits of the person or solely identified with the brain or nervous system (Mackay and Petocz, 2011: 46). One thing is clear---the mind is not ‘an entity, thing, or substratum, but ... qualities of brain activities of a certain kind’ (Watts, 1982: 212).

Anderson adopts the more-or-less traditional tripartite distinction between the so-called intellect, emotions and will, while rejecting any assertion that either the intellect (reason or cognition) or the will (conation or striving/avoiding [‘avoiding,’ being my interpolation, is simply the *reverse* form of

striving]) are distinct, separate entities in themselves. Indeed, as Anderson sees it, both cognition and conation are *relations*---and not qualities---between a subject and an object term, namely, a *relation* between the *mind* and its *objects*, as follows:

- in the case of the activity of mind referred to as *cognition* ('knowing')---a person who knows (or believes, thinks, remembers, or perceives) and the thing known (or believed, thought, remembered, or perceived), the latter existing independently of the knower (mind), and
- in the case of the activity of mind referred to as *conation* ('striving' [or 'avoiding'])---a person who strives (or avoids) and the thing striven for (or avoided), *again* the latter existing independently of the striver (mind).

Consistent with Anderson's view of the propositional nature of reality, both cognition and conation are said to be 'propositional' in that each is *of* 'situations.' Such is the essence of *psychological* realism---as well as *philosophical* realism. We are dealing with 'real' situations in one space-time, for psychological situations are no less and no more real than non-psychological ones. Also, as cognition ('knowing') and conation ('striving' [or 'avoiding']) are relations, they themselves 'cannot be the *character* of the mental' (Watts, 1982: 214).

However, when it comes to the so-called emotions (or feelings, passions, or affect), Anderson sees them, *not* as being a relation, but rather a *quality*---indeed, *the* quality that distinguishes mentality (that is, mental processes) from things that are non-mental. According to Anderson, mind *is* feeling, that is, it is emotions (or feelings) that characterise minds---that are, yes, the 'stuff' of mind---and it is emotions that enter into cognitive *relations* such as knowing things as well as conative relations such as striving for (or avoiding) things. Emotions are not themselves relations, rather they are the *subject term* in any mental relation, that is, they 'know ... strive and, in general, interact with other things' (Anderson, 1962[1934]: 73). In other words, emotions (both in our waking and sleeping life) are *in relation* to other things, that is, they have *objects*. Years later, Marks (1982, 1986), who admits to have been influenced by Buddhist thinking on the matter, said something similar when he recognized that a particular *belief* and a particular *desire* could jointly constitute a motivation or a feeling.

Emotions (for example, the love of beauty, the love of inquiry, and the 'spirit' of compassion and kindness) have a 'feeling-quality,' or 'feeling-tone,' about them (Anderson, 1962[1934]: 74)---as opposed to being simply 'brute feelings'---that is, there is a certain 'felt' dimension about them, notwithstanding that they vary qualitatively among themselves, and it is emotions that are the

properties of brain states, for they are ‘located in brain states’ (McMullen, 1996: 166). Interestingly, the American process philosopher Susanne Langer, who was also a materialist and psychological realist, embraced the thrust of Anderson’s theory of mind as feeling although she does not appear to have acknowledged any indebtedness to Anderson. Langer saw feeling (mind) as a physiological state, stating:

Feeling, in the broad sense of whatever is felt in any way, as sensory stimulus or inward tension, pain, emotion, or intent, is the mark of mentality. (Quoted in Danto, 1984: 642.)

In short, the mind that knows and strives (or avoids) consists of the *feelings* themselves---that is, it is the emotions or feelings themselves that know and strive (or avoid). However, it is also the case that emotions are ‘things’ that are knowable and that we can experience, as an *object* of experience (McMullen, 1996: 158) as well as being in varying degrees either cognitional or conational or both. It seems that nothing is simple about the matter. ‘We deal always with complex states of affairs and never with “simple entities”’ (Anderson, 1962[1927a]: 12).

In light of the ‘plurality’ of all situations or states of affairs, as well as ‘*the interaction of complex things*’ (Anderson, 1962[1930]: 59 [emphasis in the original]), Anderson espouses, *not* the unitary, but the ‘multiple’ mind (Baker, 1986: 55), that is, ‘mind as a plurality or complexity of feelings which have objects, with the emotion or emotions which happen to be dominant at the particular time as the ego or “I”’ (Watts, 1982: 215). In addition, there is no such thing as ‘consciousness’ (the latter being nothing more than the reification of a *relation*) (Anderson, 1962[1929]), and no such thing as the so-called ‘abstract ego,’ ‘ego-self,’ ‘witnessing self,’ ‘transcendental self,’ or unified knower, rather there is a *plurality of knowers*:

... Things are known only by their characters, and so the objective in each case is a complex situation, not any ‘simple’ entity. Hence, any motive that can seek, can judge; and the reverse also holds, each motive being interested in situations of a certain sort. Our object-seeking activities (passions or inclinations) govern our judgments; and *there is no logical basis for supposing the existence of a non-passionate judge or ‘rational’ faculty, over and above our activities themselves, which is peculiarly critical of them, or to which they should be referred.* The fact that judgments are made by passions does not mean, as already indicated, that they are *about* passions, and it does not mean that they are false. They can be shown to be false only by having other judgments, equally definite, brought against them. (Anderson, 1962[1928]: 218-219 [emphasis added].)

