

॥ ॐ नमो तस्मै भगवते अराहते सम्मसम्बुद्धस्स ॥
 ॐ नमो तस्स भगवतो अरहतो सम्मसम्बुद्धस्स ॥
 ॐ नमो တန့်တန့် ဂကဝတိ ဝရဟတိ ဝမ္မာနမ္မပုပ္ဖဝုဒ္ဓတန့်တန့်
 Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa

1

An Introduction to the Brahma,jāla Sutta

The Discourse on the Perfect Net

[The 62 grounds for wrong views]

(Dīgha Nikāya 1/1:1-46)

by Piya Tan

[Cross-reference note: Numbers with parentheses, eg [2] refers to another section in this chapter; Numbers preceded by a section sign, §, eg [§2] refers to the section (“verse”) in the Sutta itself. Numbers with a colon “:”, eg [1.2] refers to chapter 1 section 2, and [3.1.1] refers to chapter 3 section 1 part 1.]

1 India of the Buddha’s time

According to **Karl Jaspers**, the 6th century BCE was the “Axial Age,” that is, a turning point in human history. There was a great upsurge in intellectual and religious turmoil, and ideas and discussions were widespread. As there were neither books nor established centres of learning in ancient India, intelligent men and women sought and shared knowledge wherever crowds gathered—market-places, city gates and even highways.

The Buddha lived at a time when new confraternities or religious orders confronted the old brahminical system in the central Gangetic plain. Theologically, the brahminical religious establishment was known as *astikā* (literally, “there is”), that is, the “orthodox” establishment that affirmed the existence of such ideas as the Creator God and the priesthood of the brahmins as intermediaries between the human and the divine. The reform movement, in contrast, was known as *nāstika* (literally, “there is not”) or the heterodox, since they reject the Vedas and the priesthood of the brahmins, and advocating direct experience of spirituality through insight.

In terms of practice, the members of the ascetic reform movement were generally known by the Sanskrit term *śramaṇa* (P *samaṇa*). They rejected the teachings of the orthodox religious establishment, the brahmins or *brāhmaṇa*. These factions were not only well known as religious groups but were also the intellectual nucleus around which Indian theology, metaphysics and science were built. While the brahmins were mostly sedentary and a hereditary corporation with their traditional mantras, rites and rules, the *śramaṇas* constituted a strong reform movement, peopled mainly by the kshatriyas (members of the aristocratic warrior class) who (unlike the brahmins) did not maintain that religious knowledge was the exclusive privilege of any particular caste.

The members of this reform movement, also known as “wanderers” (Skt *parivrājakā*; P *paribbājaka*) or “ascetics” (Skt *śramaṇā*; P *samaṇa*) were not householders but eremites. They rejected the Vedas, abhorred brahminical rituals and were, as a rule, non-theistic. Since many of them who were celibate recluses, they could also be called “monks” [from late Greek *monakhos* ← *monos*, “alone”] but they did not lead cloistered lives. Some of them lived in the forest, either in huts or at the foot of trees or in the open, but most of the year, excluding the three-month rains-retreat, was spent wandering.

The wanderers (*paribbājaka*), as evident from the word, were peripatetics—more fully, “the sectarian wanderers of other faiths” (*añña,titthiyā paribbājakā*)—were a special class of ancient Indian mendicants (including women wanderers) who held various beliefs, and wandered around India from pre-Bud-

dhist times.¹ They were generally not ascetics, except when they were celibate. Such wanderers who were teachers often engaged in debates over a wide range of topics. Special debating halls and meeting places were set aside for them and the local inhabitants came to pay their respects and support them. In a few rare instances, wanderers were lay devotees of the Buddha.

2 Synopsis

The Brahma,jāla Sutta stands like a sentinel as the very first discourse of the Dīgha Nikāya, and as such, effectively the very first text in the whole Sutta Pīṭaka.² The Sutta is also the first of thirteen consecutive suttas that share a very similar fourfold structure: (1) an opening story; (2) the moralities; (3) mental concentration (the attainment of dhyanas); and (4) spiritual knowledge and liberation. The comprehensiveness and depth of the Brahma,jāla Sutta is clearly to impress the non-Buddhists. Like most of the other suttas of the Dīgha Nikāya, it is philosophical, dramatic, inspirational, even magical and entertaining.³

The Brahma,jāla Sutta opens with the Buddha and the monks journeying on the highway between Rājagaha and Nālandā, with the wanderers Suppiya and his resident pupil (*antevasī*), Brahma,datta, following right behind. While Suppiya speaks ill of the three jewels, his pupil, Brahma,datta disagrees, speaking of the virtues of the Three Jewels. This goes on even when they have broken journey for the night at the Amba,laṭṭhika grove [§§1-2].

