

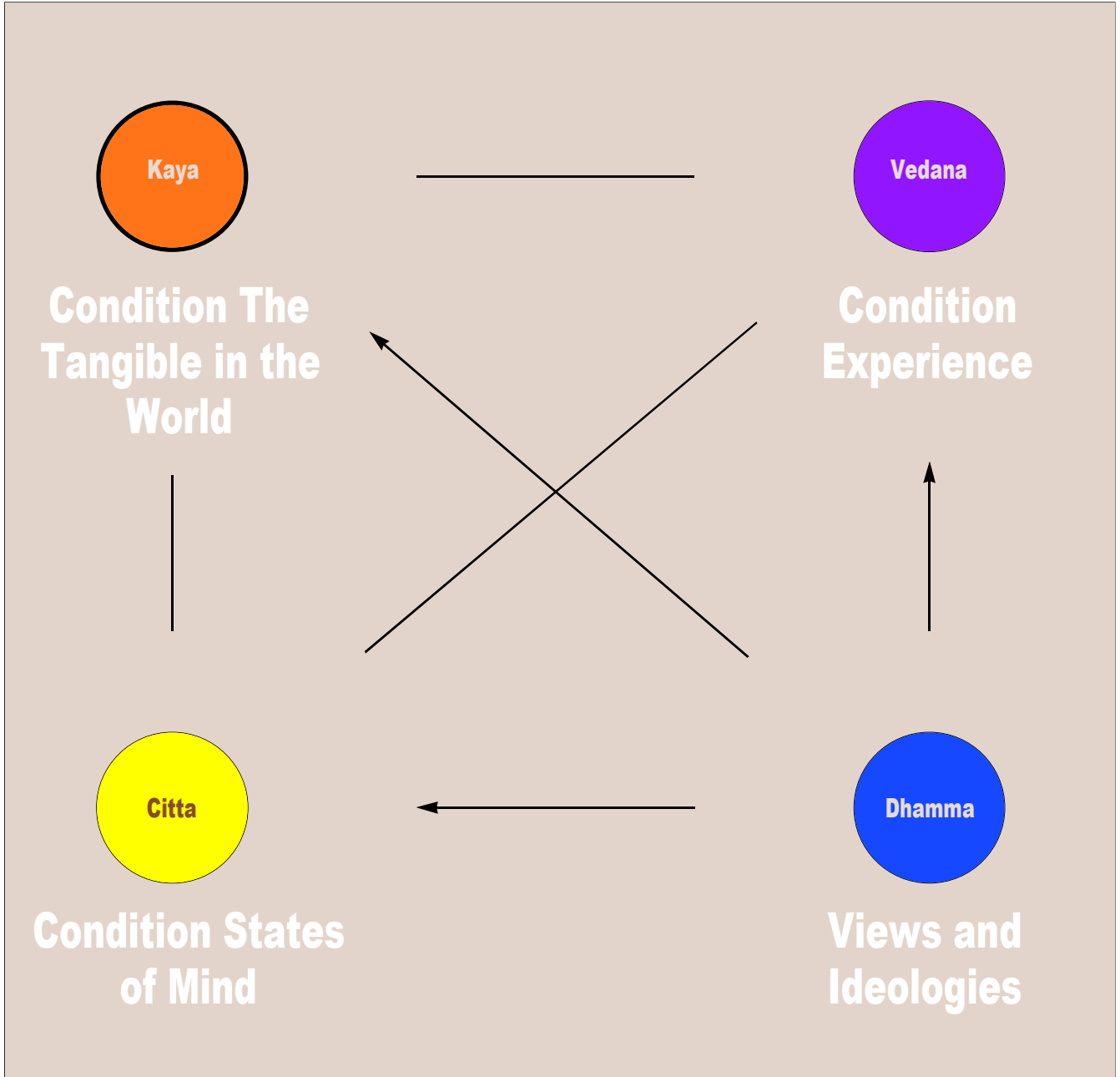
**views  
contexts and  
ideologies**

**from the perspective  
of the Four Satipatthanas**

## **Views, Contexts and Ideologies**

The perspective of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness is in essence four perspectives, all of which are necessary

# Views and Ideologies



# Buddhist view on Views

The lightly

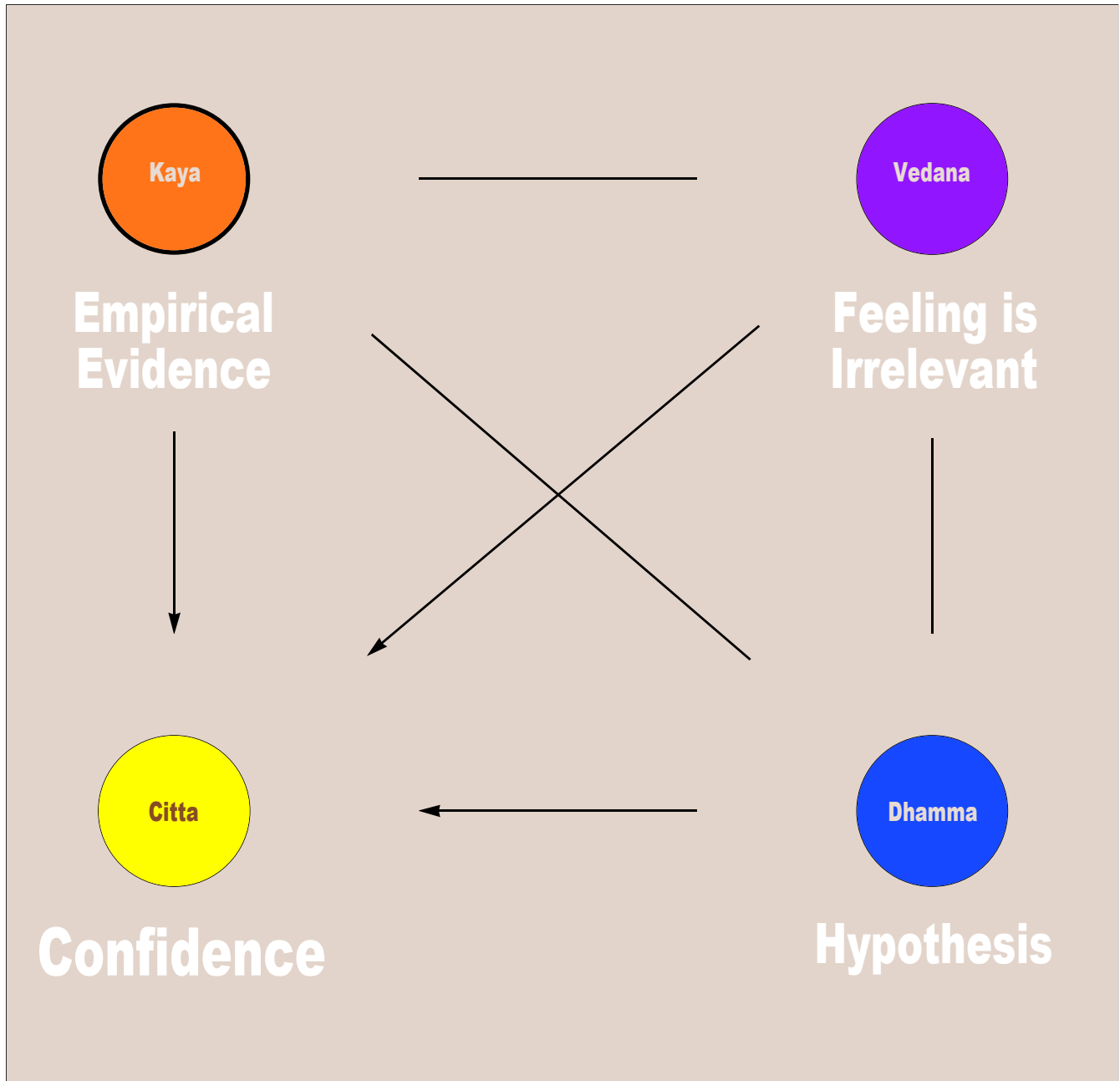
# The Comprehensiveness of The Evidence for Faith