## **Buddhism and Buddhist psychology**

### ***Introduction***

It has been noted by many writers and commentators that all of the Buddha's teachings deal with the mind. Hall (1957: 7) writes, 'In Buddhism we have what is probably the oldest and most perfectly integrated system of what we now call psychology.' In a similar vein, Watts (1975[1961]: 3) sees Buddhism as 'something more nearly resembling psychotherapy', as opposed to its being a religion or philosophy as those terms are ordinarily understood in the West. This is especially true of Theravāda (literally, 'the Way [*or Teaching or Tradition*] of the Elders' or 'the Ancient Teaching') Buddhism, which is the oldest surviving Buddhist school, being 'the type of Buddhism which sticks closely to the Buddha's own teaching' (Watts, 1982: 316).

Theravāda Buddhism---the Buddhism of Southeast Asia---is not a religion as such. Religion ordinarily involves a system of beliefs or statement of doctrine, a code of conduct, and prescribed forms of ritual or religious observances, as well as both 'faith' and 'worship', accompanied by a system of moral philosophy or particular doctrines of faith as well as a religious community which supports that faith and its organization and practices. Theravāda Buddhism, which is naturalistic in its orientation and outlook upon life, does not involve or require any faith at all---certainly no faith in any supposedly supernatural or transcendent 'Being', 'Thing' or 'Principle'---nor does Theravāda Buddhism involve any worship as such, nor does it impose or otherwise require any system of beliefs or statement of doctrine, code of conduct or prescribed forms of ritual or religious observances. Like all forms of Buddhism, Theravāda Buddhism seeks to relieve human suffering by various means of mental cultivation including the regular practice of mindfulness (*vipassanā* meditation). Indeed, Theravāda Buddhism asserts that the 'real Buddhism' is just that---'the practice of meditation using mindfulness and clear comprehension to realize wisdom --- and thus erase all defilement, and end suffering' (*Vipassana Bhavana*, 1988: 3).

Nor is Buddhism a *philosophy* as we generally understand the term, although it does contain much which is philosophical, as well as ethical and moral, in nature. However, that which is philosophical in Buddhism is very much 'practical philosophy'---with the emphasis on 'practical' or, rather, *practice*.

A cardinal, perhaps the core, teaching of Buddhism---arguably the *only* thing that holds *every* Buddhist teaching together---is this: *all* phenomena are arising together in a mutually interdependent

web of cause and effect. Perhaps even more importantly, this teaching more accurately states that *things arise dependent on conditions and cease when those same conditions cease*. Buddhist literature refers to two main categories of causation: first, *external* causes (in the form of material objects and events); secondly, *internal* causes (in the form of cognitive and other mental activities).

The texts and ideas of the ‘Mind [*or* consciousness]-only’ (Yogācāra [Vijñānavāda]) school of Buddhist philosophy and psychology are used, *among other texts*, to explain Buddhist psychology. The Yogācāra school of thought is a 4th century outgrowth of Indian Mahāyāna (‘Greater Vehicle’) Mādhyamika Buddhism, and its ideas are by no means universally accepted by all Buddhists. One of its key ideas is the assertion that no external reality exists---*not* an Andersonian idea to say the least. Be that as it may, according to the Yogācāra school the mind consists of eight functional ‘consciousnesses’ [sic], namely, the *functions* of the six [sic] sensory organs of the human body (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mental function) together with the consciousness which constantly grasps the ‘self’ (the *manas*) as well as the *alaya* consciousness (the soul-like supra-unconsciousness, sometimes referred to as the ‘master of the mind’ in Buddhist texts) which, as a supposed ‘organ of consciousness,’ is said to collect and store all so-called ‘karmic seeds’ of the mind in the purported ongoing cycle of birth and death of all sentient beings.