Evidently, a monk or some monks cannot help overhearing their conversation, and this soon becomes a topic of discussion in the grove. The Buddha then joins to the discussion by giving a teaching on how to deal with the responses of others to the Teaching [§§3-6]. He goes on to speak of how other praise him, that is, the unwise worldling would praise his moral virtue [§§7-27], but the wise and the saints would praise for his analysis of the 62 grounds for wrong views [§§28-104]. More than half of these 62 grounds, interestingly arise from misunderstanding various meditation attainments [6.1].

In the “wisdom” section [§§105-144], the Buddha explains how these 62 grounds arise from the “feeling of those who know not, merely the agitation and vacillation of those overcome by craving” [§§105-117]. Applying the principle of dependent arising, the Buddha goes one to explain such ignorant reactions are in turn caused by contact (*phassa*), that is, through misunderstanding sense-experience [§§118-143]. All these are speculative views (*diṭṭhi,gata*), arising from feeling, that binds them to the rounds of speculative views and of suffering [§144].

The remaining sections [§145-149], dealing with liberation, close the Sutta. The Buddha declares the how one can transcend these 62 grounds [§145], which comprehensively includes all possible grounds for wrong views like a perfect net that catches all the fishes in a pond [§145-146]. The Buddha explains his credentials for such an overarching analysis: his own awakening [§147]. Inspired, Ānanda asks for the title of the teaching, and the Buddha gives five alternative titles [§148] and the audience rejoice [§149].

3 The moralities

Sections 43-62 of **the Sāmañña,phala Sutta** (D 2) comprises 13 groups or items on moral conduct, divided into three parts in ascending order of length:

- | | |
|---|-------------|
| (1) “the lesser section on moral virtue,” or short tract (<i>cūla,sīla</i>), | (D 2.43-45) |
| (2) “the medium section on moral virtue,” or medium tract (<i>majjhima,sīla</i>), | (D 2.46-55) |
| (3) “the great section on moral virtue,” or long tract (<i>mahā,sīla</i>). ⁴ | (D 2.56-62) |

(D 2:43-63/63-70) = SD 8.10

¹ See **Jaṭila S** (S 3.11.3/1:78) = SD 14.11 nn; **Susima S** (S 12.70) = SD 16.6; also DPPN: *paribbājaka*; GC Pande, *Studies in the Origins of Buddhism*, 2nd ed 1974:330-337; Uma Chakravarti, *The Social Dimensions of Early Buddhism*, 1987:36-38, 132.

² And, if we take the Sutta Pīṭaka as the very first of the triad, then the Brahma,jāla S stands at the *very door* of the whole collection of the Pali Canon.

³ See Joy Manné, 1991:67.

⁴ D 2

Except for a few minor variations, these three sections are found in all of the first 13 suttas of the Chapter on Morality (*sīla, vagga*), and may once have formed a separate “tract” (D:RD 1:3 n1). They probably form one of the earliest part of the Dīgha Nikāya (Norman 1983:32).

The best known application of this famous and ancient treatise on moral virtue or “moralities” (*sīla*) is found in **the Sāmañña, phala Sutta** (D 2), where it forms the beginning section on “the fruit of recluseship” (*sāmañña, phala*). Understandably, the whole set of teachings comprising moral virtue [43-63], mental development [64-86], the knowledge of supernormal powers [87-96], and the development of liberating wisdom [97-98], are known by the same name, *sāmañña, phala*.⁵

The best modern study of the moralities (*sīla*) is that done by **Damien Keown** in his *The Nature of Buddhist Ethics* (1992:25-35), where he says,

It would seem, therefore, that the *Short Tract* [short moralities] has a claim to be considered as the primary one of the three, and that the *Medium Tract* [medium moralities] and *Long Tract* [great moralities] expand on certain aspects of it. For example, the *Short Tract* prohibits attendance at shows (item 10), and the *Medium Tract* then goes on to specify sixteen kinds of shows included in the prohibition. Again, the *Short Tract* prohibits the use of high beds (item 12) and the *Medium Tract* stipulates twenty examples of the kinds of bed to be avoided. Likewise, the *Short Tract* prohibits numerous kinds of wrong livelihood (13-26), and the *Long Tract* adds to this by describing various kinds of fortune-telling which should be avoided. It is as if the *Medium* and *Long Tracts* have been tagged on to add precision, plug loopholes, or resolve disputes which may have arisen over the interpretation of the *Short Tract*. The *Long Tract* perhaps has more claim to independence than the *Medium Tract* since fortune-telling and soothsaying, to which it is mainly devoted, are not specifically mentioned in the *Short Tract*. (Keown 1992:27 f)

