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(Avyakatā) Vaccha,gotta Suttā

The Vaccha,gotta Discourses (on the Undeclared)

(Vaccha,gotta) Moggallāna Sutta (S 44.7) & (Moggallāna) Vaccha,gotta Sutta (S 44.8)

Theme: Vaccha,gotta questions Moggallāna and the Buddha on the Undeclared

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1 Summaries and significance

1.1 SUTTA SUMMARIES

1.1.1 Mirrored suttas. Both the (Vaccha,gotta) Moggallāna Sutta (S 44.7) and the (Moggallāna) Vaccha,gotta Sutta (S 44.8) contain “mirrored” teachings (the same contiguous teachings given by two different persons), and the two suttas mirroring one another—the purpose of which is clearly to show the sameness and universality of the key teachings. In the former, it is the 6 sense-bases (*saḷ-āyatana*) [§§16.1, 31.1]; hence, it can also be called **the (Āyatana) Vaccha,gotta Sutta**. In the latter, it is the 5 aggregates (*pañca-k,khandha*) [§§15.1, 30.1]; hence, it can also be called **the (Khandha) Vaccha,gotta Sutta**.

1.1.2 The mirrored teachings

1.1.2.1 The (Vaccha,gotta) Moggallāna Sutta [SD 53.14a] records Vaccha,gotta first approaching the elder Moggallāna, asking him about the 10 theses [2.1], why the “wanderers of other sects” have views about them, and why the Buddha is silent on them.¹ Moggallāna explains that the wanderers have such views because they hold **the 3 self-views** (or any of them) regarding **the 6 sense-bases** [2.2.2], while the Buddha does not [2.2.3].

The second half of the Sutta reflects the same contents with Vaccha,gotta before the Buddha who gives the very same answers. The Sutta closes with Vaccha,gotta expressing his wonder that both “teacher and disciple” agree on the very same teachings [§32].

1.1.2.2 The (Moggallāna) Vaccha,gotta Sutta [SD 53.14b] records Vaccha,gotta first approaching the Buddha, asking him about the 10 theses, why the “wanderers of other sects” have views about them, and why the Buddha is silent on them. The Buddha explains that the wanderers have such views because they hold **the 4 self-views** (or any or some of them) regarding **the 5 aggregates** [2.3.1], while the Buddha himself does not [2.3.2].

The second half of the Sutta reflects the same contents with Vaccha,gotta before the elder Moggallāna who gives the very same answers. The Sutta closes with Vaccha,gotta expressing his wonder—as in the preceding Sutta—that both “teacher and disciple” agree on the very same teachings [§32].

1.2 VACCHA,GOTTA

1.2.1 Brahmin wanderer. There are at least four persons named **Vaccha,gotta** (Skt *vatsa,gotra*, “lineage of the calf”)—it is, after all, not a personal name but a gotra or lineage-name. The protagonist of our Suttas here [1.1.2] is probably **Vaccha,gotta 1, a brahmin wanderer of Rājagaha**.² His upbringing in the brahminical tradition of religion and learning is probably the basis for his interest in the 10 undeclared (*avyākata*) theses [2.1] and his persistent questioning the Buddha and his disciples about them. Finally,

¹ See **Silence and the Buddha**, SD 44.1 (5).

² See SD 27.4 (1).

convinced by the Buddha's teachings, he joins the order and becomes an arhat, as recorded in **the Mahā Vaccha,gotta Sutta** (M 73).³

1.2.2 Vaccha,gotta the speculator

1.2.2.1 Like Māluṅkya,putta—in **the Cūḷa Māluṅkya,putta Sutta** (M 63)—the wanderer **Vaccha,gotta** asks the Buddha and his disciples such as Moggallāna [1.1.2], Ānanda⁴ and Sabhiya Kaccāna⁵—about the 10 theses. Like Māluṅkya,putta, Vaccha,gotta can be described as being intellectually inclined. In fact, we probably have the greatest number of suttas that record or refer to his numerous meetings and discussions with the Buddha, and this is, as a rule, about the 10 theses.⁶

1.2.2.2 Nāgārjuna's Dàzhìdù lùn (*Mahāprajñāpāramitā,śāstra*)⁷ identifies the Vaccha,gotta of the Pāli suttas with **Śreṇika Vatsa,gotra**, the namesake of what in Mahāyāna sources is called the Śreṇika Heresy. This heresy is mentioned in the Mahāparinivāna Sūtra,⁸ a Sanskrit work. There, when Śreṇika Vatsa,gotra raises the question about whether there is a self or not, the Buddha remains silent.⁹

Śreṇika then himself offers **the fire simile** which radically differs from the Buddha's. He compares the physical body to a house and the "eternal soul" to its owner. According to his simile, even though the house may burn down in a fire, the owner is safe outside the house. Thus, the body and its aggregates may be impermanent and subject to dissolution, but not the self.

In other Sanskrit sources, Vatsa,gotra also seems to refer to the person most typically known as **Vatsa or Vaṁśa**, a student of the ascetic Kāśyapa. Such accounts may well describe the activities of Vaccha,gotta when he first meets the Buddha. Understandably, this may explain why the Buddha, too, uses the fire simile for Vaccha,gotta, as recorded in **the Aggi Vaccha,gotta Sutta** (M 72).¹⁰

1.3 RELATED SUTTAS

1.3.1 **Vaccha,gotta** is the interlocutor and inquirer in the following discourses:

M 71	Te,vijja Vaccha,gotta Sutta	what the Buddha knows	SD 53.3
M 72	Aggi Vaccha,gotta Sutta	nirvana and the problem of language	SD 6.15
M 73	Mahā Vaccha,gotta Sutta	the awakening of Vaccha,gotta as an arhat	SD 27.4

The third discourse—**the Mahā Vaccha,gotta Sutta** (M 73)—records the apex of his spiritual life: he joins the order, goes into solitary retreat and attains arhathood.

1.3.2 Vaccha,gotta most often appears in **the Saṃyutta Nikāya** where he has his own chapter of 55 suttas—**the Vaccha,gotta Saṃyutta** (S 33)—where upon his inquiries, the Buddha explains to him why

³ M 73/1:489-497 (SD 27.4).

⁴ See (**Vaccha,gotta**) **Ānanda S** (S 44.10/4:400 f), SD 2.16 (excerpt).

⁵ See (**Vaccha,gotta**) **Sabhiya Kaccāna S** (S 44,11/4:401 f), SD 53.23.

⁶ SD 27.4 (1).

⁷ 大智度論 T1509/T2154-513a:4; tr Kumārājīva (402-406 CE).

⁸ 大涅槃經 *Dà nièpán jīng*, T1.11, T 1.160, T1.176, T1.191, T24.382b-399c.

⁹ See Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism: Śreṇika heresy.

¹⁰ M 72/1:483-489 (SD 6.15).

the 10 points¹¹ are “undeclared” (*avyākata*) [2.1]. These suttas apply the framework of the 4 noble truths to each of the 5 aggregates. Since, in sutta terms, **ignorance** (*avijjā*) refers to not understanding and not penetrating the 4 noble truths, each of these suttas works on a synonym of ignorance. The suttas collectively show how ignorance (not knowing the 4 noble truths) is the underlying condition for the arising of the 10 undeclared questions and speculative views.