Now, not all Buddhists accept the existence of the last two mentioned functions---especially the concept of *alaya* consciousness, which is almost entirely a Mahāyāna teaching, even if, as some have asserted, its original idea was already there in the Pāli canon of the Theravāda). Most if not all Buddhists would accept the existence of the first six. (Of course, the inclusion of ‘mental function’ is problematic.) Certainly, most if not all Buddhist texts on the subject assert that the mind is not a single or unitary entity or element but rather an interactive complexity of factors. That much is bedrock to Buddhism. Mental states (*cittas*)---themselves said to be ‘made up’ of many different mental properties---arise separately, and each is different from the other. For example, there is a mental state that sees, and a mental state that hears, and so forth.

Buddhism views a *person* as being ‘a human body-mind as a whole, an autonomous and dynamic system that arises in dependence upon human culture and the natural world’ (Hanson, 2009: 211, citing Mackenzie, 2010). So-called ‘consciousness’---not so much an entity in its own right but a dynamic, ever-changing process---emerges ‘when mind and body cohere’ (Watts, 1982: 316), the physical body being ‘essential for the emergence of the mental’ (Watts, 1982: 316). In addition,

Buddhism has never regarded the body and the mind as being separate. Mind is said to extend into the body, with the body also extending into the mind.

Traditional Buddhist psychology recognises the following four *functions* (as opposed to ‘mental entities’, which they are said *not* to be) of the mind:

- consciousness (*viññāna*),
- perception (*saññā*),
- feeling of body sensations (*vedanā*), and
- reaction (*sankhāra*).

Boisvert (1995: 113-5) writes that ‘it is clear that within the realm of Pāli Buddhism, neither *viññāna* nor any of the other aggregates can be considered as permanent or as occupying the place of an everlasting self ... *Viññāna* is characterized by impermanence in the sense that it arises and passes away at every moment.’ In short, even in Buddhism, the ever-changing *viññāna* is a non-entity---a position not dissimilar (at least in that respect) to that of John Anderson, who also rejects the idea that consciousness is an entity at all. According to Anderson, to assert, ‘What are we aware with, if not our consciousness?’ is to err in logic, there being involved *only* these three elements---the person who is conscious (aware, etc), the thing (object---external or internal) of which the person is aware, and the act of being conscious. So-called consciousness is nothing more than the wrongful reification of a *relation*.

However, Anderson goes on to accept the more-or-less traditional tripartite division of mind into *cognition*, *conation* and *feeling*, with the first two being considered as relations, and with feelings constituting the ‘real qualities of mental processes’ (Anderson, 1962[1934]: 73).

Thoughts, feelings, perceptions and sensations arise and pass away by natural laws of cause and effect. They wax and wane. They arise and vanish. Buddhism teaches that, in order for there to be an *immediacy* and *directness* about our moment-to-moment experience of life, three events need to occur more-or-less simultaneously. Those three events are as follows:

- touch (or sensation),
- awareness, and
- mindfulness.

If those three events are not simultaneously experienced, what will be experienced will be nothing but the past, for the reality of the immediate experience will already have subsided. Indeed, any consciousness of it will be in the form of an *after-thought* or a *memory*, as we glance back to re-experience, and (sadly, yes) evaluate, a *past* experience. In that regard, we are reminded by Anderson that:

Progress in psychology may therefore be made by the actual *discovery* of the emotional character of sentiments or motives, i.e., of what is in our minds, as contrasted with what is *before* our minds. (Anderson, 1962[1934]: 75.)

### ***The ‘illusory mind’***

When Buddhism uses the word ‘illusion’ it does so in a special way. Referring to a thing as an ‘illusion’ does not mean that the thing does not exist. It simply means that the thing in question has no separate, independent, unchangeable and permanent existence.

Buddhism psychology aims to treat what Buddhism often calls an ‘illusory [*or* a ‘false’] mind’ (that is, a mind characterized and dominated by wandering, oppositional and discriminatory thoughts) with a view to bringing into manifestation a ‘true [*or* ‘pure’] mind’ (being a mind which is *not* in opposition to itself).

Buddhist psychology teaches the doctrine that ‘self is illusion,’ and that belief in the existence of some supposedly permanent and substantial ‘self’ or soul is a *delusion*. Now, the concept of *anattā* is bedrock to Buddhism. The Pāli [being the main language of Buddhism] word *anattā* (*anātman* [Sanskrit]) means ‘not-self’ or ‘non-self’ rather than ‘no-self’. The Buddhist teaching of *anattā*---of which there are several different (and even discordant) interpretations in Buddhism---affirms that there is no actual ‘self’ at the centre of our conscious---or even unconscious---awareness. The ‘self’ does *not* exist---at least it does not exist in the sense of possessing a separate, independent, unchangeable, material existence of its own. In words attributed to the Buddha, whether ‘past, future, or present; internal or external; manifest or subtle...as it actually is ... “This is not mine. This is not my self. This is not what I am”’ (*Majjhima Nikāya* I, 130). Buddhist scriptures are very firm on this teaching of ‘not-self’:

Even as the word of ‘chariot’ means  
That members join to frame a whole;  
So when the groups [the ‘five aggregates’ (see below)] appear to view,

We use the phrase, ‘a living being.’ (*Milindapantha*, 133.)