Science

# Grounds for Faith in Science

Science

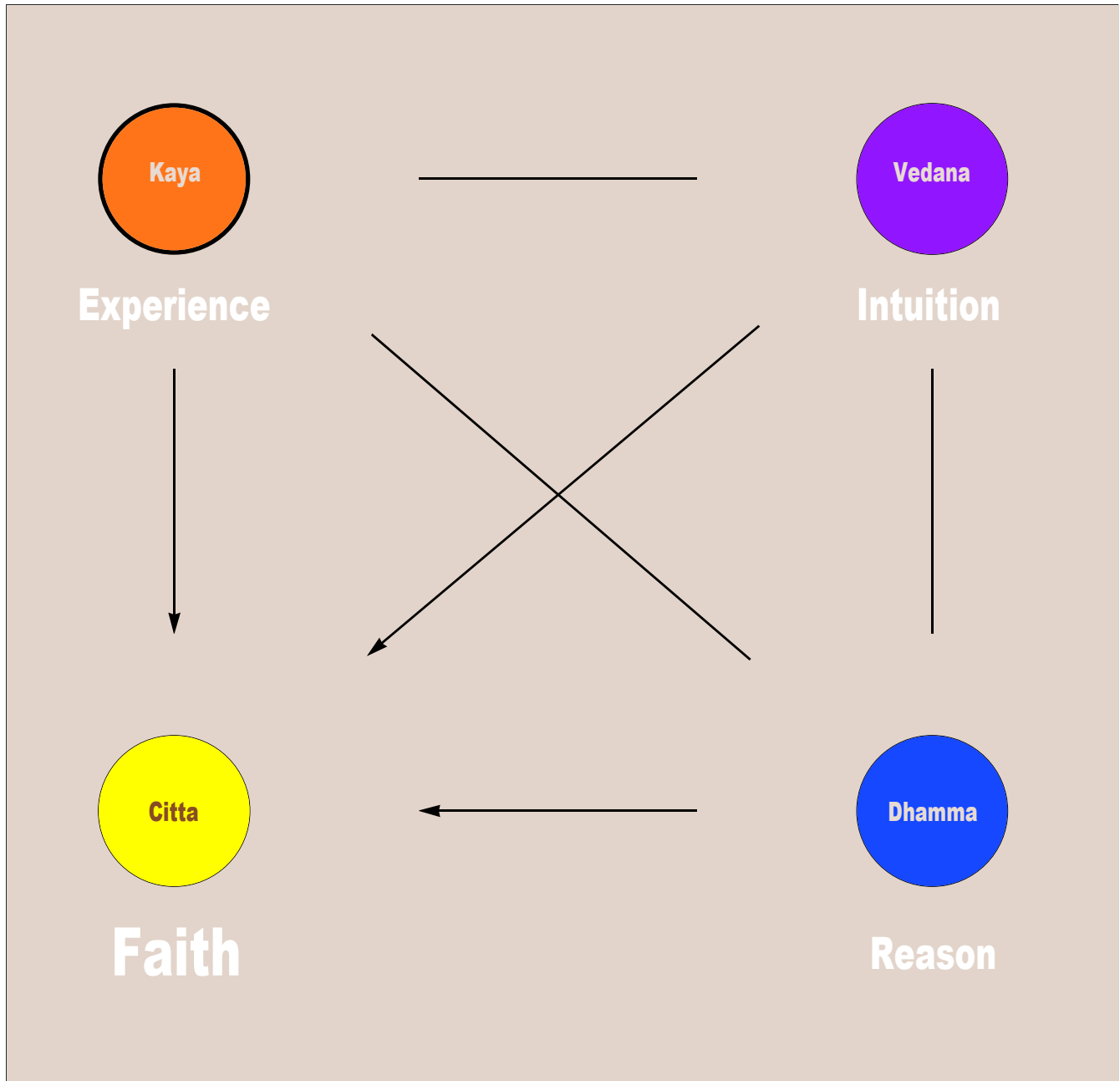
# Grounds for Faith in Science



# Grounds for Faith in Buddhism

Science

# Three Grounds for Faith in Buddhism



## Science as a world-view and the problem of the 'burden of proof'

The scientific world-view has grown predominant over the last century, a view graphically illustrated by the (date) cover of National Geographic magazine, which shows an image of the Dalai Lama with electrodes attached to his head. Inside the magazine is a feature article examining the evidence that practicing buddhism makes people happier. It seems that advanced buddhist practitioners do seem happier than ordinary people, according to science, because they have a preponderance of the brain waves that are most associated with happiness.

I want to compare here the differing views of buddhism and science, in the way they approach faith (what buddhism calls *sradha*), or confidence and trust. Confidence / trust is a state of mind. As such it is in the realm of *Citta* (Heart / attitude). It arises on various grounds (conditions). The Buddha extolled three grounds for having confidence (in his teaching - the practice of buddhism): reason, experience, and intuition (see following pages).

Science differs in it puts its confidence in just two of these: reason and experience. Its focus is on hypothesis and empirical evidence working in tandem. According to science, if something has a sound theoretical basis, and it also can be proved in experience (in the sense of being measureable experimentally), we are justified in having faith in it. Science begins with a set of assumptions (a view) that appears to be true. Based on that view, a hypothesis is put forward to be tested. An experiment is then designed to test the hypothesis. Empirical evidence is then sought [L. *empiricus*, from Gk. *empeirikos*, experienced - *en*, in, and *peira*, a trial - Webster.] to support the hypothesis, which falls or in maintained on the evidence. Science this way is based on rationality and empiricism. We can say, in the satipatthana model, that *kaya* represents what is measureable (the tangible) and *dhamma* the view (the truthfulness of the hypothesis).

In our culture we largely live unconsciously with this rational / scientific view of the world. To the extent we do, we are placed under a 'burden of proof'. Exploring buddhism with this view, we cannot accept it until it has been shown scientifically to work, hence the National Geographic article. Buddhism values reason and measureable experience but also values intuition, feeling (feeling in science is seen as likely to cloud ones 'objective' judgement, and so get in the way of progress). Measuring buddhism by its own criteria for confidence (reason, experience and intuition), proof becomes not so much of a burden. In the absence of proof, it is still OK to go by how we feel about it, whether it feels right or not.

In the satipatthana model, which is a buddhist framework, science effectively ignores feeling (*vedana*). In the physical sciences feeling is irrelevant. It is possible, within the scientific framework, to be a scientist and faithfully follow the scientific method and not take into account ones feelings about the effects of whatever one is researching and developing. Ethical sensitivity (*niramisam vedana*) is outside of the domain of science. Such feelings are still within the domain of a scientists ethical concern, but whether they chose to be sensitive to them is a matter for them, not science. It is perfectly reasonable then for a scientist working on an atom bomb, or other weapons development, to not be in any way sensitive to how their work affects peoples lives, and still legitimately remain a scientist.

However a scientist who happens to also be a buddhist is obliged to consider the ethical consequences of what they are producing. In addition to their burden of proof they are also under an ethical burden, which they cannot legitimately pass on to others, and still remain buddhist (or, they become less buddhist as a result). Science on the other hand allows scientists to effectively pass on any ethical burden to others.

Buddhism we could say is *more* objective than science in its treatment of the individual and their life, because in it one has to bring mindfulness to all four satipatthanas, not just to three, as in science: namely, confidence / trust (*citta*), rationality / assessment (*dhamma*), and tangible evidence (*kaya*). Which makes it a more challenging discipline to practice.

But surely scientists are creative, I hear you say, they do use their intuition. Yes that is true. There has to be a creative leap to each new hypothesis and that will probably depend on intuition, but it is not used in itself as a ground for confidence in *what* has been discovered. That has to be tested in reason and experience.

But what about the humanities, the more human sciences like psychology? Surely they deal with feeling! Well, yes they do, in their subject matter. But they are still sciences in the sense mentioned above. Feeling is not part of their remit in terms of their methodology. One psychological theory would never be chosen instead of another because one felt better about it, it would have to meet the criteria of rationality and empiricism.

When I look at the picture of the Dalai Lama wearing electrodes, an empirical question arises - Does seeing this picture and reading the article on it actually encourage anyone to take up buddhism, and so become happier? If it did, it would confirm the scientific basis for faith, that all you need is reason and proof. Having those, people would flock to buddhist centres left, right, and centre. But they don't seem to be doing, not in sufficient numbers anyway. What the picture misses conveying is the felt experience of practicing buddhism. Its feeling tone. One of the key things that people visiting the Manchester Buddhist Centre comment on is the calm feeling of the place. It feels special, calm and human. And this gives people faith. People respond to that. Similarly people respond to the warmth and dignity of the Dalai Lama. To his unique and intangible presence. But they probably respond less to his specialness when they see electrodes strapped to his head (not that he would mind if he sees it as serving humanity), which then effectively reduces him to an object to be studied. We do need to study things (to satisfy our reason) but we need to maintain that sense of wonder and mystique as well (to satisfy our feeling and intuition).

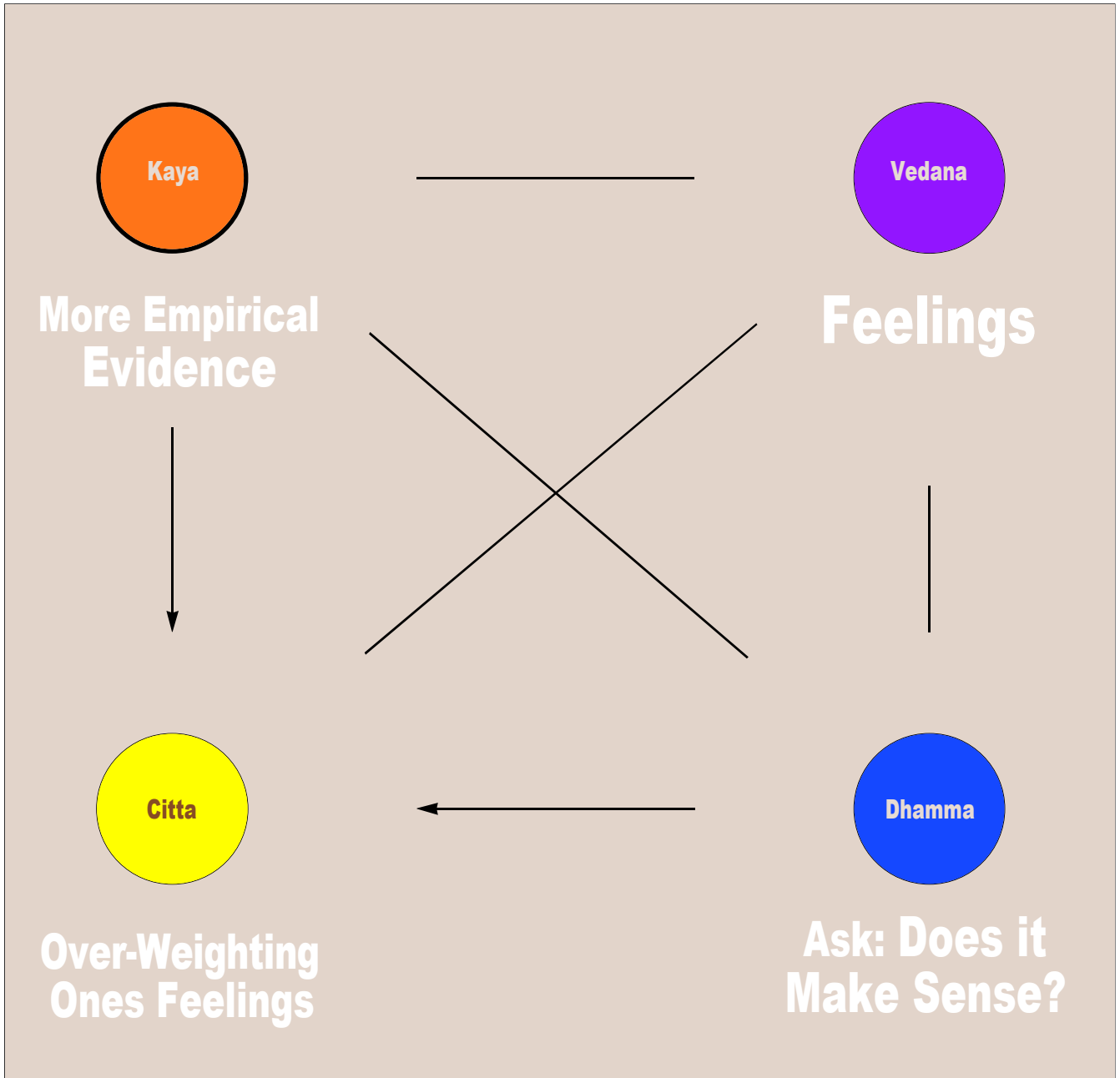
Science originally was very simple and mechanistic. Since Einstein and relativistic physics there is uncertainty about what effectively can be measured by science (not everything as previously thought). This fact does undermine science's sense of certainty, which I think has appealed to people who have intuited that science may not cover everything, but at the same time, it still doesn't explicitly lead science into the realm of ethics.

