

THE EIGHT WORLDLY CONCERNS (adapted from Lion's Roar magazine)

The eight worldly concerns classify the attachments and aversions that yoke us to samsara, the cycle of suffering. They are the four hopes and corresponding four fears, which we cycle through endlessly—until, that is, we discover enlightenment (which includes liberation from the eight worldly concerns). This list is from the Indian philosopher Nagarjuna, Letter to a Friend. Teaching also widely expounded elsewhere.

1 & 2: Happiness vs. Suffering

Once we have happiness, fear arises, for we are afraid to lose it. When suffering arises, no amount of wishful thinking makes it go away. The more we hope for it to be otherwise, the more pain we feel.

3 & 4: commonly 'Fame vs. Notoriety/Infamy' but more idea of 'Good Reputation vs. Poor Reputation'

We are obsessed with fame, also sometimes flattery and reputation. We can also be afraid of our own insignificance, or being judged inadequate or unpleasant. When it dawns on us how hard we need to work to be seen as someone special, our fear of insignificance is only magnified.

5 & 6: Praise vs. Blame

We need to be pumped up constantly or we begin to have doubts about our worth. When we are not searching for praise, we are busy trying to cover up our mistakes so we don't get caught.

7 & 8: Gain vs. Loss

Just as we are about to congratulate ourselves on our success, the bottom falls out. Over and over, things are hopeful one moment and the next they are not, and in either case we are anxious.