Just as the word ‘chariot’ is but a mode of expression for axles, wheels, chariot-body, pole, and other constituent members, placed in a certain relation to each other, but when we come to examine the members one by one, we discover that in the absolute sense there is no chariot; ... in exactly the same way the words ‘living entity’ and ‘Ego,’ are but a mode of expression for the presence of the five attachment groups [again, the ‘five aggregates’ (see below)], but when we come to examine the elements of being one by one, we discover that in the absolute sense there is no living entity there to form a basis for such figments as ‘I am,’ or ‘I’; ... . (*Visuddhi-Magga*, 133-34.)

Our so-called consciousness goes through continuous fluctuations from one moment to the next. As such, there is *nothing* to constitute, let alone sustain, a separate, transcendent ‘I’ structure or entity. We ‘die’ and are ‘born’ (or ‘reborn’) from one moment to the next. Whence comes our sense of ‘I-ness’? In the words of one leading writer and commentator:

The ‘I-ness’ or selfhood of man, perceived as unchanging --- his sense of individual being in time, having experiences --- is an unwarranted extension or assumption from experience to experiencer, from knowledge to knower, thought to thinker. (Lester, 1973: 27.)

Problems arise when we choose, hundreds of times each day, to identify with our ‘false’ (or ‘illusory’) sense of ‘self’ (or ‘I-ness’). We try, ever so hard, to convince ourselves---that is, the *person* that each of us *really* is---that we actually are those ever waxing and waning, arising and subsiding, hundreds and thousands of *I*’s and *me*’s (‘selves’) that, in a dynamic, ongoing, ever-changing and seemingly endless process of ‘self-ing’, parade before us like ‘mental wallpaper,’ from one moment to the next. These *I*’s and *me*’s are brought about by thought; they have no separate, independent reality *by themselves*, even though, like all things, they have spatial extension and temporal duration. The so-called ‘I’ or ego-self is ‘a series of words and memories and knowledge, which is the past, which is a habit’ (Krishnamurti, 1978[1972]: 128). King states:

The so-called ‘self’ is the content of its awareness, no more, no less; as this content changes so does the ‘self.’ (King, 1964: 9.)

Impermanence (Pāli: *anicca*; Sanskrit: *anitya*)---in Buddhism, the second mark of existence---characterises and pervades all compounded phenomena. In the *Shorter Discourse to Saccaka* (*Majjhima Nikāya*, I, 230, 35), the Buddha explains that all mental formations (feeling, perception, etc) are impermanent---as are all other things as well. Everything is said to be in a constant state of Heraclitean flux: ‘all is changing, in flux, man in becoming’ (Lester, 1973: 27). Anderson would not disagree with that.

Having said that, it is a paradox of immense proportions that, for something which has no separate, independent, unchangeable and material reality of its own---and certainly no singularity---the non-existent so-called 'self' causes us so much damn trouble---mainly because we let 'it'.

We perceive life through our senses and our conscious mind, notwithstanding that our knowledge of both internal and external reality ('situations')---as well as our remembering of it in the form of memories---is a direct and immediate apprehension of present or (in the case of memories) past occurrences or events. Over time, beginning from the very moment of our birth, sensory perceptions harden into memories and complexes---I use the term 'complex' in its ordinary and everyday, but also Andersonian sense, as opposed to its use in a Freudian context---formed out of aggregates of thought and feeling. In addition, we are conditioned to think in certain ways and to believe certain things about life. In time, the *illusion* of a separate 'witnessing [or so-called 'transcendental'] self' emerges. The 'self' has many aspects including but not limited to the 'reflective self', the 'emotional self', the 'autobiographical self', the 'core self', the 'self-as-object', and the 'self-as-subject'. However, our mental continuity and *sense* of identity and existence are simply the result of habit, memory and conditioning. Our everyday feeling of supposedly being a single, unified self is an utter illusion.

Be that as it may, hundreds of thousands of separate, ever-changing and ever-so-transient mental occurrences ('selves') harden into a mental construct of sorts which is no more than a confluence of impermanent components ('I-moments')---that is, mental states (*cittas*)---cleverly synthesized by the mind in a way which *appears*---note that word, appears---to give them a singularity and a separate, independent, unchangeable and material existence and life of their own. The so-called 'ego-self'---as well as the so-called 'mind' (*nama*)---has no separate, independent, permanent existence in the sense of being 'compact, all of one piece, doing all these different mental functions' (*Vipassana Bhavana*, 1988: 3):

'We', our entire existence, at any given time is simply the arising of one of those mental states, which is quickly replaced by another. (*Vipassana Bhavana*, 1988: 3.)