A more detailed discussion is found elsewhere.⁶

4 Wrong views

4.1 RIGHT VIEW. As already noted, more than half of the 62 grounds for wrong views—49 to be exact—are related to various meditation attainments [§6.1]. This raises a couple of important points at least. Firstly, is that meditation is not an exclusive Buddhist domain: other people, religionists and non-religionists alike, may be able to attain meditative states. However, not everyone will be able to fully understand the nature of these states, and as a rule perceive such experiences as grounds for various wrong views.

Understandably, the key goal in Buddhist training is to attain right understanding, so that one is not misled by one religious experiences, and so that one attains true spiritual liberation by it. In order to gain right view, one has to eliminate wrong view; and before one can eliminate them, one has to know what they really are. As such, the Buddha takes great pains to define them and explain the different forms wrong view may assume, and to point out the dangers they entail.

4.2 THREE KINDS OF WRONG VIEWS. Wrong views mentioned in the suttas may be classed into three broad categories:

- (1) self-identity view (*sakkāya, diṭṭhi*).
- (2) wrong views with fixed consequences (*niyata micchā, diṭṭhi*);
- (3) speculative views (*diṭṭhi, gata*); and

Self-identity view (*sakkāya, diṭṭhi*) [3.30] is the most harmful of all views, and underlies all of them. In other words, all wrong views are basically some form of personal identity view. The eternalist, for example, view that this self or soul is eternal, while the annihilationist views it as totally annihilated at death. **The Mahā Puṇṇama Sutta**⁷ and **the Cūḷa Vedalla Sutta**⁸ list the 20 kinds of self-identity view in

⁵ See Gethin 2001:195 f.

⁶ **Sāmañña, phala S** (D 2) = SD 8.10 Introd 3.

⁷ M 109.10/ 3:17 f = SD 17.10.

⁸ M 44.7 f/1:300.

connection with the five aggregates. A very elaborate treatment of the self-identity view is given in **the Mūla,pariyāya Sutta** (M 1).⁹

Wrong views with fixed consequences (*niyata micchā,diṭṭhi*) are those that tend to undermine the basic principles of moral virtue “by denying the framework which gives meaning and validity to ethical notions.”¹⁰ They include those forms of ethical nihilism that reject the law of karma, ethical qualities and efficacy of effort. Their consequences are said to be “fixed” (*niyata*) in that clinging to such views creates obstacles for one’s attainment of the divine states and from liberation. In extreme cases, such views may bring one rebirth in the suffering states.

Speculative views (*diṭṭhi,gata*), the most common of these three categories of views, are basically self-centred wishful thinking (craving) and unfounded conclusions (views), and include all philosophical ideas, metaphysical notions and religious teachings that cannot be experientially verified. They do not necessarily hinder one from divine rebirth, but are necessarily serious obstacles to liberation. **The Brahma-jāla Sutta** deals specifically with speculative views. However, even though the other two categories of views are not directly mentioned, they are clearly implied in them. As **Bodhi** notes:

[For the second category,] wrong views with fixed consequences, rests it ethically disruptive tenets upon doctrinal suppositions coming into purview of the Brahmajāla’s project, while [the first,] personality-view [self-identity view] forms the seed out of which all speculations evolve. The examination of speculative views is not unique to the Brahmajāla Sutta, for similar inquiries into man’s systems of belief are carried out by the Buddha elsewhere in the suttas. What distinguishes the Brahmajāla and gives it its special importance is the thoroughness with which it follows this enterprise through.

The Brahmajāla Sutta does not deal merely with a few selected topics of current philosophical interest to the Buddha’s contemporaries. It proposes to offer something far more complete: an exhaustive classification into sixty-two cases of the entire range of man’s views concerning the perennial topics of speculative thought, the ultimate nature of the self and the world.