A slightly different question arises in terms of the difference between the grounds of faith in buddhism and those in science, relating to anyone working within a complex set of conditions (say as a homeopath). They know from their well-developed intuition and long experience that the treatment will likely be beneficial to the client, but the treatment is holistic, dealing with 'the whole', a complex web of conditions, which means it is very much harder to prove that it works, or even say why it works. According to buddhism that homeopath should carry on treating the patient. They do not have to give up giving that treatment because they cannot say exactly why it works. If it is bringing benefit, that is good enough. According to buddhism it is (desireable but) not absolutely necessary to know how and why something works. Such not knowing will probably be frustrating to someone with a scientific outlook, living under a burden of proof. The burden of proof becomes especially problematic in cases of complex conditionality, as is the case with global climate change. It is problematic if in waiting for a scientific proof, we ignore our intuition to act to save the planet. In truth though, *all* situations are cases of complex conditionality, they are all *praticca samutpada*, ruled by a complex web of conditioning factors; science, in what it deals with, simply focuses on some of those factors and ignores the others.

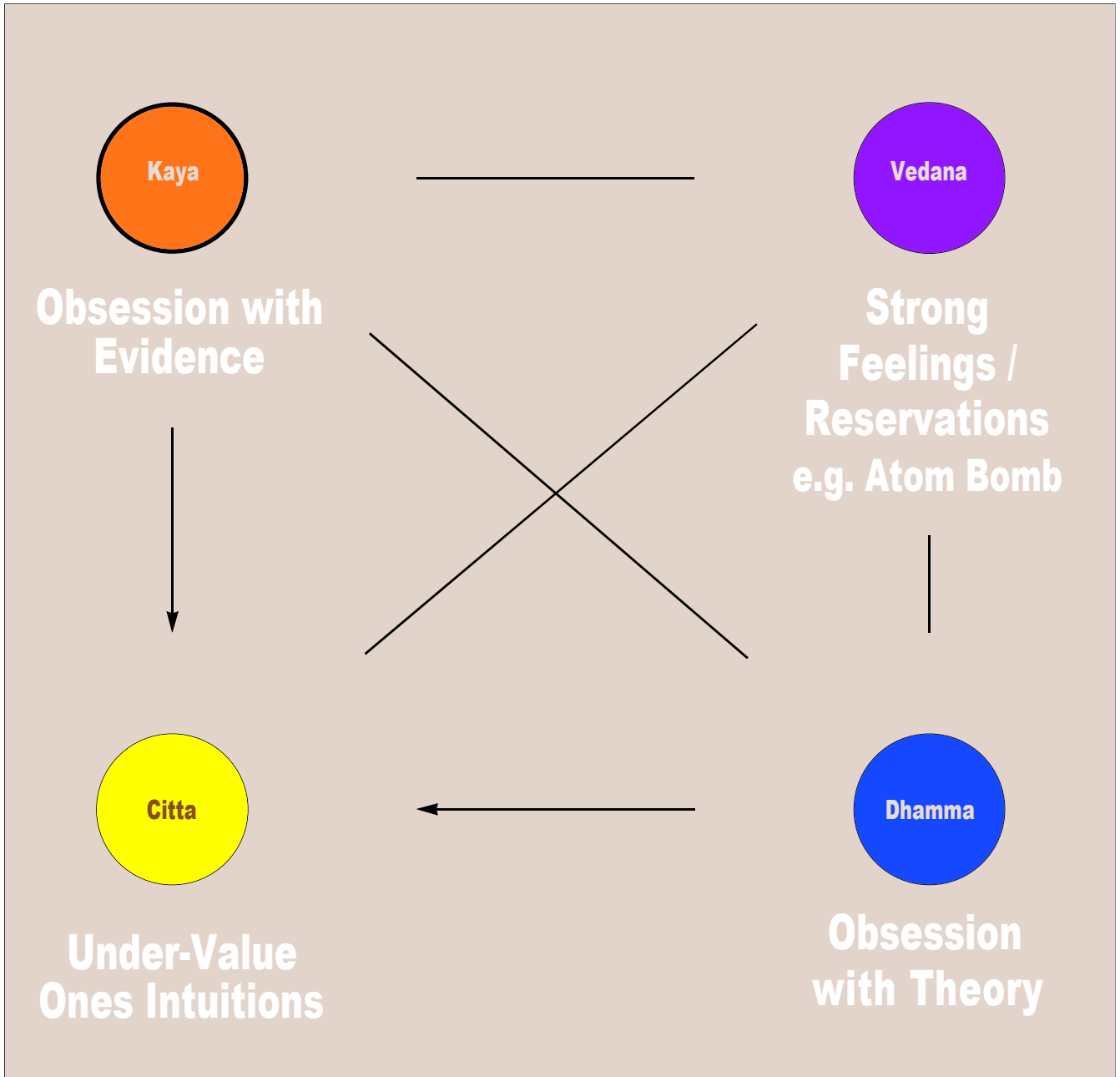
#### Conclusion

Therefore from a buddhist point of view, the scientific world-view has certain consequences. Its imposition of a burden of proof can inhibit involvement in what may actually be ethically beneficial (like meditation), and its lack of imposition of an ethical burden can lead to harm through lack of ethical involvement in the consequences of its productions. On the other hand, to the extent that it develops and enhances rationality and empiricism, as buddhism also depends on those, it can function as an aid to buddhism.

# When being more Scientific might be Helpful



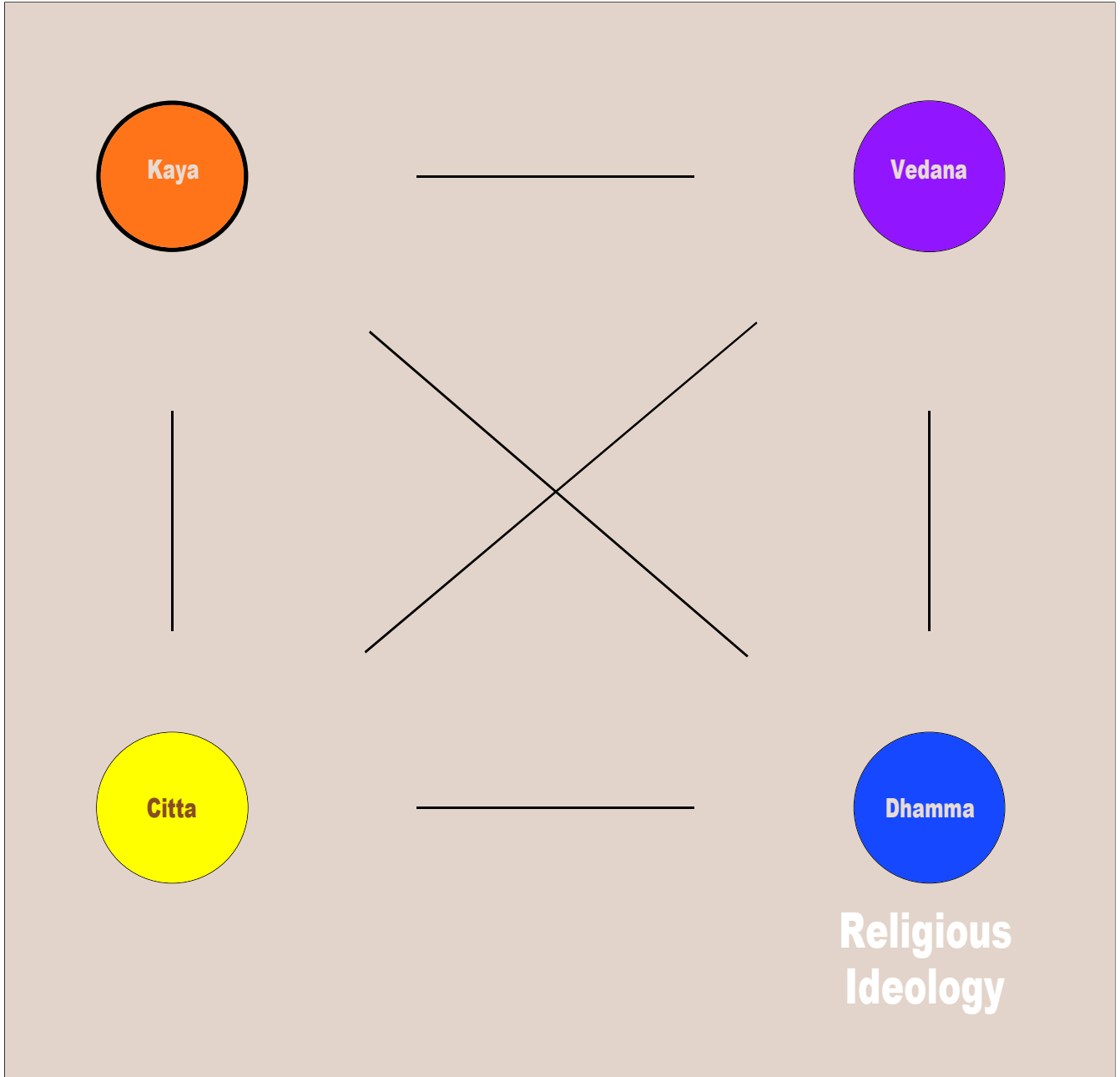
# When being Scientific might be Unhelpful