Now, it is through this perception of an internally created sense of 'self' that we experience, process and interpret all external reality. With alcoholics and other addicts, this false or illusory sense of self also becomes chemically altered (seemingly for all time)---with truly disastrous consequences for the addict and those associated with him or her.

Each of us---not just the alcoholic or other addict---clings to the ‘self’ *as* self. We even manage to convince ourselves that we ‘belong’ to that self, and that we are those myriads of *I*’s and *me*’s that make up our waxing and waning consciousness (the latter simply being the *function* consisting of apprehending the bare phenomenal world, that is, cognition):

Whenever there is a functioning sense-organ (eye, ear, tongue, nose, body and mind), a sense-object (visual form, sound, taste, smell, touch and thought) entering into the field of the sense-organ then, with these brought together, there is the manifestation of the part of consciousness referring to the specific sense-organ. (*Majjhimanikāya*, i, 190.)

The similarity with John Anderson’s rejection of the existence of any supposed abstract ‘ego’ is quite profound. Anderson wrote, ‘there is no logical basis for supposing the existence of a non-passionate judge or ‘rational’ faculty’ (Anderson, 1962[1928]: 219), which means that there is no such thing as a single, unified knower or ‘self.’ In addition, as already mentioned, Buddhist epistemology---consistent with Andersonian realism---sees knowledge as being the direct, immediate and unmediated apprehension of actual occurrences (‘situations’) both internal as well as external.

Interestingly, although the Buddha was not a psychologist *per se*, he nevertheless ‘discovered’ and understood the unconscious mind (*bhavanga-citta*), the ego [as opposed to the so-called ego-self] (*atta*), and ego fixation (*atta-vādupādāna*)---some 2,500 years before Sigmund Freud. Perhaps Buddha’s greatest contribution to psychology was his assertion that there is no such thing as the ‘self.’ In words attributed to the Buddha:

All formations are transient; all formations are subject to suffering; all things are without a self.

Therefore, whatever there be of form, of feeling, perception, mental formations, or consciousness, whether past, present, or future, one’s own or external, gross or subtle, lofty or low, far or near, one should understand according to reality and true wisdom: ‘This does not belong to me; this am I not; this is not my Self.’ (From the *Anguttara Nikaya* and *Samyutta Nikaya*, trans Nyanatiloka, in Kornfield, 1993: 53.)

Those words---‘whatever there be of form, of feeling, perception, mental formations, or consciousness, whether past, present, or future, one’s own or external, gross or subtle, lofty or low, far or near, *one should understand according to reality*’ [emphasis added]---are *very* Andersonian. We *never* know ‘feelings,’ ‘ideas’ or ‘thoughts’ independent of actual things external to ourselves. What are known are real-world ‘objects,’ that is, spatio-temporal occurrences.

Consistent with the Andersonian view that there are always three entities involved in any given transaction or relationship, Buddhism acknowledges the presence of the following three ‘relational’ elements in order for a stimulus to be perceived:

- the sense-object (or simply the *object* in question) (*visaya*),
- a sense organ (*indriya*), and
- attention or consciousness (*viññāna*).

Also consistent with the Andersonian theory of mind, Buddhism sees mental or psychological processes as being relational situations spanning both internal and external events, with the phenomena of so-called ‘consciousness’ (see the ‘five aggregates,’ below) being as follows:

Dependent on the eye and forms, visual-consciousness arises. The meeting of the three is contact. With contact as condition there is feeling. What one feels, that one perceives. What one perceives, that one thinks about. What one thinks about, that one mentally proliferates. With what one has mentally proliferated as the source, perception and notions resulting from mental proliferation beset a man with respect to past, future, and present forms cognizable through the eye (*Majjhima Nikaya*, I, 111–112).

Buddhist teachings refer to different types of ‘conditions’ that give rise to cognitive events. In the case of sensory perceptions, external objects are the *objective* or *causal* condition. However the immediately preceding moment of consciousness is said to be the *immediate* condition, with the particular sense organ being the *physiological* or *dominant* condition (Dalai Lama, 1991: online).

### ***The ‘five aggregates’***

Now, when it came to attempting to explain the conventionally accepted concept of ‘person’, the Buddha referred to various psycho-physical ‘elements’ at work in a person---the ‘five aggregates’ (*skandhas* [Sanskrit], *khandhas* [Pāli], ‘aggregates’ in English)---which are said to serve as the basis (or rather ‘bases’) of what we ordinarily designate as a ‘person.’ These ‘five aggregates’---‘aggregates’ being ‘facts’---are said to be nothing more than ‘constantly changing conglomerates of moments of materiality, sensations, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness’ (Lester, 1973: 26).

