

**THERAVADA TREATMENT AND
PSYCHOTHERAPY: An Ecological Integration
of Buddhist Tripartite Practice and Western
Rational Analysis**

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work that has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

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Abstract

An assertion that psychotherapy is an independent science and a self-authority on human mind and behaviour has uprooted its connection with philosophy and religion. In practice, the scientist-practitioner model of psychotherapy, a seemingly dualistic model, prefers determinism of science to free will of choice in humans.

In particular, the model does not see reason and emotion as co-conditioning causes of human behaviour and suffering within the interdependent aggregates of self, other, and environment. Instead, it argues for wrong reasoning as the cause of emotional suffering.

In Western thought, such narrative began at the arrival of scripted language and abstract thought in Greek antiquity that has led psychotherapy to think ignorantly that emotions are *un-reasonable* therefore they are *irrational*. Only *rational thinking* can effectively remove *un-reasonable* emotions.

This belief creates confusion between rational *theory* and rational *method* of studying change in emotion because of the belief that science cannot objectively measure emotions. As a result, rational epistemologies that are *ignorant* of moral and metaphysical issues in human experience have multiplied. These epistemologies not only construct an unchanging rational identity, but also uphold the status of permanent self-authority.

Fortunately, recent developmental psychology and cognitive neuroscience research have quashed such ideas of permanent self-identity and authority.

Buddhist theory of Interdependent Arising and Conditional Relations sees such identity and authority as arisen together with deluded emotional desires of greed and hatred.

These desires co-condition interdependent states of personal feeling and perception (metaphysics), conceptual thinking and consciousness (epistemology) and formation of (moral) emotion and action within the context of self-other-environment matrix. Moral choices particularly highlight the intentional or the Aristotelian *final cause* of action derived from healthy desires by valued meaning makings and interpretations.

Theravada formulation aims to end unhealthy desires and develop the healthy ones within the matrix including the client-clinician-therapeutic environment contexts.

Theravada treatment guides a tripartite approach of practicing empathic ethics, penetrating focus and reflective understanding, which integrates ecologically with Western rational analysis. It also allows scientific method of studying change in emotion by applying the theory of defective desires.

In addition, interdependent dimensions of thinking and feeling understood from Theravada perspective present a framework for developing theory and treatment of self disorders.

Thus, Theravada treatment not only allows scientific *method* of studying change in emotion and provides an interdependent *theory* and treatment but also ecologically integrates with Western rational analysis. Moreover, Theravada *approach* offers an *open framework* for further development of theoretical and treatment models of psychopathology classified under Western nomenclature.

The madman is not the man who has lost reason. The madman is the man who has lost everything except his reason.

Gilbert K Chesterton

The marvelous logic of the mad which seems to mock that of the logicians because it is exactly the same... The ultimate language of madness is that of reason.

Michel Foucault

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