2 Sutta teachings

2.1 THE 10 THESES AND AVYĀKATA

2.1.1 The undeclared. The word *avyākata*¹² in the Sutta title means “undeclared, undetermined, unanswered,” in special reference to the 10 undeclared statements, that is, theories, theses or speculations that are “**set aside**” (*ṭhapanīya*) because they are *not related to the quest for awakening*, even hinder it [2.1.2.3]. **The 10 speculations** are as follows—discussed, for example, in **the Avyākata Saṃyutta** (S 44.10)—are as follows:¹³

The world

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------|
| (1) The world is <u>eternal</u> . | <i>sassato loko</i> |
| (2) The world is <u>not</u> eternal. | <i>asassato loko</i> |
| (3) The world is <u>finite</u> . | <i>antavā loko</i> |
| (4) The world is <u>infinite</u> . | <i>anantavā loko</i> |

The soul or self

- | | |
|--|----------------------------------|
| (5) The soul is the <u>same</u> as the body. | <i>taṃ jīvaṃ taṃ sarīraṃ</i> |
| (6) The soul is one thing, the body <u>another</u> . | <i>aññaṃ jīvaṃ aññaṃ sarīraṃ</i> |

The tathagata (one thus gone)¹⁴

- | | |
|---|--|
| (7) The tathāgata <u>exists</u> after death. | <i>hoti tathāgato param, maraṇā</i> |
| (8) The tathāgata does <u>not</u> exist after death. | <i>na hoti tathāgato param, maraṇā</i> |
| (9) The tathāgata <u>both</u> exists and not exist after death. | <i>hoti ca na ca hoti tathāgato param, maraṇā</i> |
| (10) The tathāgata <u>neither</u> exists nor not exist after death. ¹⁵ | <i>n’eva hoti na na hoti tathāgato param, maraṇā</i> |

¹¹ Comy says that this “connected chapter” (*saṃyutta*) has only 11 suttas with a total of 55 explanations. The Pali text, as we have them, treats each of these explanations as a sutta,

¹² Skt *a-vyākṛta* = *na + vyākata* (pp of *vyākṛoti*: *vi + a + √KR*, to do).

¹³ This section recurs in SD 40a.11 (1.1). On the 10 theses, see **Aggi Vaccha, gotta S** (M 72 passim), SD 6.15; **Cūḷa Māluṅkyā, putta S** (M 63 passim), SD 5.8 (2); Vacchagotta Saṃyutta (S 33); **Nānā Tittiyā S 1** (U 6.4), SD 40a.14; **Tittihā S** (U 6.8), SD 5.8 (2+4).

¹⁴ In speculations, clearly **tathāgata** has a broader sense of “saint” in a general sense of someone liberated, *not* necessarily only a buddha or arhat. For a canonical def of *tathāgata*, see **Pāsādika S** (D 29,28 f/3:135 f); also Toshiichi ENDO 1997:195-206 (ch V). For refs, see SD 40a.10 (5.1) at (10) n. On the ineffability of the *tathāgata*, see Harvey 1995:235-245. See foll §3.

¹⁵ This tetralemma is found in many places in the Canon. In **Param, maraṇa S** (S 16.12/2:222 f) the Buddha mentions it to Mahā Kassapa; in **Anurādha S** (S 22.86/3:116-119). The tetralemma is mentioned by lemma in 4 suttas in Saṃyutta (S 24.15-18/3:215 f). The **Avyākata Saṃyutta** contains some suttas dealing with it (S 44.2-8/4:381-397): see S:B 1080 n165. For a philosophical discussion, see K N Jayatilleke, *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*, 1963:

2.1.2 Purpose of the 10 theses

2.1.2.1 The Siṃsapā Sutta (S 56.31) tells us that the Buddha knows much more than he teaches. His knowledge, he declares, can be compared to the leaves on the trees in a great forest. What he teaches is like a handful of leaves (perhaps only 4 leaves) in his hand which he shows to us. The leaves in his open hand are the 4 noble truths—which when mastered will give us a full understanding of the nature of existence, why things are so, what we can do about it, and what happens to us when we are liberated by this.¹⁶

2.1.2.2 The point of this parable is that although the Buddha rejects answering anything about the 10 theses, he—his awakened mind—understands that there can never be any satisfactory answers to them. This is because he completely understands their true nature both as theory and as reality.

Every generation of thinkers will come up with some answers to some, maybe all, of these 10 theses, and even imagine they have found *the* answer or solution. Then, the next generation will stand on their shoulders, and see farther, go in the right direction, become giants themselves, and so on. It's as if, we know more and more of less and less, but it never really ends. It keeps us in samsara.

2.1.2.3 The 10 theses have been “**set aside**” (*ṭhapanīya*) by the Buddha because they are *not related to the quest for awakening*, and may even hinder it. Since none of these theses have a satisfactory or final answer—all things change—we will somehow have the false notion that we have found the answer and rest uncomfortably on our laurels, or we are caught in a speculative loop that often unhinges us.

Clearly, from teachings such as those of the parable of the watersnake¹⁷ and the parable of the raft,¹⁸ as given in **the Alagaddūpama Sutta** (M 22), we are reminded that we must *set aside* even our views and understanding of the Dharma (even when they are right), and we need to stop *thinking* about them when we get down to exerting ourself on the path.

It's like we have put together or inherited a great **recipe**—we may have memorized it or kept it safely locked away. But we never actually go about getting the ingredients and readying the utensils, and so on, to prepare that special dish. We have never tasted that dish and thus not benefitted from it at all. Or, we have found an only **treasure map**, decoded it and have it safely locked away; but we never actually go on that journey to retrieve the treasure but continue to live in poverty!

2.2 THE 6 SENSE-BASES AND THE 18 SELF-VIEWS

2.2.1 What we really are

2.2.1.1 The (Vaccha,gotta) Moggallāna Sutta [S 44.7 @ SD 53.14a] records Moggallāna [§§15+16] and then the Buddha [§§30+31] as explaining to Vaccha,gotta that the wanderers speculated about the 10 theses because they held on to **the 3 self-views** (or any of them) and view **the 6 sense-bases** in the light of these 3 views [§§15+30], while the Buddha does not [§§16+31].

2.2.1.2 According to early Buddhism, we comprise merely body and mind, of which there are two further models—the body-based and the mind-based. The body-based model is that of **the 6 sense-bases**

350 & Kügler 2003:100 f. For an analysis of the 10 points in terms of the tetralemma, see **Cūḷa Māluṅkya,putta S** (M 63) @ SD 5.8 (2.3). See SD 40a.10 (2.2).

¹⁶ S 56.31,2 (SD 21.7).

¹⁷ M 22,10 (SD 3.13).

¹⁸ M 22,14 (SD 3.13).

—comprising the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind—so called because the bodily senses are laid out in full. The mind-based model is that of **the 5 aggregates**—form, feeling, perception, formations and consciousness¹⁹— form is the body (laid out further either as the 5 physical senses²⁰ or the 4 elements²¹). [2.2.1.1]

2.2.1.3 According to **the Sabba Sutta** (S 35.23), the “all” (*sabba*) that we are comprises our 6 sense-faculties and their respective sense-objects, thus:

And what, bhikshus, is **the all**?

<u>THE 6 SENSE-FACULTIES</u>		<u>THE 6 SENSE-OBJECTS</u>			
The eye	and	forms,		<i>cakkhuñ c’eva</i>	<i>rūpā ca</i>
the ear	and	sounds,		<i>sotañ ca</i>	<i>saddā ca</i>
the nose	and	smells,		<i>ghānañ ca</i>	<i>gandhā ca</i>
the tongue	and	tastes,		<i>jivhā ca</i>	<i>rasā ca</i>
the body	and	touches,		<i>kāyo ca</i>	<i>phoṭṭhabbā ca</i>
the mind	and	mind-objects. ²²		<i>mano ca</i>	<i>dhammā ca</i>

(S 35.23/4:15), SD 7.1

They are respectively how we know things (the 6 sense-faculties) and what we can know (the 6 sense-objects)—there is neither knowing nor the known beyond this.²³ A further vital point to know is that we, while still unawakened, do *not* often sense the known as they really are.²⁴

More often, we experience our own projections or **conceptions** (*maññāna*). We *conceive* what we see, hear, smell, taste, touch and think based on our past experiences or memories of them. In other words, our experiences are, as a rule, **mind-made** (*mano,maya*) (Dh 1-2). [2.2.2.4]

2.2.2 What we think we are

2.2.2.1 According to **the (Vaccha,gotta) Moggallāna Sutta** (S 44.7 @ SD 53.14a) both Moggallāna [§§15+16] and the Buddha [§§30+31] explain to Vaccha,gotta that the wanderers speculate about the 10 theses because they hold on to **the 3 self-views** (or any of them) and view **the 6 sense-bases** in the light of these views [§§15+30].