The ‘five aggregates,’ which are also known as the ‘five hindrances,’ are as follows:

- the aggregates of corporeality or materiality, that is, matter or bodily form (*rūpa-skandha*), or ‘moments of materiality’, more specifically, the physicality of the sentient being or person, being the gross physical body, gross form, together with the six sense organs (organs of sight, sound, touch, taste, smell---and the mind)---all objects regarded as being compounded entities (*samskrta*),
- the aggregates of sensations and emotions [or feelings] (*vedanā-skandha*)---feeling being so-called because it is ‘felt’ (cf ‘feeling-quality,’ or ‘feeling-tone,’ (Anderson, 1962[1934]: 74))---more specifically, the ‘physiological processes resulting from the contact of matter with matter, sense organs with objects of sense’ (Lester, 1973: 26) including the five ordinary bodily senses as well as mental feeling with ‘feeling overtones’,
- the aggregates of perceptions, more specifically, those of recognition and perception (*saññā*)---sometimes referred to as ‘apperception’ (*samjñā-skandha*), being ‘mental discriminations born of sensations, the recognition of objects’ (Lester, 1973: 26), and, more specifically, the capacity and power to perceive as well as recognise and distinguish between physical objects of all kinds, including the ability to comprehend the specific marks (*nimitta*) of phenomenal objects, there being six places of perception (viz perception of sights, sounds, touches, tastes, smells, and mental images),
- the aggregates of predispositions, more specifically, those of ‘dispensational’ or mental *formations* or factors (eg fixations and conclusions of the mind such as attitudes, beliefs and opinions), and more specifically volitions (*samskrta-skandha*) to actions (*kamma [karma]*), which are said to be primarily responsible for bringing forth future states of existence (Note: the word ‘formations’ (*sankhārā*) is used somewhat confusingly in three different senses: first, in a psychological sense to refer to mental constituents (*sankhāra-khandha*)); secondly, to refer to all compounded things (*sankhāra-dhamma*); and thirdly, as actions (*kamma [karma]*)), and
- the aggregates of consciousness (*viññāna-skandha*), that is, ‘consciousness in the fullest sense of the word’ (King, 1964: 7), which is said to be ‘composed of moments of awareness’ (Lester, 1973: 26), and which (although *not* an ‘entity’ as such) ‘binds the varied sense and feeling elements of the individual---physical awareness, bodily feeling-tone, and mental constructs---into a personalized unity’ (King, 1964: 7), and ‘is continuous throughout unceasing change, until death comes with the disintegration of the *skandhas*’ (Watts, 1982: 317).

The use of these fairly standard English expressions, being translations, is problematic and even misleading. Very few of the Pāli and Sanskrit sources provide descriptive definitions of the five aggregates.

Once again, the use of the word ‘illusion’ may seem problematic. It is simply the case that in Buddhism the ‘aggregates’, both individually and collectively, are a convenient fiction---that is, merely an abstract, ‘working’ classification for ‘things’ that have only an evanescent existence as opposed to being substantial, permanent entities. Having said that, there is much in Buddhist literature to the effect that the mind is simply ‘clarity and knowing,’ that is, the knowing *nature* or *agency*---fuzzy words that beg a lot of questions---but within this so-called ‘category’ of mind there can also be found gross levels such as sensory perceptions which depend for their efficacy and operation on the existence of our sense organs (Dalai Lama, 1991: online).

Then there’s that word ‘consciousness’ again. However, consciousness (*viññāna*) is regarded in Buddhism as an ‘aggregate’ more because ‘it’ tends to intensify ego-fixation as opposed to its being a ‘thing’ or separate entity in itself. More particularly, consciousness is simply the *impression* (*viññapti*) of each object or as the bare apprehension of each object. Other Buddhist commentators and scholars regard consciousness as referring to an *awareness* of the object alone (*vastumātra*). In short, the word ‘consciousness’ is little more than a shorthand expression referring to either the type of awareness that arises depending on any of the six sensory domains (*āyatana*) or awareness as one of the five above-mentioned aggregates of existence. (The word is *not* the thing---and the so-called thing’ [‘consciousness’] is certainly *not* an ‘entity’ as such.)