(Bodhi 1978:4 f)

4.3 DANGERS OF WRONG VIEWS. The Buddha places great urgency in the correcting of wrong views and the destroying of their roots. In numerous suttas, the Buddha shows how wrong views lead to suffering. The most destructive aspect of wrong view is the speculative nature it incites in one. This is because they arise from ignorance, and from misunderstanding or distorting personal experience. Very often, as illustrated by the well known parable of the blind men and the elephant¹¹—where each person blind for birth, takes a part of the elephant to be the whole animal—the speculator takes a part to be the whole, or superimposes his own selective bias upon the world: he takes the word to be the thing.

Views lead to conceit: one measures oneself against others. A view is the most effective ego-booster: it sets one apart from others, often turning one into self-righteous judges accusing those who are not with them to be against them. A view-holder tends to extol himself and to disparage others, taking only one’s belief to be true and all else to be false. Understandably, differences in views are a common ground for quarrels and disputes,¹² not only between individuals but, more devastatingly, between groups, religions, and nations. Views are the seeds of tribalism.

Views (*diṭṭhi*) and craving (*taṇhā*) are closely related. Views result from the *intellectual* tendency to superimpose one’s view or world view upon a situation or upon others. Such thoughts are reinforced by repetition and mentally proliferated until they become firmly held as an absolute truth. Craving is the *affective* tendency to run after ideas that titillates one or boosts one’s ego, especially with regards to self-protection and self-preservation. The two always work together.

⁹ M 1/1:1-6 = SD 11.8.

¹⁰ Bodhi 1978:4.

¹¹ U 6.4/66-69.

¹² See esp **Kalaha,vivāda S** (Sn 862-877/168-171).

Clinging to views prevents one from seeing true reality, and as such is the leash that binds one to samsara. One is pushed on into one birth into another, conditioned by one's karma and accumulating it for renewed existence. This is the danger that is especially voiced by the Brahma, jāla Sutta [§§105-146].

5 Overview of the 62 grounds

5.1 INTRODUCTION. The main teaching of **the Brahma, jāla Sutta** (D 1) is the set of 62 grounds upon which all wrong views, actual and potential, arise. This set is divided into two large sections: speculations about the past (18 grounds) [A]¹³ and speculations about the future (44 grounds) [B].¹⁴ Section A (speculations about the past) is, except for the last standpoint (grounds 17-18), are presented in sets of four. But this is not the famous tetralemma (*catus,koṭi*, four points) of ancient Indian logic, which is actually used in Section B (speculations about the future) where applicable.

Section A, speculations about the past, comprises five standpoints or subsets of views (*diṭṭhi-t, thāna*), namely:

I eternalism	1-4	§§30-37
II partial eternalism	5-8	§§38-52
III extensionism	9-12	§§53-60
IV endless hedging	13-16	§§61-66
V fortuitous arising	17-18	§§67-70.

And Section B, speculations about the future, comprises only three standpoints or subsets of views, namely,

VI immortality (afterlife or survival)		
(1) conscious survival	19-34	§§75-77
(2) non-conscious survival	35-42	§§78-80
(3) neither conscious nor non-conscious survival	43-50	§§81-83
VII annihilationism	51-57	§§84-92
VIII supreme nirvana here and now	58-62	§§93-99.

(A) Speculators about the past (*pubb'anta, kappika*)

5.2 (I) THE ETERNALIST VIEW (*sassata, vāda*) [grounds 1-4, §§30-37]. The first set of grounds (1-4) listed in the Brahmajāla Sutta are those regarding speculating about the past (*pubb'anta, kappā*) by way of “**the eternalist view.**” This wrong view regards “the self and the world are eternal,” that is, holding the view that

the self and the world are eternal, barren, steadfast as a mountain peak, as a pillar firmly fixed, and though these beings roam and wander in samsara, pass away and re-arise, yet they (the self and the world) exist just like eternity itself. (D 1.32/1:14)¹⁵

Such a wrong view, says the Brahma, jāla Sutta, may arise through anamnesis or recollection of past lives in any of the four following ways:¹⁶

- (1) based on one's recollecting of up to 100,000 past lives [§31];
- (2) based on one's recollecting of up to 10 aeons (*kappa*) or world cycles (“contraction and expansion,” ie the pulsating universe) [§32];
- (3) based on one's recollecting of up to 40 aeons or world cycles [§33];
- (4) based on reasoning (*takka*) [§34].

¹³ D 1.28-73/1:12-30.

¹⁴ D 1.74-104/1:30-39.