2.2.2.2 The suttas speak of the wanderers as holding **materialist** or “body-centred” views, that is, they see themselves as “owning” the 6 sense-bases—the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind—as “I,” “me” and “mine.” These are **the 3 self-views** (*attānudiṭṭhi*), that is, the notions:

¹⁹ The 5 aggregates (*pañca-k,khandha*) are respectively those of: *rūpa*, *vedanā*, *saññā*, *saṅkhārā* and *viññāṇa*. See SD 17.

²⁰ Or the 5 sense-faculties (*pañc’indriya*), ie, those of the eye (*cakkhu*), ear (*sota*), nose (*ghāna*), tongue (*jivhā*) and body (*kāya*). See SD 17.2a (9.5); SD 29.6a (5.2.1.1).

²¹ The 4 elements (*mahā,bhūta,rūpa* or *dhātu*) are earth (*paṭhavī*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*) and wind (*vāyo*). “Earth” refers to solidity, resistance, hardness, softness, etc; “water,” liquid, cohesiveness; “fire,” heat, digestion, decay; and “wind,” movement, incl bodily movement, peristalsis, etc: **Mahā Hatthi,pādōpama S** (M 28,6-22) SD 6.16.

²² “Mind-objects,” *dhammā*, alt tr “mental phenomena.”

²³ S 35.23/4:15 (SD 7.1).

²⁴ See SD 40a.10 (2), esp (2.2.6).

<u>the 3 self-views</u>	<u>latent tendencies</u> ²⁵	<u>the 3 graspings</u>			
(1) "This is mine,"	<i>etam mama</i>	"mine-making"	= owner	grasping of <u>craving</u>	<i>taṇhā,gaha</i>
(2) "This I am,"	<i>eso'ham asmi</i>	"conceit"	= object	grasping of <u>conceit</u>	<i>māna,gaha</i>
(3) "This is my self."	<i>me attāti</i>	"I-making"	= agent	grasping of <u>views</u>	<i>diṭṭhi,gaha</i>

2.2.2.3 From the above table, we can see how the 3 self-views are also known as **the threefold graspings** (*ti,vidha gaha*), respectively, the graspings of craving (*taṇhā,gaha*), of conceit (*māna,gaha*) and of views (*diṭṭhi,gaha*).²⁶ A further interesting note is that a short-form for the 3 self-views rooted in the 3 latent tendencies is "**the 'I am' conceit**" (*asmi,māna*).²⁷

2.2.2.4 Conceit (*māna*), as a latent tendency (*anusaya*), is deeply rooted in us on an unconscious level. Our ignorance (*avijjā*) and delusion (*moha*) work to prevent us from even knowing its presence and effect, and craving (*taṇhā*) and greed (*lobha*) work to encourage us to carry out its every whim. Basically, conceit makes us see ourself in terms of others in a measurable manner in terms of "having" (craving) and "being" (ignorance).²⁸

2.2.2.5 Conceit is the 8th of **the 10 mental fetters**, which hold us back to samsara and is abandoned only by the arhat.²⁹ In other words, even the streamwinner, the once-returner and the non-returner has some degree of conceit, albeit in a refined manner. For such individuals, they easily notice the occasions of conceit arising in them. They are able to control, even stop, such an occurrence, but it still lies latent, until they become arhats, when it is fully abandoned.

2.2.2.6 We have earlier noted how our experiences are, as a rule, "**mind-made**" [2.2.1.3]. This very well describes how the wanderers conceive their experiences (through the 6 senses) in terms of the 3 self-views, thus:

- (1) Rooted in the latent tendency of "**mine-making**," they are, out of craving, driven to grasp at their experiences (as body and as actions), "owning" them as "**This is mine!**"
- (2) Rooted in the latent tendency of "**conceit**," they are driven out, of conceit, to grasp at their experiences, regarding them "externally" as measurable "objects," conceiving thus: "**This I am!**"
- (3) Rooted in the latent tendency of "**I-making**," they are driven, out of views, to grasp at their experiences (as body and as actions) as "**This is my self!**"

Hence, when we multiply the 3 self-views applied to the 6 sense-bases, we get altogether a total of **18 wrong views**. Again, when we consider how we tend to conceive these views in terms of the past, the future and the present, we have a subtotal of 54 conceptions. Then again, when such conceptions are applied to self and to others, we come to a grand total of **108 wrong views** or conceptions! This is one

²⁵ The latent tendencies (*anusaya*) of "I-making," "mine-making" and conceit are technically called *ahaṅ.kāra, mamaṅ.kāra,mānānusaya*: see **Anattā,lakkhaṇa S** (S 22.59,17+12 nn), SD 1.2. See also M 109,13 (SD 17.11); M 22,-15 (SD 3.11); M 72,15 (SD 6.15); M 112,11+20 (SD 59.7); S 18.21,5 (SD 19.2a(7.5)); S 35.69,7 (SD 71.6); A 3.32a,4 SD 31.8a; A 7.46,16.1+3 (SD 15.4). See also **Anusaya**, SD 31.3 (4.1).

²⁶ See SD 6.1 (5); **Anatta Lakkhaṇa S** (S 22.59), applied to the 5 aggregates (S 22.59,17-21 (SD 1.2)).

²⁷ SD 19.2a (6.3) 5; SD 31.13 (2).

²⁸ On conceit as a fetter (*sarṃyojana*), see SD 50.12 (2.4.3); as a latent tendency (*anusaya*), see SD 53.14 (2.2.2.2).

²⁹ SD 10.16 (1.6.6-1.6.8); **Kiṭṭa,giri S** (M 70), SD 11.1 (5.1.4); (**Sekha**) **Uddesa S** (A 4.85), SD 3.3 (2).

way of understanding the number “108” in Buddhist numerology—such as the number of beads in a Buddhist rosary.³⁰

2.3 THE 5 AGGREGATES AND THE 20 SELF-VIEWS

2.3.1 What we *really* are

2.3.1.1 The (Moggallāna) Vaccha,gotta Sutta [S 44.8 @ SD 53.14b] records the Buddha [§§15+16] and then the elder Moggallāna [§§30+31] as explaining to Vaccha,gotta that the wanderers speculate on the 10 theses because they hold on to **the 4 self-views** (or any of them) and see **the 5 aggregates** in terms of these self-views [§§15+30], while the Buddha himself does not [§§16+31].

2.3.1.2 The 5 aggregates are briefly defined in **the Dhamma,cakka Pavattana Sutta** (S 56.11)³¹ and elaborated in **the Anatta Lakkhaṇa Sutta** (S 22.59).³² According to the Buddha, we (as humans) are simply made up of the 5 aggregates (*pañca-k,khandha*), that is, form, feeling, perception, formations and consciousness.