Now, John Anderson would have taken issue with a fair bit of the foregoing, but, being fair to both persons, there are certainly some similarities as respects the concept of mind being articulated. Both the Buddha and Anderson see the mental as not being a unitary agent. Consistent with the overall pluralism, we are talking about a ‘plurality of complex interacting forces’, that is, ‘distinct but connected, pluralistic complexes grounded in space and time’ (Hibberd, 2009: 69). In the words of Anderson:

What has chiefly to be emphasised, however, is that the observation of minds, the knowledge of them in propositions, requires the rejection of the ‘unitary’ view of mind, the conception of it as having only one character and being self-contained in that character. This is a rationalist, ‘unspeakable’ view. If we are to have any dealings with minds, we must be able to consider how they act in different situations, i.e., to consider them as having complex characters and activities, as being divisible and determinate. Psychological science will only be possible if we have a

variety of psychological truths, between which, and in each of which, connection and distinction are discernible. (Anderson, 1962[1927a]: 12-13.)

The Buddha, who saw a human being as simply ‘an amalgam of ever-changing phenomena’ (Boisvert, 1995: 4) of existence, had this to say about the matter:

The instructed disciple of the Noble Ones does not regard material shape as self, or self as having material shape, or material shape as being in the self, or the self as being in material shape. Nor does he regard feeling, perception, the impulses, or consciousness in any of these ways. He comprehends each of these aggregates as it really is, that it is impermanent, suffering, not-self, compounded, woeful. He does not approach them, grasp after them or determine 'Self for me' ['my self']--and this for a long time conduces to his welfare and happiness.

The instructed disciple of the Noble Ones beholds of material shape, feeling, perception, the impulses, or consciousness: 'This is not mine, this am I not, this is not my self.' So that when the material shape, feeling, perception, the impulses, or consciousness change and become otherwise there arise not from him grief, sorrow, suffering, lamentation, and despair. (Adapted from the *Samyutta Nikaya*, trans L Feer, in Kornfield, 1993: 23-24.)

The Buddha thus makes it clear that the so-called ‘self’ is only an ‘aggregate’ or ‘heap’ of perceptions and sensations. It is, in the words of Hall (1957: 23), ‘a summary of what is known and what is not known’. We are not a ‘self’; we are *persons among persons*. The Buddha also acknowledged---as, of course, did Anderson---the important distinction between ‘our perceptions or sensations of things (the fact that on certain occasions certain things are perceived by us) [and] the things themselves’ (Anderson, 1962[1962]: 166), stating that ‘the senses meet the object and from their contact sensation is born’ (Carus, 2002[1894]: 54). Also worth noting are these words attributed to the Buddha and quoted above---‘when the material shape, feeling, perception, the impulses, or consciousness change and become otherwise.’ In other words, the same event or situation can bring about different effects, and it is also the case that different events or situations can bring about the same effect. It all depends on the ‘field’ of context (the so-called ‘causal field’). This is quite Andersonian.

The spiritual philosopher J. Krishnamurti, although not a Buddhist, articulated a number of distinctive ideas that have much in common with Buddhist thought and teaching. For example, Krishnamurti wrote:

In uncovering what one actually is, one asks: Is the observer oneself, different from that which one observes---psychologically that is. I am angry, I am greedy, I am violent: is that I different from the thing observed, which is anger, greed, violence? Is one different? Obviously not. When I am angry there is no I that is angry, there is only anger. So anger is me; the observer is the observed. The division is eliminated altogether. The observer is the observed and therefore conflict ends. (Krishnamurti, 1987[1978]: 142.)

## *The ‘four establishments’*

Consistent with his rejection of the ‘unitary’ view of mind, and the mind’s innate ability to observe and examine ‘itself’ (that is, the so-called contents of the mind), Buddha refers to the ‘four establishments’ (*cattāro satipaṭṭhānā*), that is, one remains established in:

- the observation of the feelings in the feelings
- the observation of the mind in the mind
- the observation of the objects of the mind in the objects of the mind
- the observation of the body in the body.

For example, when one’s mind is desiring, the practitioner is aware, ‘My mind is desiring.’ However, this is simply a ‘device’ for achieving a state of detachment from, or disidentification with, the feelings or whatever. We---that is, the *person* that each of us is---are *not* our thoughts, feelings, or bodily sensations, even though we strongly identify ourselves with those things.

Now, once again, John Anderson would have taken issue with the foregoing classification, but I think he would have admired the directness about the Buddha’s approach. Indeed, there is more than a superficial similarity with Anderson’s concept of mind as feeling.

Anderson regarded the feelings themselves as constituting the real qualities of mental processes. Buddha, too, spoke much about the feelings, but perhaps the main difference between the two pertains to Anderson’s rejection of mental entities. According to Anderson, when, for example, we observe the body in the body---he would never have expressed it in those words---we ‘sense’ or ‘observe’ things particular things as opposed to the ‘sensations’ *per se*. However, both the Buddha and Anderson would seem to be in general agreement that ‘we never know “ideas” but always independent things, or rather states of affairs’ (Anderson, 1962[1927b]: 32). Yes, what is ‘felt,’ ‘sensed,’ etc, are real-world objects or situations, with each and every such object or situation being spatio-temporal.