# Grounds for Faith in Theistic Religions

Science

# Religions



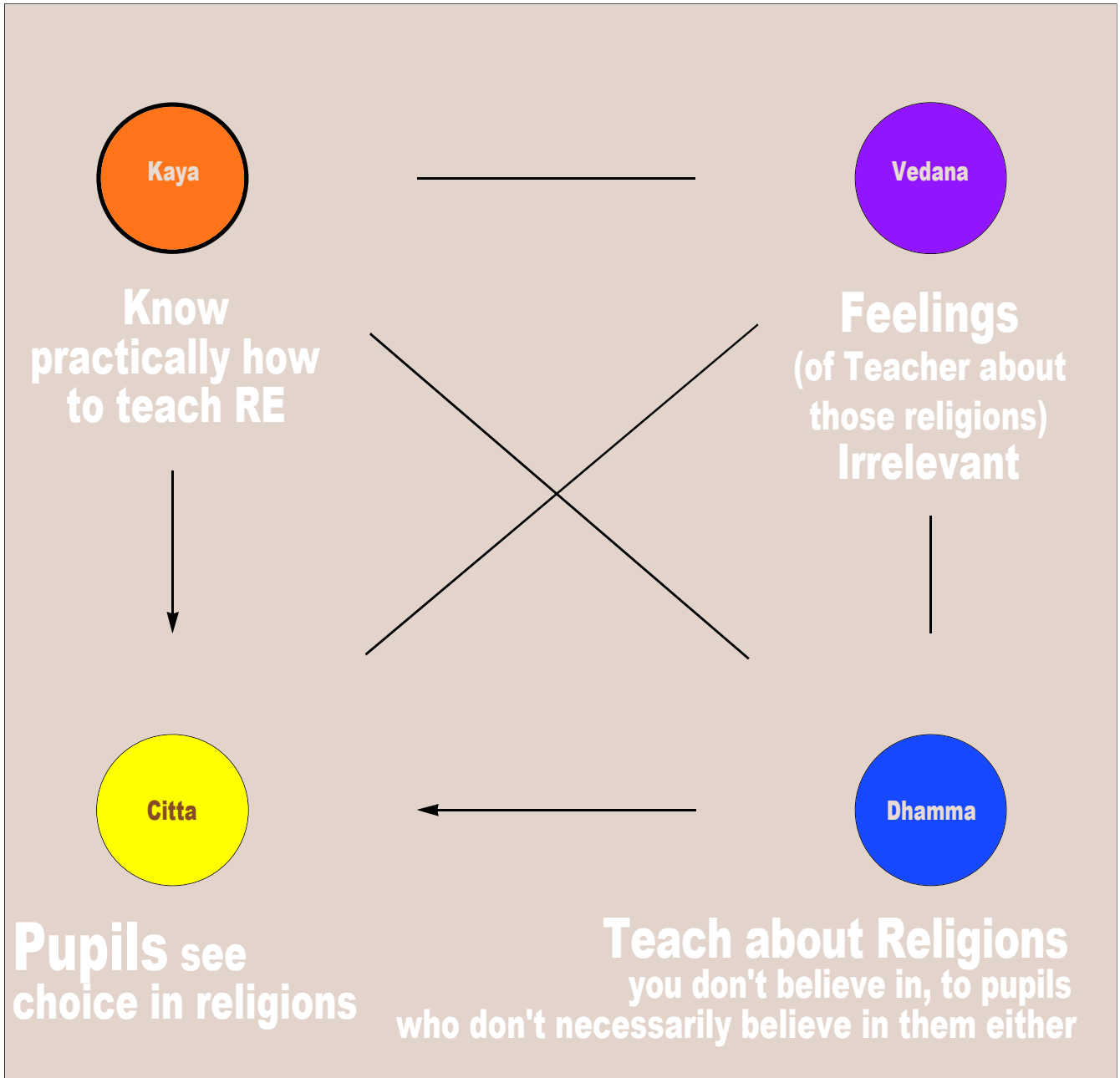
# The Boundary between The Secular and the Religious

