

An Example of a Comparative Philosophical Approach to a Universal Problem: Views and Beliefs
in Epistemology, Psychology, and Buddhism

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This paper deals with a topic that can be understood, at its most basic level, even by a child. "I believe this...", "my opinion is this..."—these are phrases that everyone is familiar with. And if we study views and beliefs in further detail, we also notice interesting facts that everyone can understand: (1) views and beliefs often seem to be created without reference to proven facts; (2) people have a tendency to cling to their own views and beliefs, even when everyone else says that they are wrong.

Because of the central role views and beliefs play in our everyday life, they have been studied in various fields of research. They are also very important in the field of religion, and especially Buddhism, a religion that is founded on the idea that human problems are caused by wrong views, and that these wrong views can be corrected by right views.

In this presentation, will introduce the research about views from three different perspectives: (1) the perspective of constructivist epistemology, based mainly on the studies by the American philosopher, Barbara Herrnstein Smith; (2) the perspective of behavioral psychology, based mainly on the huge multi-authored book, *The Handbook of Attitudes*; (3) the perspective of Buddhism, based on my own research.

I will show that, although the theoretical bases, approaches, aims, and methodologies of these three disciplines are quite different, their conclusions about views and beliefs are remarkably similar. All three disciplines agree that views and beliefs are: (1) based not on veridical facts, but rather based on whether or not the beliefs "work well" for their creators; (2) extremely difficult to remove once they are formed.

However, there are also differences between the three. For example, behavioral psychologists tend to believe that wrong views can be corrected based on an exposure to "knowledge." Constructivist epistemologists and Buddhists do not think that "knowledge" has greater validity than "views", and that in fact it ends up only creating new views. The epistemologists go even further by claiming that even a "good" view can become bad if it is clung to. Buddhists go yet further by saying that all views are none other than clinging, and that eventually all views must be abandoned.