

## Finding freedom in Right View

We can start by considering two fundamental mistaken views of the world. On one hand we have the view that everything is really mentality or mind; and on the other hand the view that everything is really materiality. So a problem of the first view then is, if everything is mental then how can it be that the material world is outside the control of the mind? And on the other side – the materialist view is flawed because these objects in the mind are not the same as the material phenomenon that they may be derived from, they do not have the same material existence, their nature is not just of matter or energy but also of information or truth; further, we can wonder how can there be any free will and thus, perhaps, what's the point of it all? This takes us to the distinction between the objective view of the world, which is championed by science (and that tends towards a matter-only view) and the subjective world view which is founded on our own experience (and tends towards a mind-only view). In other words, both views leaves us in a deficiency. Is the only way to power and sanity then to try to match our subjective world with the external reality?<sup>1</sup> Perhaps this is the modern hope, but how could it be done, won't these two views always be in opposition to each other? Or could there perhaps be something in between the two views which is really distinct?

I can only give you the Dhamma practitioner's solution to all this. First of all we have to begin with the relative freedom won by virtue: As practitioners we see the mixing together of our inner subjective and objective realities occurring at the point of contact (*phassa*). Since our desires are at the root of this contact, we avoid the whole problem by abandoning or suspending our desires (i.e. by developing virtue). Then we no longer see things by means of a distinction of material or mind; instead we see everything simply as mind objects within a pure, empty mind. And we make this new division not philosophically but in our experience, where it really matters. Ultimately this is achieved by withdrawing the mind through the practise of *samādhi*. Here is the beginning of real clarity. From this point on we relate to everything, real or imagined, through wisdom rather than desire. This means that we have functional rather than fixed views of phenomenon, and in terms of their nature we see them ultimately as all the same. Our agenda no longer lies in the world of objects but in finding more and more lasting freedom from our entanglement with this world and those objects. Thus the question regarding subjective and objective loses its significance.

Ultimately this duality of subject and object, immaterial and material, is overcome through a humility and dispassion that sees, without a sense of self, in the simple mode of *mind in relation to mind-objects*; there is then a transcendent, empty base to consciousness – in the world, but not of the world. It is not the case that seeing in this way – everything-in-the-mind – changes the nature of our experience as we might think it would either. Our experience does not start to appear unreal or dream-like. We simply have a subjective experience of the field of our own awareness, so that we see everything floating in that field.<sup>2</sup> This is a purity through virtue and restraint.

Then there is the development of wisdom which protects the mind in activity. We see in action that there is not just mind (this is the mind only view which is one extreme), nor just objects (this is materialism which is the other extreme). Instead we find that there is the mind and the mind objects (this is the view in between these two extremes). The mind-only view is flawed because all the objects within the mind have a life of their own and don't obey anyone's orders, which the mind-

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1 We can see for ourselves the big difficulty when we try to make a clear division between subjective and objective realities within our own experience. Sometimes it is very hard to tell what is real and what is a mixture of our imagination and perception?

2 This is an emptiness and not just a stillness of mind. The subtler impurities of mind are still. The mind has to be empty to abandon them. To engage in any analysis before *samādhi* is fruitless because the mind has no truly independent observation or vantage point from which to see phenomena. Any observation alters the phenomena under investigation. Within the mind there are the same issues for investigation of phenomena outside the mind. It will also be impossible for the mind to clearly see its own state, there is no clear mirror to the mind either.

only view would ultimately require in order to be able to stand. So since the objects of the mind are not under the control of the mind, they cannot, in essence, be considered part of it. Actually these objects rather have a degree of independence from the mind. It is also the case that they are interdependent on each other among themselves, even if they are initially mind generated. So the objects of the mind exist on two levels: on the physical plane, out there; and on the mental plane, in here.<sup>3</sup>

If we accept the existence of both mind and mind-objects<sup>4</sup> – and hence accept the 'middle view' we see that the usual existence of mind and mind-objects in our ordinary modes of being is one in which these two are bound up and entangled to each other. Unless or until the mind is empty it is not independent but involved and mixed up with things – so at this initial stage to see two independent natures, in the mind and the mind-objects, is just an idea and not a reality and we would be fooling ourselves if we thought we had some independence of mind.

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It is only through insight<sup>5</sup> that the mind finds complete freedom. It is through seeing, accepting and granting independence to the objects within the mind from the mind itself – through letting go of trying to control – that the mind in turn finds its own independence. This is a part of the insight of anattā. And the birth of the pure, empty mind – of the transcendent mind.<sup>6</sup> This insight begins with the body; in letting go of the body we let go of all the rest.

This is the abandoning of the worldly life for the spiritual life. The mind-objects still have a life of their own but they chase after pleasant *spiritual* feelings rather than pleasant *worldly* feelings. We do not seek influence over the things of the world but influence in the spiritual sense – this is influence over what we do and say and how we see life in order to maintain our purity of mind, to continuously win and then to embody or express our spiritual freedom.

I offer this for your reflection.

Ajahn Kalyāno

<http://www.openthesky.co.uk>

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3 E.g. the table is both an object in my mind and in the room.

4 Or in other words, if we accept the existence of both 'the knower of information' and of energy.

5 And, just to avoid any misunderstandings, this insight can only occur with the absence of the five mental hindrances. (i.e. in the state of samādhi.)

6 This independence does not constitute a dualism: the mind is empty only in the sense of being detached from phenomena; it is not separated from phenomena.