Religions

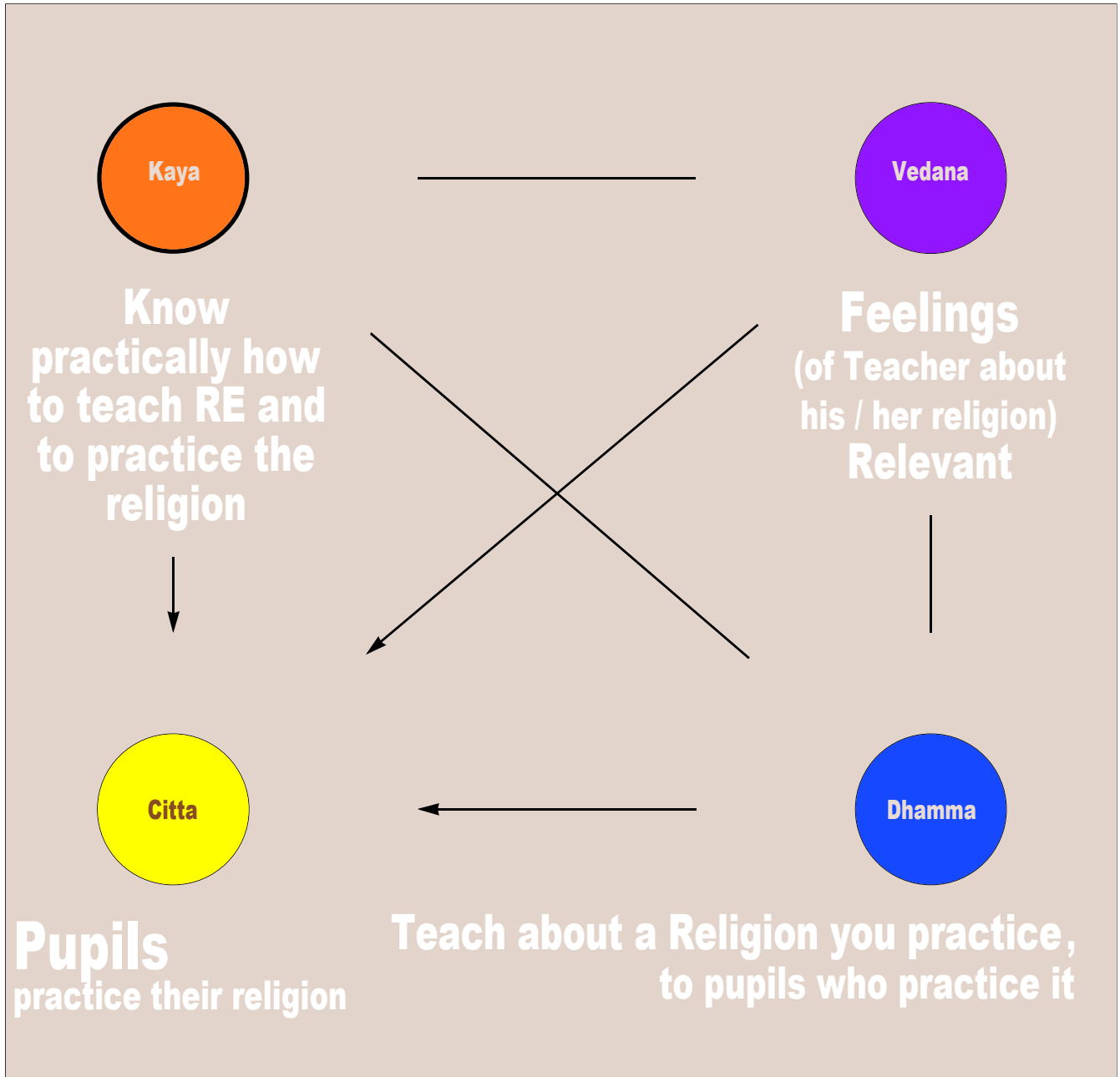
# Religious Education

Religions

# Professional Religious Education



# Confessional Religious Education



**additional  
modern  
distinctions**

**viewed from  
the perspective of  
the Four Satipatthanas**

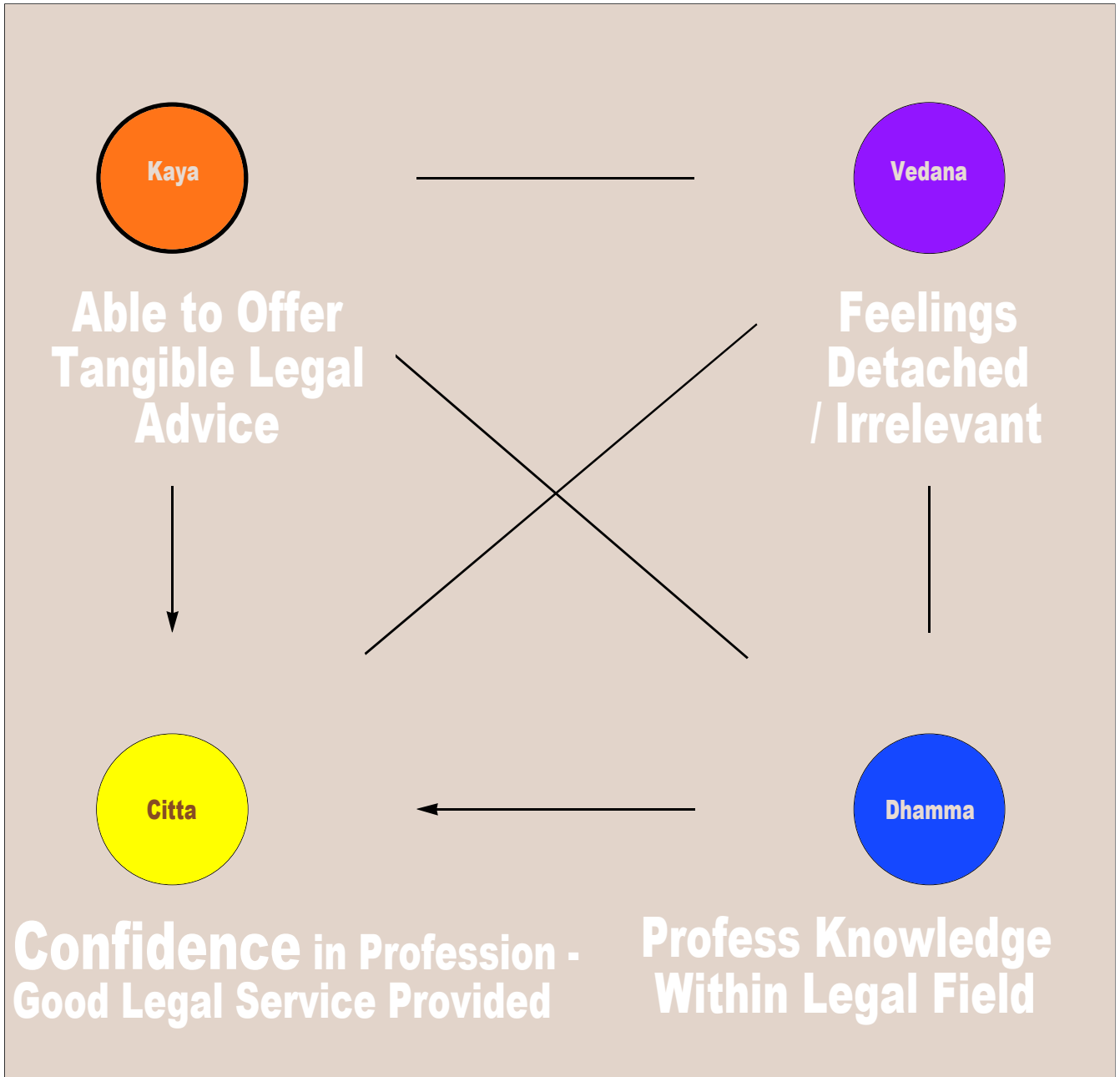
## Other Modern Distinctions

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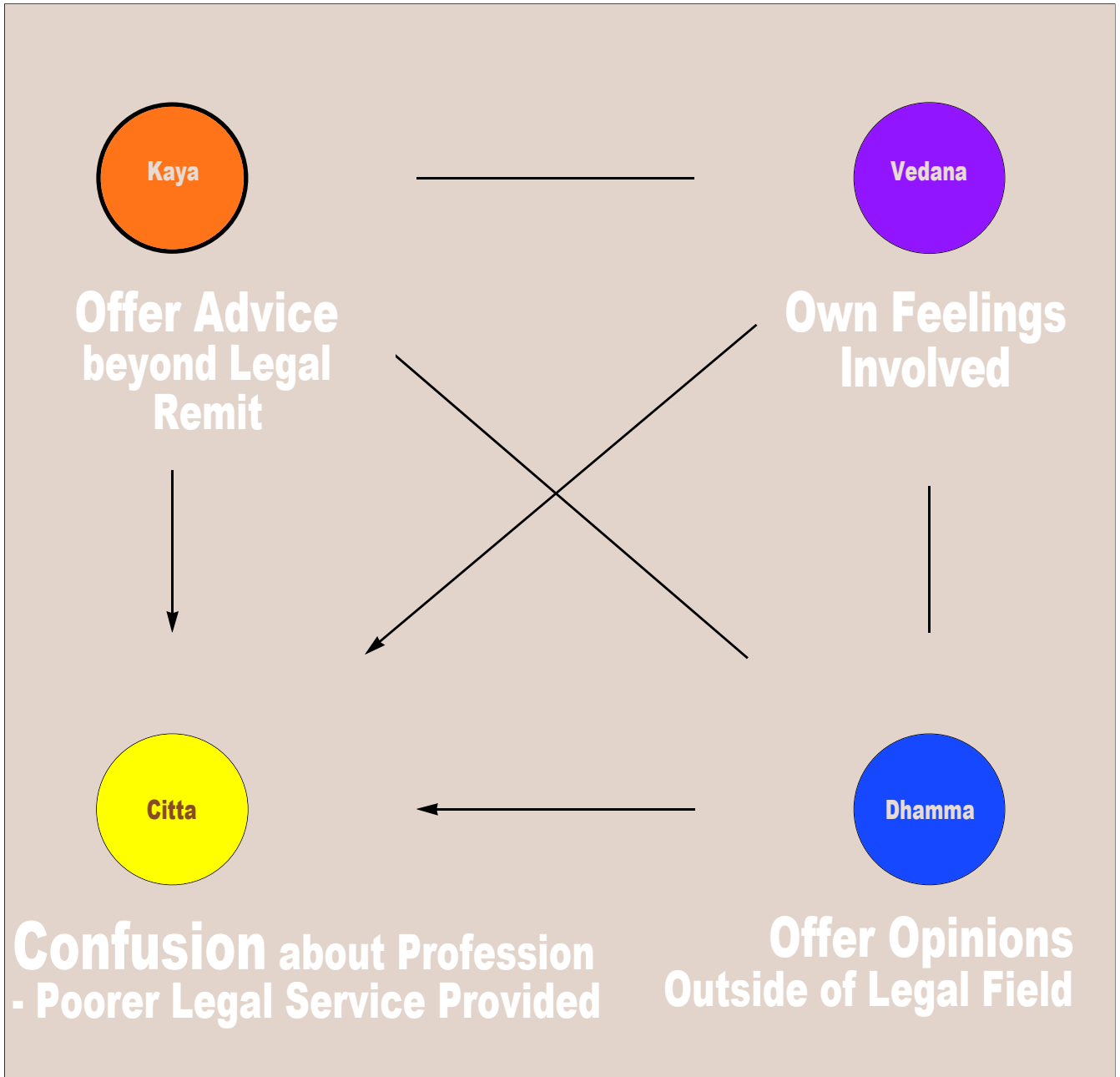
# Professionalism

that might seem true (because it has come from an authority) which doesn't arise on the basis of ones experience. Buddhism is non dogmatic because ther Buddha explicitly says we should check out anything he says in our experience, as well as expecting it to be reasonable, and to intuitively feel right.