The (Upadāna) Parivaṭṭa Sutta (S 22.56)³³ and **the Satta-ṭ,ṭhāna Sutta** (S 22.57)³⁴ analyse the aggregates into their components in a simpler way than in later analyses, such as those found in the Visuddhi,magga and the Commentaries. They break down the aggregates as summarized here in this table:

Aggregate	Contents	Condition
form	the 4 primary elements and forms derived from them	food (nutriment)
feeling	the 6 classes of feeling: feeling born of contact through eye, through ear, through nose, through tongue, through body and through mind	contact
perception	the 6 classes of perception: of forms, of sounds, of smells, of tastes, of touches and of mental phenomena	contact
formations (volitional activities)	the 6 classes of volition: volition regarding forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touches and mental phenomena	contact
consciousness	the 6 classes of consciousness: eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, tongue-consciousness, body-consciousness and mind-consciousness	name-and-form

Table. The 5 aggregates according to the suttas (based on S 22.56-57) (Following Bodhi, S:B 841)

³⁰ The rosary (*mālā*) or chanting beads (*japa,mālā*) is used in the Buddhism of faith—that is, a late development—to count the number of times one recites the Buddha’s name as an aid in meditation or reflection. Properly, the beads may be used to reflect on the 108 conceptions or, better, on the Buddha’s “108 virtues”: his 9 virtues (*navāraha,guṇa*) over the 3 periods, along with his 4 intrepidities (*vesārajja,ñāṇa*): **(Catukka) Vesārajja S** (A 4.8) + SD 51.19 (2); **Mahā Sīha,nāda S** (M 12,22-28), SD 49.1 (3.6). The number **108** is divisible by 9, along with numbers in table 9 which always remains 9, eg, $9 \times 7 = 63$ ($6 + 3 = 9$), $9 \times 5 = 45$ ($4 + 5 = 9$), $9 \times 16 = 144$ ($1 + 4 + 4 = 9$) etc. This reinforces the idea that the number 9 has a mystical significance as a constant in Buddhist numerology.

³¹ S 56.11,5(8), SD 1.1.

³² S 22.59, SD 1.2. Most of **SD 17** is dedicated to the study of the 5 aggregates.

³³ S 22.56/3:58-61 (SD 3.7). This sutta presents the aggregates in synchronic manner (within the same life).

³⁴ S 22.57/3:61-65 (SD 29.2).

2.3.2 What we think we are

2.3.2.1 According to **the (Moggallāna) Vaccha,gotta Sutta** [S 44.8 @ SD 53.14b], both the Buddha and the elder Moggallāna explain to Vaccha,gotta that the wanderers speculate on the 10 theses because they hold on to **the 4 self-views** (or any or some of them) and see the 5 aggregates in terms of these views [§§15+30].

In simple terms, blinded by these 4 self-views,³⁵ the wanderers think and live in the delusion that the 5 aggregates (any, some or all of them) [2.3.1.2] are their self or soul, some kind of permanent essence or entity. They imagine their self or soul in the following ways:³⁶

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| (1) the self = the aggregate, | just as a burning oil-lamp's flame is identical to the flame's colour; ³⁷ |
| (2) self possesses the aggregate, | just as a tree possesses a shadow; |
| (3) the aggregate is in the self, | like the scent in the flower, ³⁸ |
| (4) the self is in the aggregate: | like a jewel in a casket. |

Such views are closely related to the belief in an immortal soul, the creator-God idea, eternal heaven and hell. They are all rooted in the extreme false view of **eternalism**, that such notions are forever. Hence, they lack the fundamental understanding of the nature of time and impermanence.³⁹

2.3.2.2 Thus, from what we cognize—what we see, hear, sense and know—we tend to **conceive** views [2.2.2.6], especially **the 4 self-views** (*attānudiṭṭhi*), rooted in the 4 biases (*agati*) (greed, hate, delusion and fear),⁴⁰ which can be correlated in the following manner:⁴¹

<u>aggregate = x</u>	<u>conceptual modes</u>	<u>biases</u>	
(1) We conceive ourself <i>as</i> X	identification	delusion	<i>mohāgati</i>
(2) We conceive ourself <i>in</i> X	projection	fear	<i>bhayāgati</i>
(3) We conceive ourself <i>apart from</i> X	objectification	hate	<i>dosāgati</i>
(4) We conceive X as <i>mine</i>	transference	greed	<i>chandāgati</i>

The Pārīleyya Sutta (S 22.81) illustrates the working of these 4 self-views and how they are overcome.⁴²

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³⁵ SD 53.14a (15+30).

³⁶ See **Is there a soul?** SD 2.16 (15), details (15.2.1).

³⁷ Cf Augustine's view that the soul is wholly present both in the entire body and in each part of it:

http://cco.cambridge.org/extract?id=ccol0521650186_CCOL0521650186A011.

³⁸ Cf Plotinus's view that the body was "in the soul," is permeated by it as air is by fire (Enneads 4):

<http://classics.mit.edu/Plotinus/enneads.4.fourth.html>.

³⁹ On existence and time, see SD 3.13 (5.2.2.5).

⁴⁰ See **Sigal'ovāda S** (D 31,4+5), SD 4.1; **Āgati S 1** (A 4.17), SD 89.7; **Āgati S 2** (A 4.18), **Āgati S 3** (A 4.19); **Bhatt'ud-desaka S** (A 4.20); **Saṅgaha Bala S** (A 9.5,6.4) n, SD 2.21; SD 31.12 (6.4.1).

⁴¹ For details, see SD 53.5 (2.2).

⁴² S 22.81,14-24 (SD 6.1).

SD 53.14a

(Vaccha,gotta) Moggallāna Sutta

The Moggallāna Discourse (to Vaccha,gotta) | S 44.7/4:391-395

or (**Āyatana**) **Vaccha,gotta Sutta** the (Sense-bases) Discourse to Vaccha,gotta

Theme: Vaccha,gotta questions Moggallāna, then the Buddha, on the Undeclared

S 4.10.1.7 = Saṃyutta Nikāya 4, Saḷāyatana Vagga 10, Avyākata Saṃyutta 1, Avyākata Vg 7

I. VACCHA,GOTTA MEETS MOGGALLĀNA

2 Then, the wanderer Vaccha,gotta approached the venerable **Mahā Moggallāna**, and exchanged friendly words and cordial greetings with the venerable Mahā Moggallāna. When the friendly greetings were concluded, he sat down at one side.

Moggallāna answers Vaccha,gotta's questions

- 3 Sitting at one side, the wanderer Vaccha,gotta said to the venerable Mahā Moggallāna:
 (1) "How is it, master Moggallāna, **is the world eternal?**"
"Vaccha [Vaccha,gotta],⁴³ the Blessed One has not declared that 'The world is eternal.'"
- 4 (2) "How is it then, master Moggallāna, **is the world not eternal?**"
"Vaccha, this, too, the Blessed One has not declared that 'The world is not eternal.'"
- 5 (3) "How is it then, master Moggallāna, **is the world finite?**"
"Vaccha, this, too, the Blessed One has not declared that 'The world is finite.'"
- 6 (4) "How is it then, master Moggallāna, **is the world infinite?**"
"Vaccha, this, too, the Blessed One has not declared that 'The world is infinite.'" [392]
- 7 (5) "How is it then, master Moggallāna, **are the soul and the body the same?**"
"Vaccha, this, too, the Blessed One has not declared that 'The soul and the body are the same.'"
- 8 (6) "How is it then, master Moggallāna, **is the soul one thing and the body another?**"
"Vaccha, this, too, the Blessed One has not declared that 'The soul is one thing and the body another.'"
- 9 (7) "How is it then, master Moggallāna, **does the tathagata exist after death?**"
"Vaccha, this, too, the Blessed One has not declared that 'The tathagata exists after death.'"
- 10 (8) "How is it then, master Moggallāna, **does the tathagata not exist after death?**"
"Vaccha, this, too, the Blessed One has not declared that 'The tathagata does not exist after death.'"
- 11 (9) "How is it then, master Moggallāna, **does the tathagata both exist and not exist after death?**"
"Vaccha, this, too, the Blessed One has not declared that 'The tathagata both exists and not exist after death.'"
- 12 (10) "How is it then, master Moggallāna, **does the tathagata neither exist nor not exist after death?**"
"Vaccha, this, too, the Blessed One has not declared that 'The tathagata neither exists nor not exist after death.'"

Vaccha,gotta is dissatisfied with Moggallāna's answers

13 "But what, master Moggallāna, is the cause, what is the reason, when **the wanderers of other sects** are asked such questions, they give such answers as these:

⁴³ Throughout: Se *vaccha,gotta*; Be Ee Ce *vaccha*.