¹⁵ *Sassato attā ca loko ca vañjho kūṭa'tṭho esika-t, thāyi-t, thito, te ca sattā sandhāvanti samsaranti cavanti upapajjanti, atthi tv-eva sassata, samāni.*

¹⁶ The first 3 of these 4 grounds for eternalist views are mentioned by Sāriputta in **Sampasādanīya S** (D 28.15/-3:108-111). Cf **Sāmañña, phala S** (D 2.92/1:80 = SD 8.10), which conflates (1) & (2) here.

As RH Robinson points out, this last view's "formal structure is the same as that of the eel-wiggler's case" (grounds 13-16), in so far as it amounts to hedging (1972:318 f) [see 4 here]. This is also the case with the fourth partial-eternalist view [2], the fourth extensionist view [3], and the second fortuitous arising view [5], in so far as they are hedgings, whether through pure ignorance or through good reasoning.

A NOTE ON ETERNALISM. In the **Titth'āyatana Sutta** (A 3.61), the Buddha speaks against the doctrines or notions of **determinism** (everything is due to past action, *pubbe,kata,hetu*), of **theism** (everything is due to God) (*issara,nimmāṇa,hetu*), and of **fatalism** (there is neither cause nor condition, *ahetu,-appaccayā*). The first notions criticized by the Titth'āyatana Sutta—that everything that happens is "due to our past actions" (*pubbe,kata,hetu*), and that everything is "due to God's creation" (*issara,nimmāṇa,-hetu*)—are those of "strict determinism" (*niyati,vāda*),¹⁷ which holds that all events affecting our lives have been predetermined. The real situation is, of course, more complicated than this, because there are different views of karma and of the God-idea.¹⁸ The third notion is the doctrine of fatalism, that is, the notion that everything occurs "without cause or reason" (*ahetu,appaccayā*), that is, by chance (*adhicca,-samuppanna*) [see 5 here].¹⁹

All these three notions fall under the category of "the doctrine of non-action" (*akiriya,vāda*). The Buddha's basic rebuttal is that if any of these three notions were true, then no one would be morally responsible for their commission and omission of deeds, and would follow the ten unwholesome course of actions (*akusala kamma,patha*),²⁰ that is, the breaking of the precepts through the three doors (body, speech and mind).

5.3 (II) THE PARTIAL-ETERNALIST VIEW (*ekacca,sassata,vāda*) [grounds 5-8, §§38-52]. The second set of grounds (5-8) listed in the Brahma,jāla Sutta are those speculating about the past based on "the partial-eternalist view." This wrong view regards "the self and the world are both eternal and not eternal," based on the speculation that some beings (like Brahmā or Creator) are eternal and some (like the speculator himself) are not [§§38-51], or, if he is a reasoner or logician (*takkī*) or one who relies on reasoning alone (that is, who think along a rationalist dualism), he may think thus (wrong view 8):²¹

That which is called "eye," or "ear," or "nose," or "tongue," or "body"—that self is impermanent, unstable, not eternal, subject to change. But that which is called "mind," or "mentality," or "consciousness"—that self is permanent, stable, eternal, not subject to change, and it will remain the same just like eternity itself. (D 1.49/1:21)²²

¹⁷ See Jayatilleke 1963:445-448.

¹⁸ For other texts that rebut the creator-idea, see eg **Tevijja Sutta** (D 13/1:235-252 = SD 1.8): on the falsity of the God-idea; **Pāṭika Sutta** (D 24.1.5/3:4, 2.14-21/3:28): it is not the Buddha's purpose to explain the origin of the world; **Devadaha S** (M 101.22/2:222): if an all-powerful has created a suffering world, he must be an evil god; **Bhuridatta J** (J 543/6:208): can there be an all-powerful, yet all-loving creator-god? For philosophical studies, see eg John Hospers, *An Introduction of Philosophical Analysis*, 2nd ed 1967:321-348 (ch 17) & G Dharmasiri, *A Buddhist Critique of the Christian Concept of God*, Colombo, 1974, esp chs 2 & 5.

¹⁹ **The Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2) mentions strict determinism and fatalism as being held and taught by the Ājīvika, Makkhali Gosāla, who claims: "Pleasure and pain are measured out by the bushel. Samsara (cycle of life and death) is fixed in its limits, with neither shortening nor lengthening, neither excess nor deficit. Just as a ball of string, when thrown, comes to its end simply by unwinding, in the same way, having transmigrated and wandered on, the wise and the foolish alike will put an end to pain." (D 2.18/1:54) = SD 8.10. See Jayatilleke 1963:261 f

²⁰ D 3:269, 290; A 5:264.