# Professionalism e.g. Law



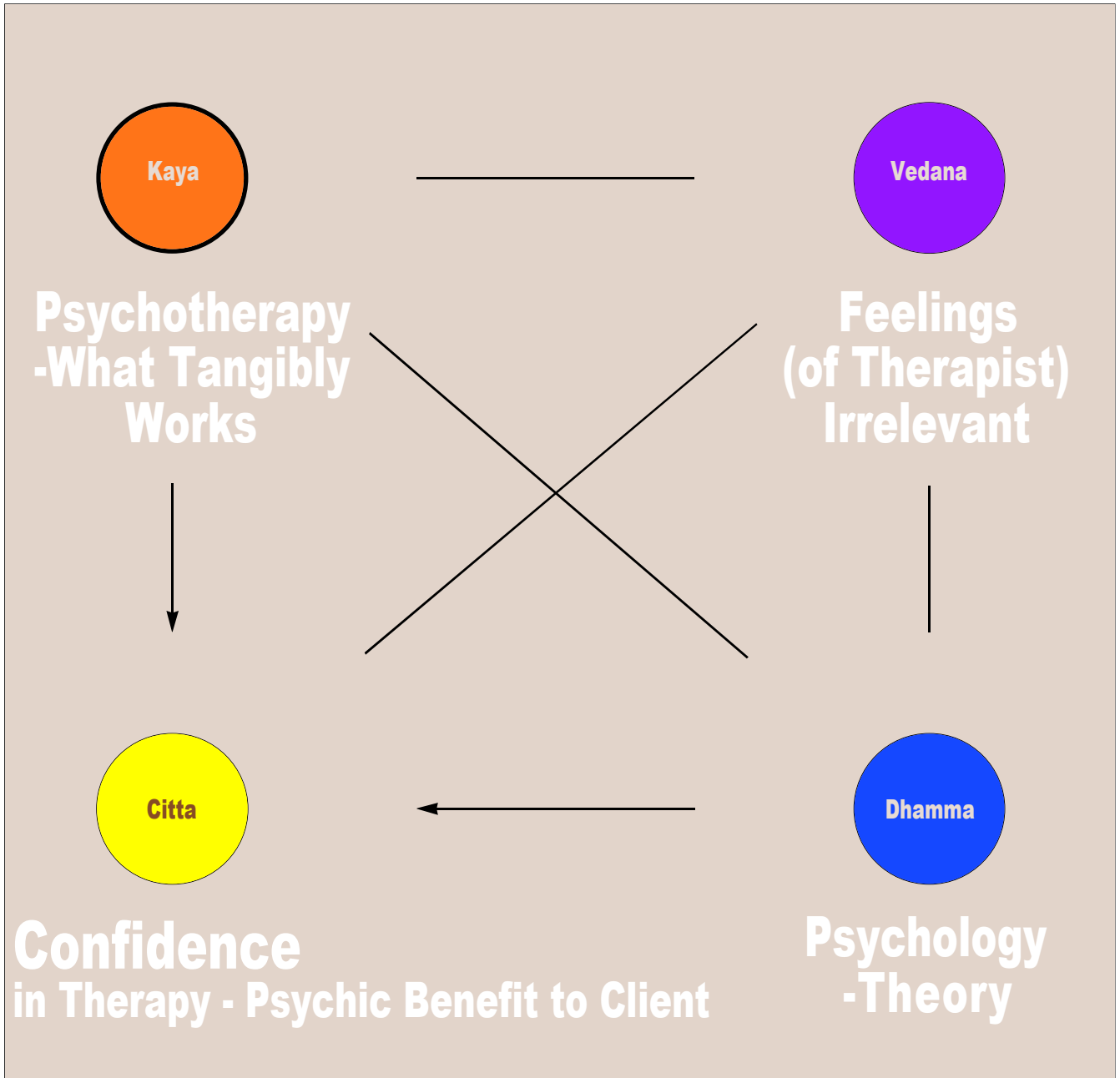
# Unprofessionalism in Lawyer



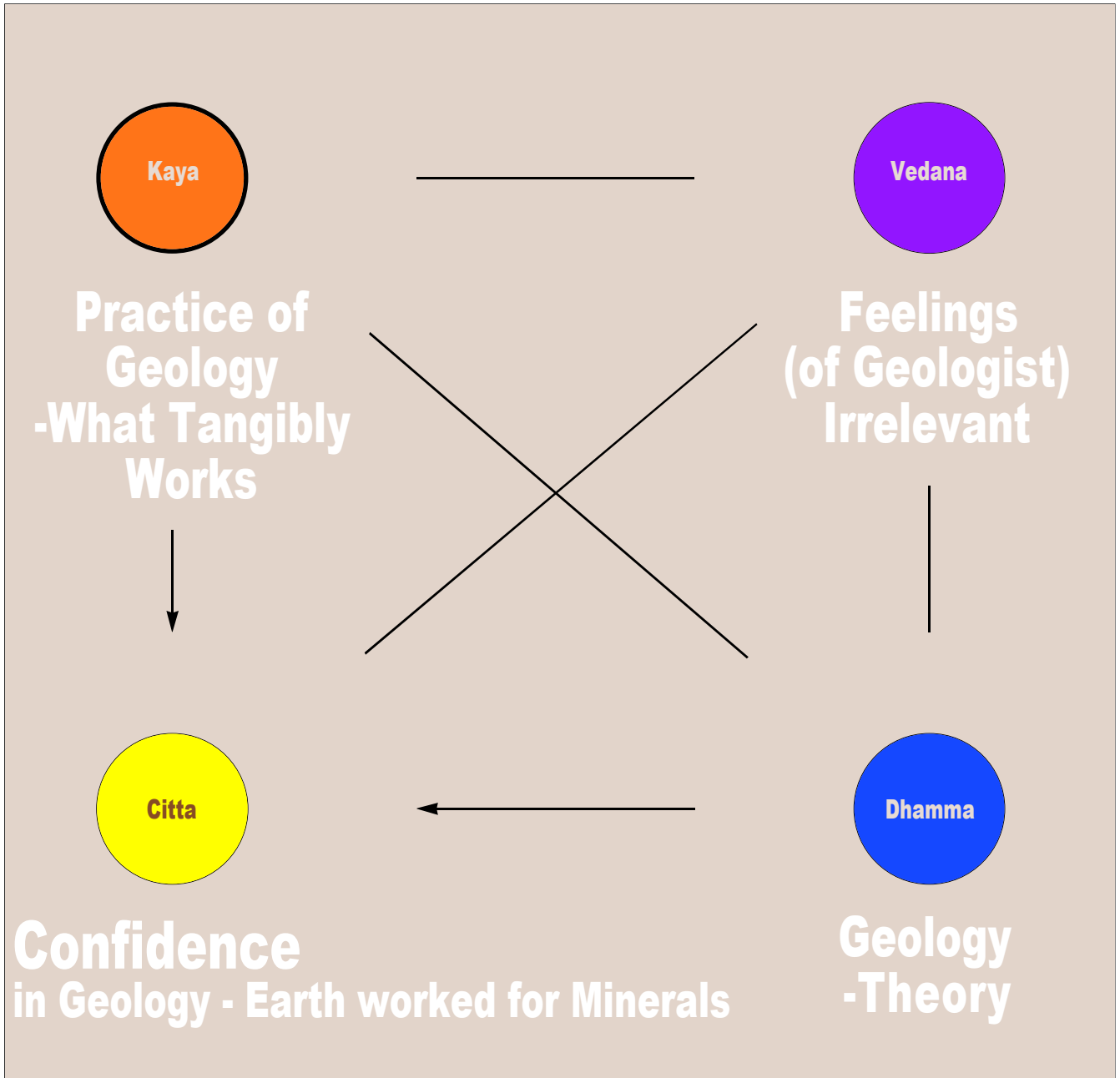
## Examples of Professionalism

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# Psychology as a Science



# Geology as a Science



**how  
views are  
held**

**from the perspective of  
the Four Satipatthanas**

## How Views are Held

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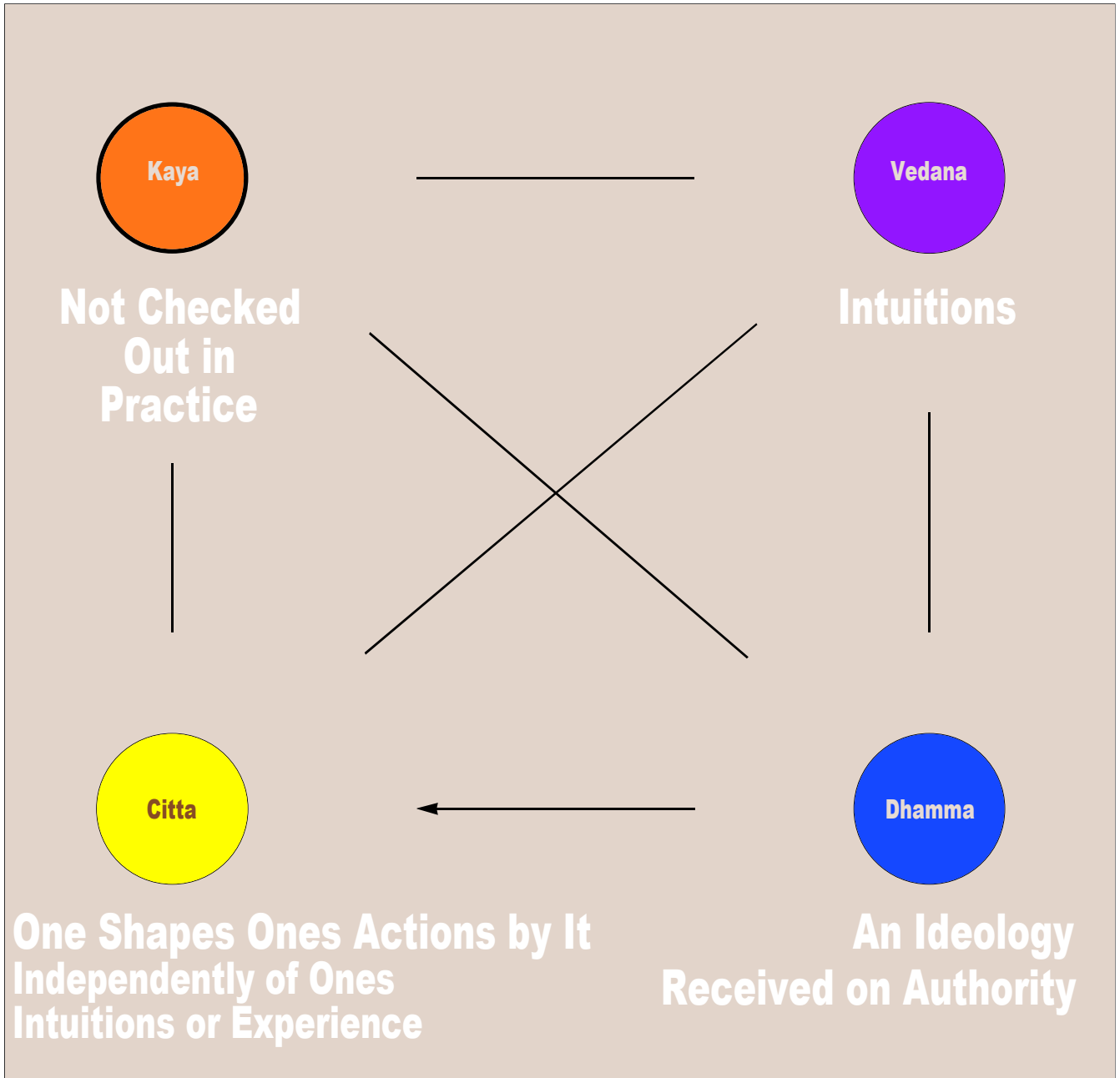
# Dogma

Dogma - From the Greek *dogma*, meaning that which seems true, an opinion, from *dokeo*, to seem. A settled opinion or belief; a tenet; an opinion or doctrine received on authority, as opposed to one obtained from experience or demonstration.