- | | |
|---|--|
| (1) 'The world [universe] is eternal.' | <i>sassato loko</i> |
| (2) 'The world is not eternal.' | <i>asassato loko</i> |
| (3) 'The world is finite.' | <i>antavā loko</i> |
| (4) 'The world is infinite.' | <i>anantavā loko</i> |
| (5) 'The soul is the same as the body.' | <i>taṃ jīvaṃ taṃ sarīraṃ</i> |
| (6) 'The soul is one thing, the body another.' | <i>aññaṃ jīvaṃ aññaṃ sarīraṃ</i> |
| (7) 'The tathagata exists after death.' | <i>hoti tathāgato param, maraṇā</i> |
| (8) 'The tathagata does not exist after death.' | <i>na hoti tathāgato param, maraṇā</i> |
| (9) 'The tathagata both exists and not exist after death.' | <i>hoti ca na ca hoti tathāgato param, maraṇā</i> |
| (10) 'The tathagata neither exists nor not exist after death.'? | <i>n'eva hoti na na hoti tathāgato param, maraṇā</i> |

[393]

14 What, indeed, master Moggallāna, is the cause, what is the reason, when **master Moggallāna** is asked such questions, he does *not* give answers such as these:

- (1) 'The world is eternal.'
- (2) 'The world is not eternal.'
- (3) 'The world is finite.'
- (4) 'The world is infinite.'
- (5) 'The soul is the same as the body.'
- (6) 'The soul is one thing, the body another.'
- (7) 'The tathagata exists after death.'
- (8) 'The tathagata does not exist after death.'
- (9) 'The tathagata both exists and not exist after death.'
- (10) 'The tathagata neither exists nor not exist after death.'?"

The self-views of the wanderers

15 "Vaccha, the wanderers of other sects:

- (1) regard the eye thus: 'This is mine; this I am; this is my self.'⁴⁴
- (2) regard the ear thus: 'This is mine; this I am; this is my self.'
- (3) regard the nose thus: 'This is mine; this I am; this is my self.'
- (4) regard the tongue thus: 'This is mine; this I am; this is my self.'
- (5) regard the body thus: 'This is mine; this I am; this is my self.'
- (6) regard the mind thus: 'This is mine; this I am; this is my self.'

15.2 Hence, the wanderers of other sects, when asked such questions, give answers such as these:

- (1) 'The world [universe] is eternal.'
- (2) 'The world is not eternal.'
- (3) 'The world is finite.'
- (4) 'The world is infinite.'
- (5) 'The soul is the same as the body.'
- (6) 'The soul is one thing, the body another.'
- (7) 'The tathagata exists after death.'
- (8) 'The tathagata does not exist after death.'
- (9) 'The tathagata both exists and not exist after death.'
- (10) 'The tathagata neither exists nor not exist after death.'

⁴⁴ *Etaṃ mama, eso'ham asmi, eso me attā'ti.*

The Buddha's teaching

16 But, Vaccha, **the Tathagata**, the arhat, the fully self-awakened:

- (1) regards the eye thus: 'This is *not* mine; this I am *not*; this is *not* my self.'⁴⁵
- (2) regards the ear thus: 'This is *not* mine; this I am *not*; this is *not* my self.'
- (3) regards the nose thus: 'This is *not* mine; this I am *not*; this is *not* my self.'
- (4) regards the tongue thus: 'This is *not* mine; this I am *not*; this is *not* my self.'
- (5) regards the body thus: 'This is *not* mine; this I am *not*; this is my *not* self.'
- (6) regards the mind thus: 'This is *not* mine; this I am *not*; this is my *not* self.'

16.2 Hence, Vaccha, the Tathagata, the arhat, the fully self-awakened, when asked such questions, does not give answers such as these:

- (1) 'The world is eternal.'
- (2) 'The world is not eternal.'
- (3) 'The world is finite.'
- (4) 'The world is infinite.'
- (5) 'The soul is the same as the body.'
- (6) 'The soul is one thing, the body another.'
- (7) 'The tathagata exists after death.'
- (8) 'The tathagata does not exist after death.'
- (9) 'The tathagata both exists and not exist after death.'
- (10) 'The tathagata neither exists nor not exist after death.'

II. VACCHA,GOTTA MEETS THE BUDDHA

17 Then, the wanderer Vaccha,gotta rose from his seat and approached the Blessed One. He exchanged friendly words and cordial greetings with the Blessed One. When the friendly greetings were concluded, he sat down at one side.

Vaccha,gotta questions the Buddha [§§3-12]

18 Sitting at one side, the wanderer Vaccha,gotta said to the Blessed One:

- (1) "How is it, master Gotama, **is the world eternal?**"
"Vaccha [Vaccha,gotta],⁴⁶ I have not declared that 'The world is eternal.'"
- 19** (2) "How is it, then, master Gotama, **is the world not eternal?**"
"Vaccha, this, too, I have not declared that 'The world is not eternal.'"
- 20** (3) "How is it, then, master Gotama, **is the world finite?**"
"Vaccha, this, too, I have not declared that 'The world is finite.'"
- 21** (4) "How is it, then, master Gotama, **is the world infinite?**"
"Vaccha, this, too, I have not declared that 'The world is infinite.'"
- 22** (5) "How is it, then, master Gotama, **are the soul and the body the same?**"
"Vaccha, this, too, I have not declared that 'The soul and the body are the same.'"
- 23** (6) "How is it, then, master Gotama, **is the soul one thing and the body another?**"
"Vaccha, this, too, I have not declared that 'The soul is one thing and the body another.'"

⁴⁵ *N'etaṃ mama,n' eso'ham asmi, n'eso me attā'ti.*

⁴⁶ Throughout: Se *vaccha,gotta*; Be Ee Ce *vaccha*.

- 24 (7) “How is it, then, master Gotama, **does the tathagata exist after death?**”
“Vaccha, this, too, I have not declared that ‘The tathagata exists after death.’”
- 25 (8) “How is it, then, master Gotama, **does the tathagata not exist after death?**”
“Vaccha, this, too, I have not declared that ‘The tathagata does not exist after death.’”
- 26 (9) “How is it, then, master Gotama, **does the tathagata both exist and not exist after death?**”
“Vaccha, this, too, I have not declared that ‘The tathagata both exists and not exist after death.’”
- 27 (10) “How is it, then, master Gotama, **does the tathagata neither exist nor not exist after death?**”
“Vaccha, this, too, I have not declared that ‘The tathagata neither exists nor not exist after death.’”

Vaccha,gotta questions the Buddha further [§§13-14]

28⁴⁷ “But what, master Gotama, is the cause, what is the reason, when **the wanderers of other sects** are asked such questions, they give such answers as these:

- (1) *‘The world is eternal.’*
- (2) *‘The world is not eternal.’*
- (3) *‘The world is finite.’*
- (4) *‘The world is infinite.’*
- (5) *‘The soul is the same as the body.’*
- (6) *‘The soul is one thing, the body another.’*
- (7) *‘The tathagata exists after death.’*
- (8) *‘The tathagata does not exist after death.’*
- (9) *‘The tathagata both exists and not exist after death.’*
- (10) *‘The tathagata neither exists nor not exist after death.’?* [394]

29 What, indeed, master Gotama, is the cause, what is the reason, when **master Gotama** is asked such questions, he does *not* give answers such as these:

- (1) *‘The world is eternal.’*
- (2) *‘The world is not eternal.’*
- (3) *‘The world is finite.’*
- (4) *‘The world is infinite.’*
- (5) *‘The soul is the same as the body.’*
- (6) *‘The soul is one thing, the body another.’*
- (7) *‘The tathagata exists after death.’*
- (8) *‘The tathagata does not exist after death.’*
- (9) *‘The tathagata both exists and not exist after death.’*
- (10) *‘The tathagata neither exists nor not exist after death.’?*

The views of the wanderers [§15]

30 “Vaccha, the wanderers of other sects:

- (1) regard the eye thus: ‘This is mine; this I am; this is my self.’
- (2) regard the ear thus: ‘This is mine; this I am; this is my self.’
- (3) regard the nose thus: ‘This is mine; this I am; this is my self.’
- (4) regard the tongue thus: ‘This is mine; this I am; this is my self.’

