

Vedanā - Niceness Opinion

Every object that enters our awareness receives a vedanā—a sense of being nice, not-nice, or neither. This teaching was given by the Buddha as a way to get closer to what we experience and to reduce grasping and rejection in experiences.

There are three kinds of vedanā:

Vedanā Traditional	Colloquial	This seems to be...
Pleasant	Nice	...happiness-making
Unpleasant	Not Nice	...unhappiness-making
Neither pleasant nor unpleasant	Neither	...not worth my time

Vedanā as an aspect of experience is a subconscious categorisation of sense-contact. It is something that our minds add to the experience. It is not something inherently true about a phenomenon. In short, vedanā is a niceness opinion. As a practice, seeing the vedanā of this appearance in consciousness as it is happening offers us a way of easing reactivity. We simply note what this phenomena is classified as: pleasant, unpleasant, nether...nor.

The point of this teaching is that vedanā, taken as a fact, is a subtly-reactive builder of reactivity. Left unnoticed it often escalates into a significant dukkha-making demands on life. Whereas, when the flavour of the vedanā-opinion is noticed we gain possibilities for freedom.

If sense-contact is **classified as pleasant**, it can lead to a demand for more of the phenomena we are sensing. A certain degree of dukkha—unsatisfactoriness—will be felt, not only in pain of it not lasting, but immediately too, for contracted demand is dukkha.

If sense-contact is **classified as unpleasant**, it can lead to rejecting these phenomena, giving rise to dukkha here and now. Additionally, this typically leads to distracting fantasies about a more pleasant future, and escape plans to avoid unpleasant contact.

If sense-contact is **classified as neither pleasant nor unpleasant**, it can lead to our minds more or less overlooking the phenomena. In this, the dukkha of boredom or confusion will arise. Although neither...nor is to some degree more pleasant than a directly unpleasant vedanā, this response will escalate into deeper unpleasantness, from which we will try to escape.

When we meet our experience with the insight of seeing what vedanā is added on, we free ourselves from our rigid view of things being possible only-one-way, and can invite new ways of meeting experience, such as spaciousness, kindness, and interest.