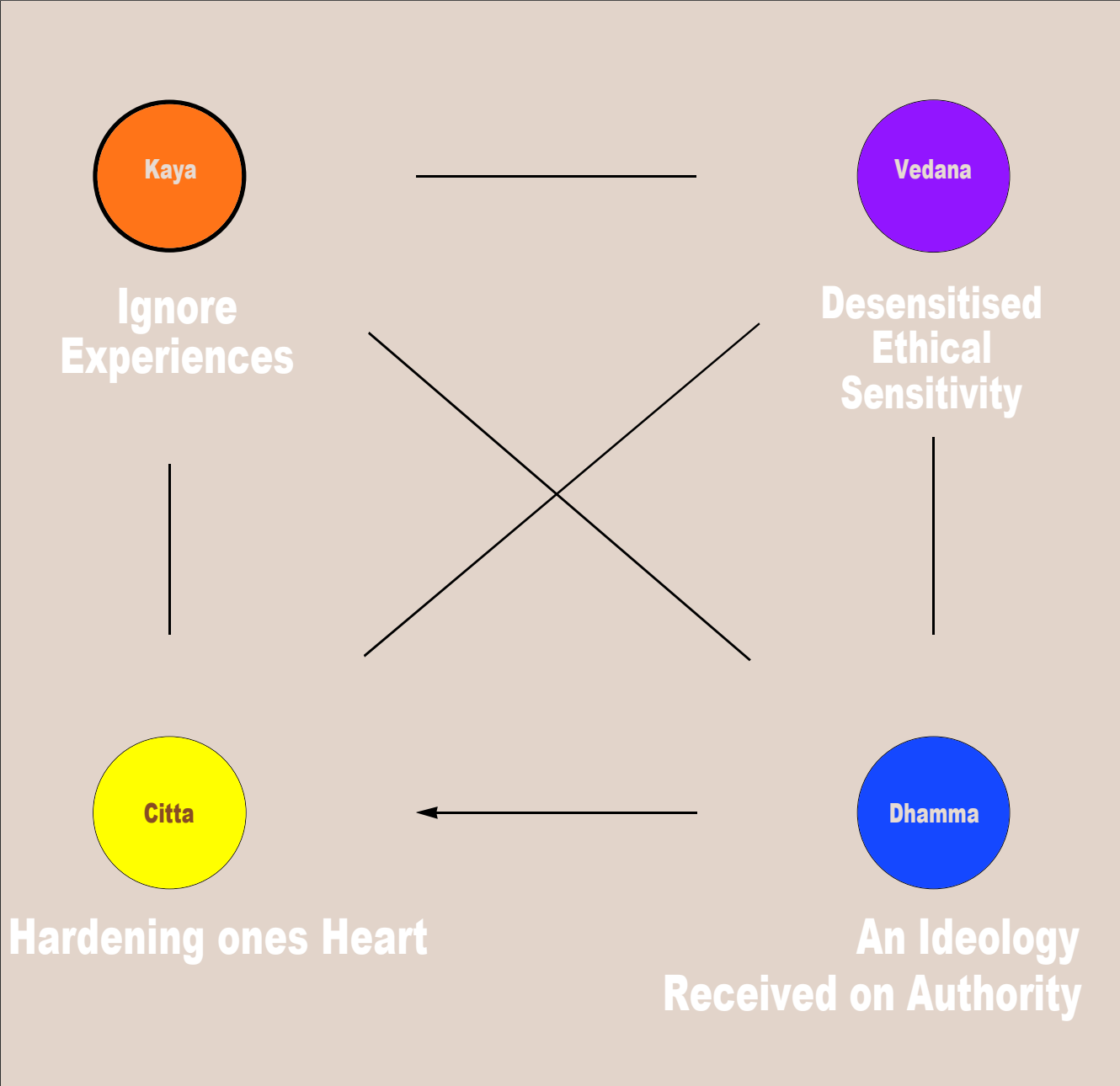
Dogmatic - Having the character of a dogma; disposed to assert opinions with overbearing or arrogance; dictatorial; arrogant; authoritative.

A dogma is a view that might seem true (because it has come from an authority) which doesn't arise on the basis of one's experience. Buddhism is non dogmatic because the Buddha explicitly says we should check out anything he says in our experience, as well as expecting it to be reasonable, and to intuitively feel right.