⁴⁷ Ee does not number this para. Hence, the SD para numbering is one-up from here on.

- (5) regard the body thus: 'This is mine; this I am; this is my self.'
 (6) regard the mind thus: 'This is mine; this I am; this is my self.'

30.2 Hence, the wanderers of other sects, when asked such questions, give answers such as these:

- (1) 'The world [universe] is eternal.'
- (2) 'The world is not eternal.'
- (3) 'The world is finite.'
- (4) 'The world is infinite.'
- (5) 'The soul is the same as the body.'
- (6) 'The soul is one thing, the body another.'
- (7) 'The tathagata exists after death.'
- (8) 'The tathagata does not exist after death.'
- (9) 'The tathagata both exists and not exist after death.'
- (10) 'The tathagata neither exists nor not exist after death.'

The Buddha's teaching [§16]

31 But the Tathagata, Vaccha, the arhat, the fully self-awakened:

- (1) regards the eye thus: 'This is *not* mine; this I am *not*; this is *not* my self.'
- (2) regards the ear thus: 'This is *not* mine; this I am *not*; this is *not* my self.'
- (3) regards the nose thus: 'This is *not* mine; this I am *not*; this is *not* my self.'
- (4) regards the tongue thus: 'This is *not* mine; this I am *not*; this is *not* my self.'
- (5) regards the body thus: 'This is *not* mine; this I am *not*; this is my *not* self.'
- (6) regards the mind thus: 'This is *not* mine; this I am *not*; this is my *not* self.'

31.2 Hence, the Tathagata, Vaccha, the arhat, the fully self-awakened, when asked such questions, does not give answers such as these:

- (1) 'The world is eternal.'
- (2) 'The world is not eternal.'
- (3) 'The world is finite.'
- (4) 'The world is infinite.'
- (5) 'The soul is the same as the body.'
- (6) 'The soul is one thing, the body another.'
- (7) 'The tathagata exists after death.'
- (8) 'The tathagata does not exist after death.'
- (9) 'The tathagata both exists and not exist after death.'
- (10) 'The tathagata neither exists nor not exist after death.'"

Vaccha,gotta is elated

32 "It is amazing, master Gotama! It is wonderful, master Gotama! How the explanation of both the teacher and the disciple coincide and concur word for word, meaning for meaning, and do not diverge in terms of the foremost points!⁴⁸

⁴⁸ *Acchariyaṃ bho gotama, abbhutaṃ bho gotama, yatra hi nāma satthussa ca sāvakassa ca atthen'attho vyañjanena vyañjanam saṃsandissati samessati na vihāyissati* yad idam aggapadasmim̃. Be virodhayissati; Ce Ee*

Just now, I approached the recluse Moggallāna [395] and questioned him about this matter. And the recluse Moggallāna, too, answered regarding this matter in these very same words and phrases—just like master Gotama!⁴⁹

It is amazing, master Gotama! It is wonderful, master Gotama! How the explanation of both the teacher and the disciple coincide and concur word for word, meaning for meaning, and do not diverge in terms of the foremost points!⁵⁰

— evaṃ —

SD 53.14b

(Moggallāna) Vaccha,gotta Sutta

The Vaccha,gotta Discourse (by Moggallāna) | S 44.8/4:395-397
or (Khandha) Vaccha,gotta Sutta the (Aggregates) Discourse to Vaccha,gotta⁵¹

Theme: Vaccha,gotta questions Buddha, then Moggallāna, on the Undeclared
S 4.10.1.8 = Saṃyutta Nikāya 4, Saḷāyatana Vagga 10, Avyākata Saṃyutta 1, Avyākata Vagga 8

I. VACCHA,GOTTA MEETS THE BUDDHA

2 Then the wanderer Vaccha,gotta approached **the Blessed One**. He exchanged friendly words and cordial greetings with the Blessed One. When the friendly greetings were concluded, he sat down at one side.

Vaccha,gotta asks the Buddha about the 10 theses

3 Sitting at one side, the wanderer Vaccha,gotta said to the Blessed One:

(2) “How is it, master Gotama, **is the world eternal?**”

“Vaccha [Vaccha,gotta],⁵² the Blessed One has not declared that ‘The world is eternal.’”

4 (2) “How is it then, master Gotama, **is the world not eternal?**”

“Vaccha, this, too, the Blessed One has not declared that ‘The world is not eternal.’”

5 (3) “How is it then, master Gotama, **is the world finite?**”

“Vaccha, the Blessed One has not declared that ‘The world is infinite.’”

6 (4) “How is it then, master Gotama, **is the world infinite?**”

“Vaccha, this, too, the Blessed One has not declared that ‘The world is infinite.’”

7 (5) “How is it then, master Gotama, **are the soul and the body the same?**”

“Vaccha, the Blessed One has not declared that ‘The soul and the body are the same.’”

Se *vihāyissati* [but Ee *virodhayissati* at S 4:379,26]. AA:Ee read *viggayhissati*, which Comy glosses “The words do not contradict,” *na viruddhaṃ padaṃ* (Ce *viruddha,saddaṃ*) *bhavissati* (SA 3:114,3). This passage recurs in **Khemā Therī S** (S 44.1/4:379,34-27), SD 63.6. **Agga,padasmim** recurs in **Saññā Manasikāra S 1** (A 11.7/5:320,32), which is glossed as “nirvana” (*nibbāna*, AA 5:79,12).

⁴⁹ *Idānāhaṃ bho gotama, samaṇaṃ moggallānaṃ upasaṅkamitvā etam atthaṃ āpucchim, samaṇ’opi me moggallāno etehi padehi etehi vyañjanehi etam atthaṃ vyākāsi seyyathā’pi bhavaṃ gotamo.*

⁵⁰ Vaccha,gotta repeats this whole passage at the end of **(Moggallāna) Vaccha,gotta S** (S 44.8,31), SD 53.14b. Spoken, mutatis mutandis, by Ānanda to Sāriputta at **Saññā Manasikāra S 2** (A 11.8,6), SD 53.20b.

⁵¹ Ee erroneously subtitles this as *bandha*, “the fetter.”

⁵² Throughout: Se *vaccha,gotta*; Be Ee Ce *vaccha*.

- 8 (6) “How is it then, master Gotama, **is the soul one thing and the body another?**”
“Vaccha, this, too, the Blessed One has not declared that ‘The soul is one thing and the body another.’”
- 9 (7) “How is it then, master Gotama, **does the tathagata exist after death?**”
“Vaccha, the Blessed One has not declared that ‘The tathagata exists after death.’”
- 10 (8) “How is it then, master Gotama, **does the tathagata not exist after death?**”
“Vaccha, this, too, the Blessed One has not declared that ‘The tathagata does not exist after death.’”
- 11 (9) “How is it then, master Gotama, **does the tathagata both exist and not exist after death?**”
“Vaccha, the Blessed One has not declared that ‘The tathagata both exists and not exist after death.’”
- 12 (10) “How is it then, master Gotama, **does the tathagata neither exist nor not exist after death?**”
“Vaccha, this, too, the Blessed One has not declared that ‘The tathagata neither exists nor not exist after death.’”