Here is a most illuminating sutra from the *Samyutta Nikāya* known as ‘The Sutra on Totality’:

Monks, I will teach you the totality of life. Listen, attend carefully to it and I will speak.

What, monks, is totality?

It is just the eye  
with the objects of sight,  
the ear with the objects of hearing,  
the nose with the objects of smell,

the tongue with the objects of taste,  
the body with the objects of touch  
and the mind with the objects of cognition.  
This, monks, is called totality.

Now, if anyone were to say, 'Aside from this explanation of totality, I will preach another totality,' that person would be speaking empty words, and being questioned would not be able to answer. Why is this? Because that person is talking about something outside of all possible knowledge. (From the *Samyutta Nikāya*, trans G Fronsdal, in Kornfield, 1993: 57.)

The above is the *locus classicus* of Buddhist empiricism. The so-called 'twelve gateways' (*āyatana*)---also known as the bases of cognition---which are said in Buddhism to constitute the 'totality of life,' are as follows:

- eye and material form (or colour and light)
- ear and sound
- nose and odour
- tongue and taste
- body and tangibles (that is, tactile objects)
- mind and the objects of cognition (eg ideas and concepts).

In other words, the six (yes, six, in Buddhism) spheres of experience and their corresponding objects are said to constitute the 'doors of perception,' to use a phrase coined by Aldous Huxley. Now, the first five spheres of existence (sense organs) and their corresponding objects (colour, sound, smell, taste, and tactile objects) are clear enough, but what about 'mind'? In Buddhism the 'sixth consciousness' (mind) is said to be generated from contact between the so-called 'sixth organ' and its corresponding object (*dharmas*, that is, any objects or things, whether inside or outside the mind), yet Buddhism fails to provide any detailed explanation of this supposed organ. One Buddhist who has given a fair bit of thought to the matter is Choi (2011). Interestingly, Choi accepts that we can explain mind as feeling, emotion or mood. For example, when we hear pleasant music, pleasant feeling arises. Further, Choi makes the point that the mind as feeling, emotion or mood may also affect the physical body (eg changes in blood pressure, respiration rate, etc).

Buddhism and Andersonian realism are one in affirming that mentality belongs to the spatio-temporal world as much as the non-mental, and that our knowledge of mind (that is, of mental 'situations') is on the exact same footing as the non-mental. Everything---internal and external---exists and occupies both time and space. Such is the matrix of being---the one way of being. Our knowledge of all things

(that is, 'situations')---internal and external---consists of the direct, immediate and unmediated apprehension of actual occurrences both internal as well as external.

The so-called 'totality of life'---there is (in both Buddhism and Andersonian realism) no such thing as a 'totality' as such---is the sum of all that we see, all that we hear, all that we smell, all that we taste, all that we touch, and all that we think. The Buddha affirms that if someone preaches 'another reality,' that person is speaking 'empty words' as any talk about 'another reality'---say, so-called higher and lower levels of reality---is 'something outside of all possible knowledge.' John Anderson, of course, held the same view---that is, the idea of 'speakability'---for it is the case that *all* argument rests on the possibility of intelligible *discourse*. Discourse and argument depend, among other things, but most fundamentally, upon the existence of the particular events or situations to which reference is made.

## **Conclusion**

Both Buddhism and Andersonian realism assert that there is no unifying consciousness, and no ultimate 'self.' Both systems of thought espouse a *psychological realism* that expressly acknowledges the reality of cognitive and other 'mental' processes, such that mind is seen as both relational and extended to situations in the external world, with mentality belonging to the spatio-temporal world along with everything else such that a person's mental things and processes are not wholly internal to that person.

Both systems of thought regard the human mind as a field---indeed, a veritable battle-ground---of conflicted tendencies, feelings and emotions in light of the fact that the mental is not a unitary agent. Consistent with the overall pluralism of both systems of thought, we are always dealing with a plurality---indeed, pluralities---of complex interacting but otherwise waxing and waning forces, for *such* is the nature of reality.

Both systems of thought take an 'extended' view of the mind such that it is more than just the activity of the brain. Rather, the mind is an embodied and relational process. True, the mind is a product of the brain, but it is conditioned by both internal and external events.

Both systems of thought espouse the existence of a thoroughgoing determinism which applies to all things including human behaviour.

Finally, both systems of thought espouse a direct realist paradigm and reject any notion of there being some sort of representationalist framework whereby knowledge of the world or even the situational contents of the mind itself are supposedly mediated by internal representational entities.

Although there are some not insignificant differences between the two systems of thought, there is much that is common to both.

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