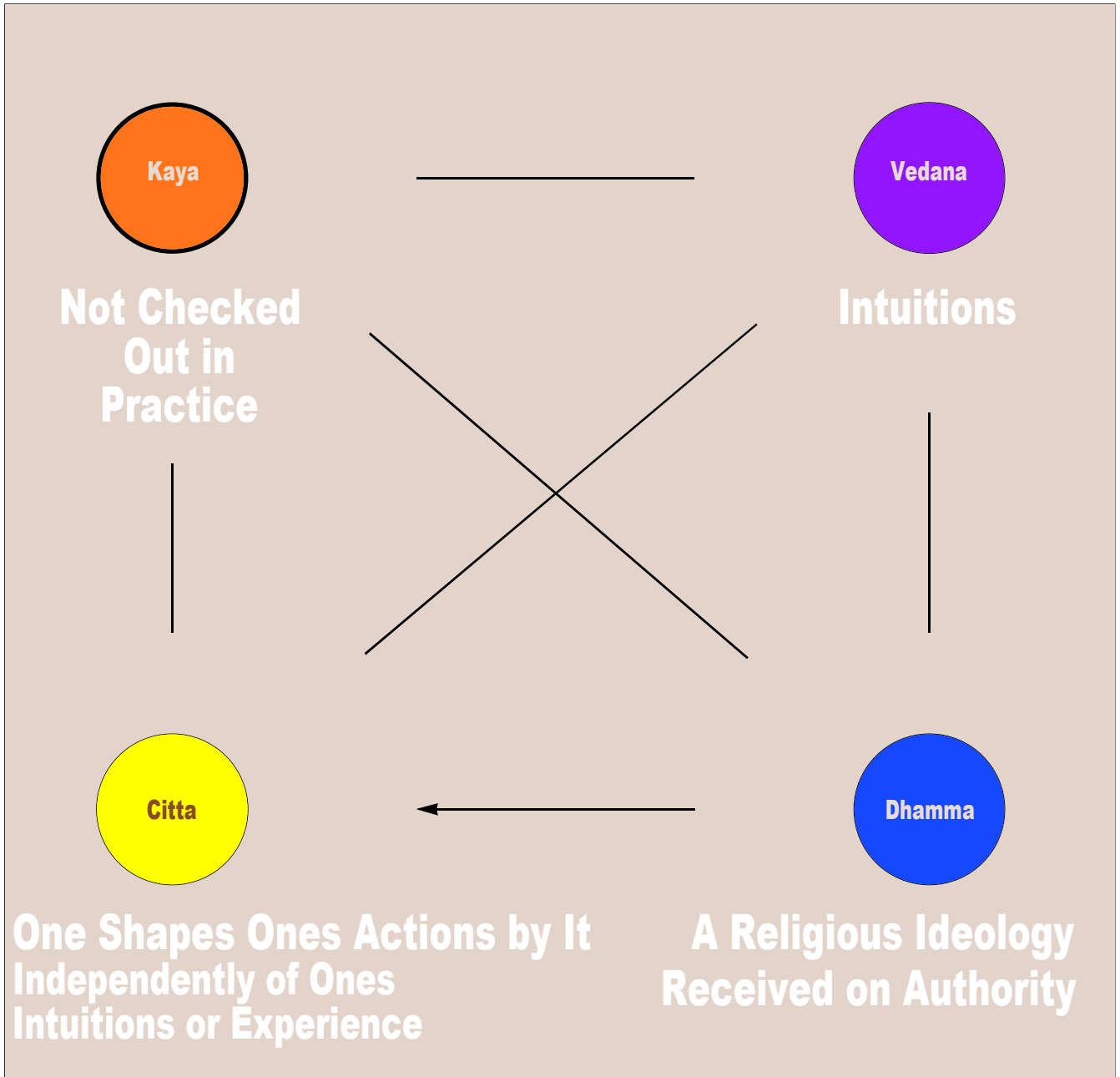
# Dogma



# Where Dogma Leads e.g. Asceticism



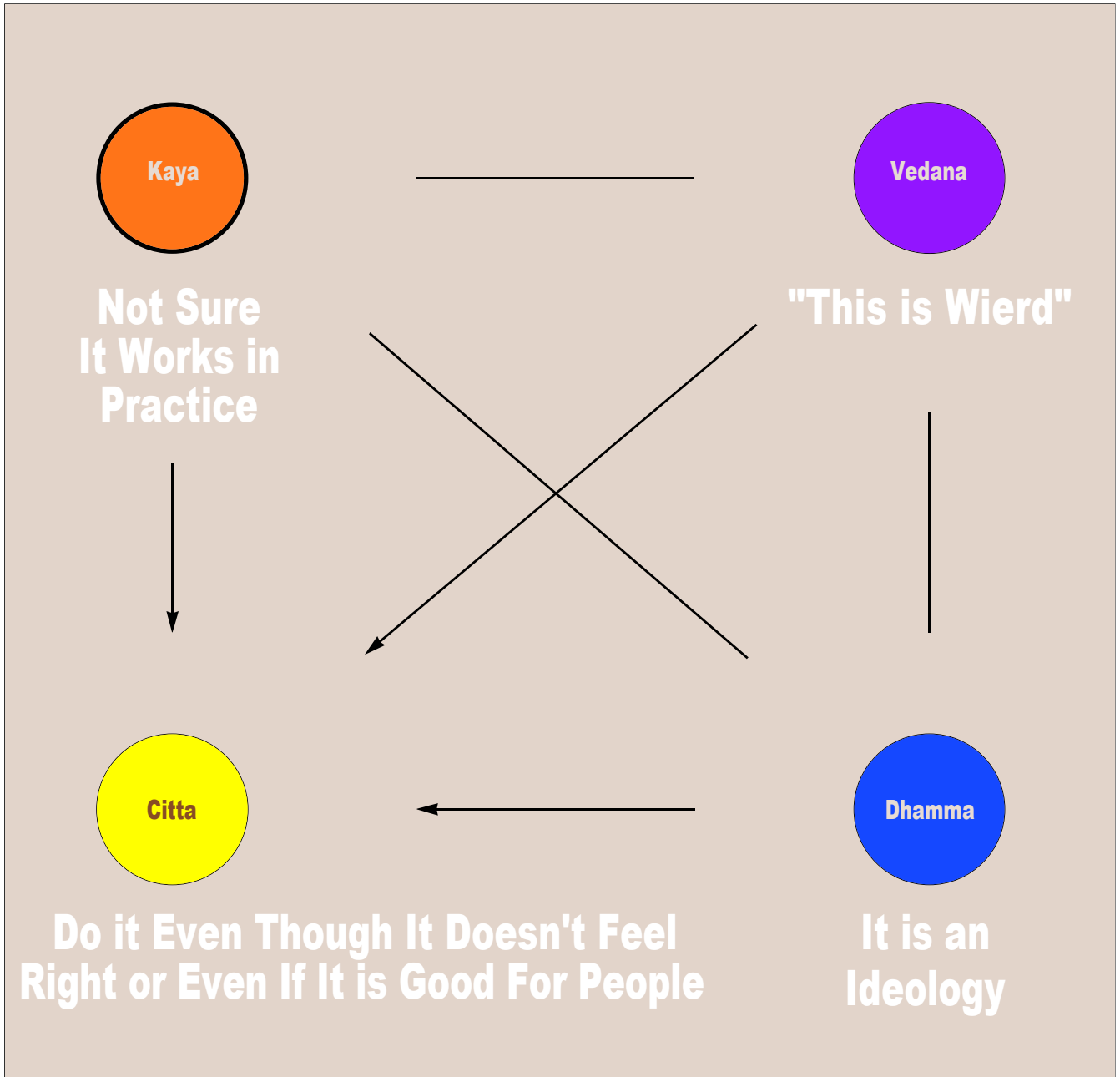
# Religious Do gma



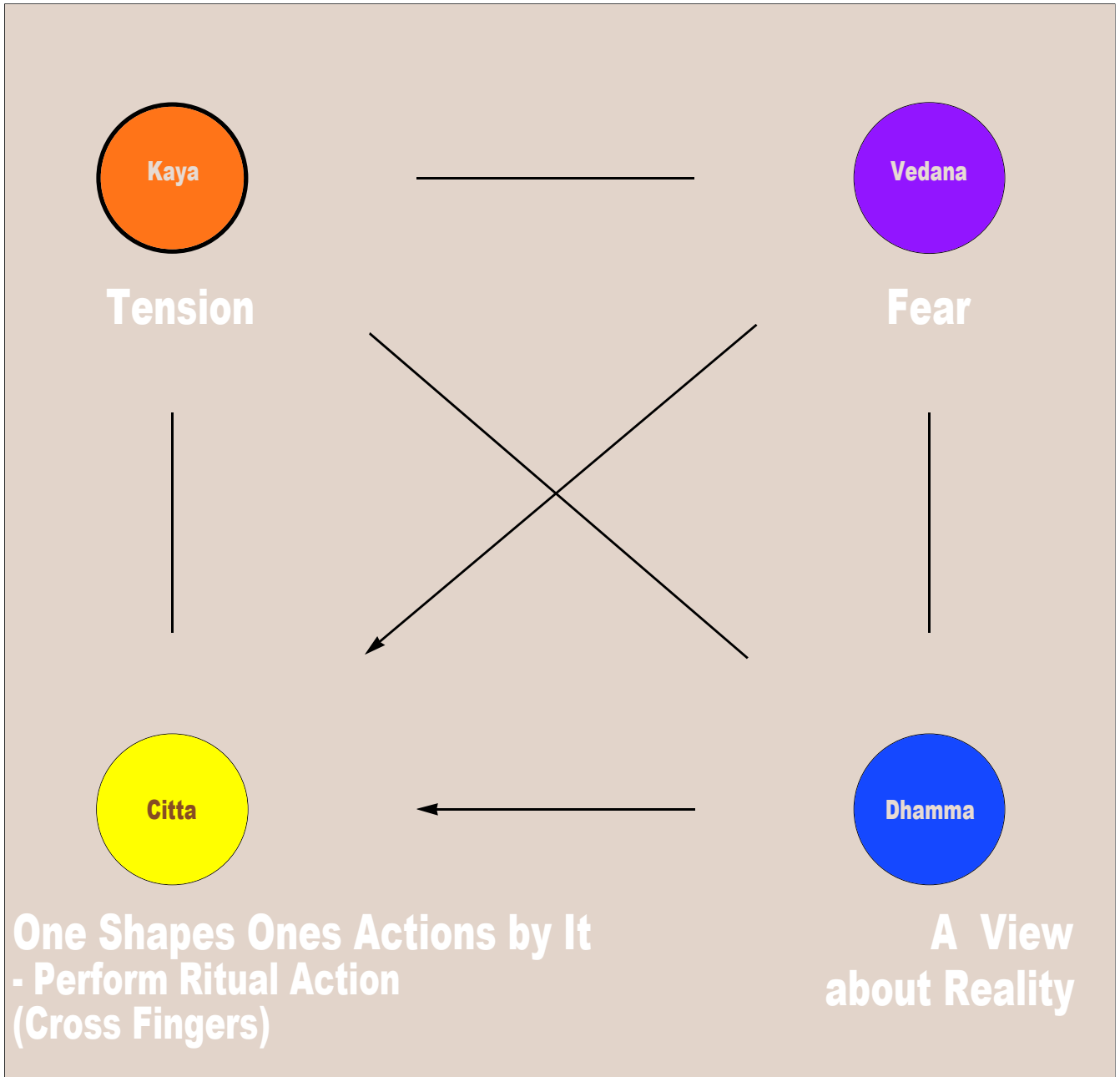
## Other Dogmas

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# Political Cor rectness



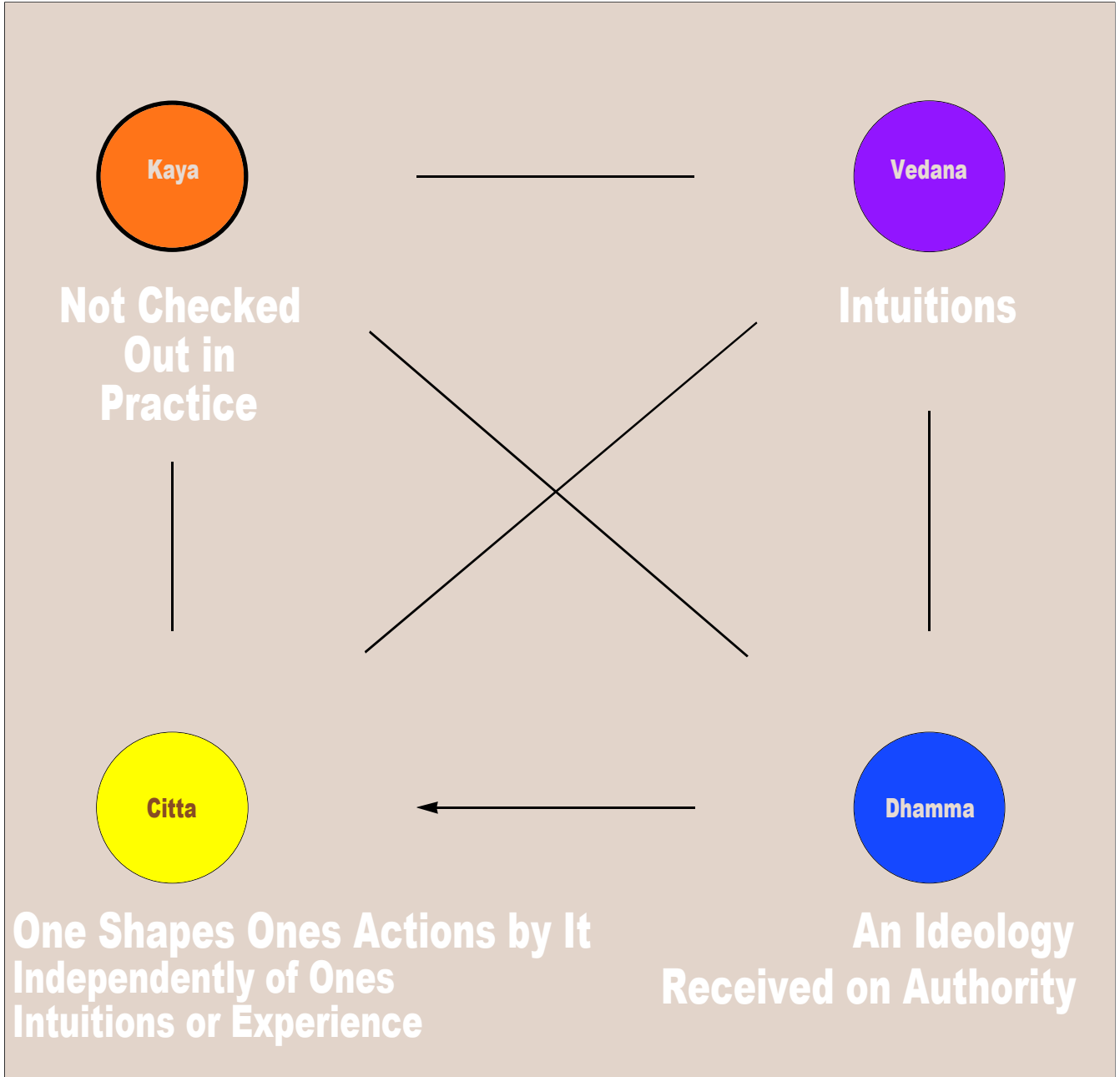
# Superstition



## Liberal Views

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# Liberalism



## Literal Views

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# Literalism