Why the Buddha does not declare the 10 theses

13 “But what, master Gotama, is the cause, what is the reason, when **the wanderers of other sects** are asked such questions, they give such answers as these:

- | | |
|---|--|
| (1) ‘The world [universe] is eternal.’ | <i>sassato loko</i> |
| (2) ‘The world is not eternal.’ | <i>asassato loko</i> |
| (3) ‘The world is finite.’ | <i>antavā loko</i> |
| (4) ‘The world is infinite.’ | <i>anantavā loko</i> |
| (5) ‘The soul is the same as the body.’ | <i>taṃ jīvaṃ taṃ sarīraṃ</i> |
| (6) ‘The soul is one thing, the body another.’ | <i>aññaṃ jīvaṃ aññaṃ sarīraṃ</i> |
| (7) ‘The tathagata exists after death.’ | <i>hoti tathāgato param, maraṇā</i> |
| (8) ‘The tathagata does not exist after death.’ | <i>na hoti tathāgato param, maraṇā</i> |
| (9) ‘The tathagata both exists and not exist after death.’ | <i>hoti ca na ca hoti tathāgato param, maraṇā</i> |
| (10) ‘The tathagata neither exists nor not exist after death.’? | <i>n’eva hoti na na hoti tathāgato param, maraṇā</i> |

The 20 self-views of the wanderers

14 “Vaccha, **the wanderers of other sects**

- | | | |
|---------------------------|--|--|
| (1) regard: ⁵³ | form as <i>self</i> ;
or self as <i>possessing form</i> ;
or <i>form</i> as <i>in self</i> ;
or self as <i>in form</i> . | <i>rūpaṃ attato</i>
<i>rūpa, vantaṃ vā attānaṃ</i>
<i>attani vā rūpaṃ</i>
<i>rupasmim vā attānaṃ</i> |
| (2) They regard | feeling as <i>self</i> ;
or self as <i>possessing feeling</i> ;
or <i>feeling</i> as <i>in self</i> ;
or self as <i>in feeling</i> . | <i>vedanaṃ attato</i>
<i>vedanā, vantaṃ vā attānaṃ</i>
<i>attani vā vedanaṃ</i>
<i>vedanasim vā attānaṃ</i> |
| (3) They regard | perception as <i>self</i> ;
or self as <i>possessing perception</i> ;
or <i>perception</i> as <i>in self</i> ; | <i>saññaṃ attato</i>
<i>saññā, vantaṃ vā attānaṃ</i>
<i>attani vā saññā</i> |

⁵³ For details on these 4 self-views (*attānuditṭhi*)—totalling 20 of them—see **Is there a soul?** SD 2.16 (15), esp (15.2.1). On the 20 self-views, see SD 2,16 (15.2).

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>or self as <i>in perception</i>.</p> <p>(4) They regard formations⁵⁴ as self;
or self as <i>possessing formations</i>;
or <i>formations</i> as in self;
or self as <i>in formations</i>.</p> <p>(5) They regard consciousness as self;
or self as <i>possessing consciousness</i>;
or <i>consciousness</i> as in self;
or self as <i>in consciousness</i>.</p> | <p><i>saññasmim̐ vā attānaṃ</i></p> <p>saṅkhāraṃ attato
<i>saṅkhāra, vantaṃ vā attānaṃ</i>
<i>attani vā saṅkhāraṃ</i>
<i>saṅkhārasmim̐ vā attānaṃ</i></p> <p>viññāṇaṃ attato
<i>viññāṇa, vantaṃ vā attānaṃ</i>
<i>attani vā viññāṇaṃ</i>
<i>viññāṇasmim̐ vā attānaṃ</i></p> |
|--|---|

14.2 Therefore, **the wanderers of other sects, [396]** when asked such questions, give answers such as these:

- (1) 'The world [universe] is eternal.'
- (2) 'The world is not eternal.'
- (3) 'The world is finite.'
- (4) 'The world is infinite.'
- (5) 'The soul is the same as the body.'
- (6) 'The soul is one thing, the body another.'
- (7) 'The tathagata exists after death.'
- (8) 'The tathagata does not exist after death.'
- (9) 'The tathagata both exists and not exist after death.'
- (10) 'The tathagata neither exists nor not exist after death.'

The Buddha's teaching

15 But, Vaccha, **the Tathagata**, the arhat, the fully self-awakened:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>(1) does <u>not</u> regard:⁵⁵
form as self;
nor self as <i>possessing form</i>;
nor <i>form</i> as in self;
nor self as <i>in form</i>.</p> <p>(2) He does <i>not</i> regard
feeling as self;
nor self as <i>possessing feeling</i>;
nor <i>feeling</i> as in self;
nor self as <i>in feeling</i>.</p> <p>(3) He does <i>not</i> regard
perception as self;
nor self as <i>possessing perception</i>;
nor <i>perception</i> as in self;
nor self as <i>in perception</i>.</p> | <p><i>na rūpaṃ</i> attato
<i>na rūpa, vantaṃ vā attānaṃ</i>
<i>na attani vā rūpaṃ</i>
<i>na rupasmim̐ vā attānaṃ</i></p> <p><i>na vedanaṃ</i> attato
<i>na vedanā, vantaṃ vā attānaṃ</i>
<i>na attani vā vedanaṃ</i>
<i>na vedanasim̐ vā attānaṃ</i></p> <p><i>na saññaṃ</i> attato
<i>na saññā, vantaṃ vā attānaṃ</i>
<i>na attani vā saññā</i>
<i>na saññasim̐ vā attānaṃ</i></p> |
|--|---|

⁵⁴ *Saṅkhāraṃ* is collective singular. I have rendered it here as the more familiar plural form relating to the un-awakened.

⁵⁵ For details on these 4 self-views (*attānuditṭhi*)—totalling 20 of them—see **Is there a soul?** SD 2.16 (15), esp (15.2.1). On the 20 self-views, see SD 2,16 (15.2).

(4) He does *not* regard

formations⁵⁶ as *self*;
nor self as *possessing formations*;
nor *formations* as *in self*;
nor self as *in formations*.

na **saṅkhāram** attato
na saṅkhāra,vantaṃ vā attānaṃ
na attani vā saṅkhāram
na saṅkhārasmiṃ vā attānaṃ

(5) He does *not* regard

consciousness as *self*;
nor self as *possessing consciousness*;
nor *consciousness* as *in self*;
nor self as *in consciousness*.

na **viññāṇam** attato
na viññāṇa,vantaṃ vā attānaṃ
na attani vā viññāṇam
na viññāṇasmiṃ vā attānaṃ

15.2 Hence, Vaccha, **the Tathagata**, the arhat, the fully self-awakened, when asked such questions, does *not* give answers such as these:

- (1) 'The world is eternal.'
- (2) 'The world is not eternal.'
- (3) 'The world is finite.'
- (4) 'The world is infinite.'
- (5) 'The soul is the same as the body.'
- (6) 'The soul is one thing, the body another.'
- (7) 'The tathagata exists after death.'
- (8) 'The tathagata does not exist after death.'
- (9) 'The tathagata both exists and not exist after death.'
- (10) 'The tathagata neither exists nor not exist after death.'

II. VACCHA,GOTTA MEETS MOGGALLĀNA

16 Then, the wanderer Vaccha,gotta rose from his seat and approached the venerable **Mahā Moggallāna**. He exchanged friendly words and cordial greetings with the venerable Mahā Moggallāna. When the friendly greetings were concluded, he sat down at one side.

17 Sitting at one side, the wanderer Vaccha,gotta said to the venerable Mahā Moggallāna:

Vaccha,gotta asks about the 10 theses [§§3-12]

- 18** (1) "How is it, master Moggallāna, **is the world eternal?**"
"Vaccha [Vaccha,gotta],⁵⁷ I have not declared that 'The world is eternal.'"
- 19** (2) "How is it then, master Moggallāna, **is the world not eternal?**"
"Vaccha, this, too, I have not declared that 'The world is not eternal.'"
- 20** (3) "How is it then, master Moggallāna, **is the world finite?**"
"Vaccha, this, too, I have not declared that 'The world is finite.'"
- 21** (4) "How is it then, master Moggallāna, **is the world infinite?**"
"Vaccha, this, too, I have not declared that 'The world is infinite.'"
- 22** (5) "How is it then, master Moggallāna, **are the soul and the body the same?**"
"Vaccha, this, too, I have not declared that 'The soul and the body are the same.'"

⁵⁶ Saṅkhāram is collective singular. I have rendered it here as the more familiar plural form relating to the un-awakened.

⁵⁷ Throughout: Se vaccha,gotta; Be Ee Ce vaccha.

- 23 (6) “How is it then, master Moggallāna, **is the soul one thing and the body another?**”
“Vaccha, this, too, I have not declared that ‘The soul is one things and the body another.’”
- 24 (7) “How is it then, master Moggallāna, **does the tathagata exist after death?**”
“Vaccha, this, too, I have not declared that ‘The tathagata exists after death.’”
- 25 (8) “How is it then, master Moggallāna, **does the tathagata not exist after death?**”
“Vaccha, this, too, I have not declared that ‘The tathagata does not exist after death.’”
- 26 (9) “How is it then, master Moggallāna, **does the tathagata both exist and not exist after death?**”
“Vaccha, this, too, I have not declared that ‘The tathagata both exists and not exist after death.’”
- 27 (10) “How is it then, master Moggallāna, **does the tathagata neither exist nor not exist after death?**”
“Vaccha, this, too, I have not declared that ‘The tathagata neither exists nor not exist after death.’”

Vaccha,gotta questions Moggallāna further [§§13-14]

28 “But what, master Moggallāna, is the cause, what is the reason, when **the wanderers of other sects** are asked such questions, they give such answers as these:

- (1) *‘The world is eternal.’*
- (2) *‘The world is not eternal.’*
- (3) *‘The world is finite.’*
- (4) *‘The world is infinite.’*
- (5) *‘The soul is the same as the body.’*
- (6) *‘The soul is one thing, the body another.’*
- (7) *‘The tathagata exists after death.’*
- (8) *‘The tathagata does not exist after death.’*
- (9) *‘The tathagata both exists and not exist after death.’*
- (10) *‘The tathagata neither exists nor not exist after death.’?*

28.2 What, indeed, master Moggallāna, is the cause, what is the reason, when **master Gotama** is asked such questions, he does *not* give answers such as these:

- (1) *‘The world is eternal.’*
- (2) *‘The world is not eternal.’*
- (3) *‘The world is finite.’*
- (4) *‘The world is infinite.’*
- (5) *‘The soul is the same as the body.’*
- (6) *‘The soul is one thing, the body another.’*
- (7) *‘The tathagata exists after death.’*
- (8) *‘The tathagata does not exist after death.’*
- (9) *‘The tathagata both exists and not exist after death.’*
- (10) *‘The tathagata neither exists nor not exist after death.’?’ [397]*

The views of the wanderers [§15]

29 “Vaccha, the wanderers of other sects

(1) regard:

- form** as *self*;
- or self as *possessing form*;
- or form as *in* self;
- or self as *in form*.

(2) They regard

feeling as *self*;
or self as *possessing feeling*;
or *feeling* as *in self*;
or self as *in feeling*.

(3) They regard

perception as *self*;
or self as *possessing perception*;
or *perception* as *in self*;
or self as *in perception*.

(4) They regard

formations⁵⁸ as *self*;
or self as *possessing formations*;
or *formations* as *in self*;
or self as *in formations*.

(5) They regard

consciousness as *self*;
or self as *possessing consciousness*;
or *consciousness* as *in self*;
or self as *in consciousness*.

29.2 Hence, Vaccha, **the wanderers of other sects**, when asked such questions, give answers such as these:

- (1) 'The world is eternal.'
- (2) 'The world is not eternal.'
- (3) 'The world is finite.'
- (4) 'The world is infinite.'
- (5) 'The soul is the same as the body.'
- (6) 'The soul is one thing, the body another.'
- (7) 'The tathagata exists after death.'
- (8) 'The tathagata does not exist after death.'
- (9) 'The tathagata both exists and not exist after death.'
- (10) 'The tathagata neither exists nor not exist after death.'

The Buddha's teaching [§16]

30 But, Vaccha, **the Tathagata**, the arhat, the fully self-awakened:

(1) does not regard:⁵⁹

form as *self*;
nor self as *possessing form*;
nor *form* as *in self*;
nor self as *in form*.

⁵⁸ *Saṅkhāraṃ* is collective singular. I have rendered it here as the more familiar plural form relating to the un-awakened.

⁵⁹ For details on these 4 self-views (*attānuditṭhi*)—totalling 20 of them—see **Is there a soul?** SD 2.16 (15), esp (15.2.1). On the 20 self-views, see SD 2,16 (15.2).

- (2) He does *not* regard
feeling as *self*;
 nor self as *possessing feeling*;
 nor *feeling* as *in self*;
 nor self as *in feeling*.
- (3) He does *not* regard
perception as *self*;
 nor self as *possessing perception*;
 nor *perception* as *in self*;
 nor self as *in perception*.
- (4) He does *not* regard
formations⁶⁰ as *self*;
 nor self as *possessing formations*;
 nor *formations* as *in self*;
 nor self as *in formations*.
- (5) He does *not* regard
consciousness as *self*;
 nor self as *possessing consciousness*;
 nor *consciousness* as *in self*;
 nor self as *in consciousness*.

30.2 Hence, Vaccha, **the Tathagata**, the arhat, the fully self-awakened, when asked such questions, does not give answers such as these:

- (1) *'The world [universe] is eternal.'*
- (2) *'The world is not eternal.'*
- (3) *'The world is finite.'*
- (4) *'The world is infinite.'*
- (5) *'The soul is the same as the body.'*
- (6) *'The soul is one thing, the body another.'*
- (7) *'The tathagata exists after death.'*
- (8) *'The tathagata does not exist after death.'*
- (9) *'The tathagata both exists and not exist after death.'*
- (10) *'The tathagata neither exists nor not exist after death.'*

Vaccha,gotta's exultation

31⁶¹ "It is amazing, master Moggallāna! It is wonderful, master Moggallāna! How the explanation of both the teacher and the disciple coincide and concur word for word, meaning for meaning, and do not diverge in terms of the foremost points!⁶²

⁶⁰ *Saṅkhāraṃ* is collective singular. I have rendered it here as the more familiar plural form relating to the un-awakened.

⁶¹ Ee misnumbers this as "30," repeating the preceding number, and misnumbering the foll as "31."

⁶² *Acchariyaṃ bho moggallāna, abbhutaṃ bho moggallāna, yatra hi nāma satthussa ca sāvakassa ca atthen'attho vyañjanena vyañjanaṃ saṃsandissati samessati na viḥāyissati* yad idaṃ aggapadasmim̃. Be virodhayissati; Ce Ee Se viḥāyissati [but Ee virodhayissati at S 4:379,26]. AA:Ee read **viggayhissati**, which Comy glosses "The words do not contradiction," na viruddhaṃ padaṃ (Ce viruddha,saddaṃ) bhavissati (SA 3:114,3). This passage recurs in*

32 Just now, I approached the recluse Gotama and questioned him about this matter. And **the recluse Gotama**, too, answered regarding this matter in these very same words and phrases—just like **master Moggallāna!**⁶³

33 It is amazing, master Moggallāna! It is wonderful, master Moggallāna! How the explanation of *both the teacher and the disciple* coincide and concur word for word, meaning for meaning, and do not diverge in terms of the foremost points!⁶⁴

— evaṃ —

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Khemā Therī S (S 44.1/4:379,34-27), SD 63.6. **Agga, padasmim̐** recurs in **Saññā Manasikāra S 1** (A 11.7/5:320,32), which is glossed as “nirvana’ (*nibbāna*, AA 5:79,12).

⁶³ *Idānāhaṃ bho moggallāna, samaṇaṃ gotamaṃ upasaṅkamtivā etam atthaṃ āpucchim̐, samaṇ’opi me gotama etehi padehi etehi vyañjanehi etam atthaṃ vyākāsi seyyathā’pi bhavaṃ moggallāno.*

⁶⁴ Vaccha,gotta repeats this whole passage at the end of **(Moggallāna) Vaccha,gotta S** (S 44.6,32), SD 53.14b. Ānanda responds in the same way to Sāriputta at the end of **Saññā Manasikāra S 2** (A 11.8,6), SD 53.20b.