²¹ Grounds 5-7 due to partial-eternalism are respectively as follows: (5) theism; (6) the polytheism of beings who were gods corrupted by play; (7) polytheism of beings who were gods corrupted by mind.

²² *Yam kho idam vuccati cakkhun ti pi sotan ti pi ghānan ti pi jivhā ti pi kāyo ti pi ayam attā anicco addhuvo asassato vipariṇāma,dhammo. Yañ ca kho idam vuccati cittan ti vā mano ti vā viññānan ti vā ayam attā nicco dhuvo sassato avipariṇāma,dhammo sassata,samam that'eva ṭhassatī ti.*

5.4 (III) THE EXTENSIONIST VIEW (*antānanta, vāda*) [grounds 9-12 §§53-60]. The undeclared points 3-4 are elaborated in “the extensionist view”²³ (9-12) of the Brahma, jāla Sutta, that is,

- (1) this view that the world is finite [§54];
- (2) this view that the world is infinite [§55];
- (3) this view that the world is finite in a vertical direction but infinite across [§56];
- (4) this view that the world is neither finite nor infinite [§57].

The first three grounds here are those of meditators who have reached a certain level of mental concentration, but not beyond, perceiving only up to that level, thus holding the above respective views. In the case of (1), the speculator thinks, “This world is finite and bounded (by a circle)” (*antavā ayaṃ loko parivaṭṭamo*), basing his wrong view on his limited meditation concentration. The second speculator similarly thinks, “This world is infinite and unbounded” (*anantavā ayaṃ loko aparivanto*). The third thinks, “This world is finite and infinite” (*antavā ca ayaṃ loko ananto ca*), that is, finite upward and downward, but infinite across (horizontally). The fourth wrong view is based on reasoning:

Here, monks, some recluse or brahmin is a rationalist [logician, *takkī*], an investigator (*vīmaṃsī*). He declares his view, shaped by reason, deduced from his investigations, following his own mental genius, thus: “The world is neither finite nor infinite. Those recluses and brahmins who declare it to be infinite and bounded speak falsely. Those who declare it to be infinite and boundless speak falsely. Those who declare it to be both finite and infinite speak falsely. The world is neither finite nor infinite. (D 1.57/1:23 f)²⁴

5.5 (IV) THE ENDLESS HEDGERS (*amarā, vikkhepika*) [grounds 13-16, §§61-66]. The fourth set of grounds here—that of the rationalist or investigator—appears simply to be the denial of the preceding three propositions based on speculator’s reasoning and argumentation. In the first type of eel-wriggling (*amarā, vikkhepa*),²⁵ the Buddha declares,

Here, monks, some recluse or brahmin does not understand as it really is what is wholesome and what is unwholesome. He thinks, “I do not understand as it really is what is wholesome and what is unwholesome. If, without understanding, I were to declare something to be wholesome or unwholesome, my declaration might be false. If my declaration should be false, that would distress me, and that distress would be an obstacle to me.” Therefore, out of fear and loathing of making a false statement, he does not declare anything to be wholesome or unwholesome.

And when questioned about this or that point, he resorts to evasive statements and to endless hedging, “I do not take it thus, nor do I take it in that way, nor do I take it in some other way. I do not say that it is not, nor do I say that it is neither this nor that.” (D 1.61/1:25-27)

While this first eel-wriggler fears being distressed by failure [§62], the second fears that “desire, lust, hate or ill-will” (*tattha me assa chando vā rāgo vā doso vā paṭigho vā*) might arise in him [§64]. The third fears that he would be outwitted or left dumbfounded by clever debaters and hair-splitters [§64]. And the fourth is simply dull and stupid (*mando hoti momūho*) [§65]. In every case, they resort to hedging. In the light of this discussion, RH Robinson concludes:

²³ The term “extensionists” was first used by TW Rhys Davids, D:RD 1:35 ff. The Pāli *antānanta* = *anta* (finite) + *ananta* (infinite); *antānanta, vādī* = “those who hold that the world is finite and those who hold that the world is infinite,” a dvandva.

²⁴ *Idha bhikkhave ekacco samaṇo vā brāhmaṇo vā takkī hoti vīmaṃsī. So takka, pariyaḥataṃ vīmaṃsā ’nucari-taṃ sayam, paṭibhānaṃ evam āha: n’ evāyaṃ loko antavā na panānanto. Ye te samaṇa, brāhmaṇā evam āhaṃsu: antavā na panānanto. Ye te samaṇa, brāhmaṇā evam āhaṃsu: ananto ayaṃ loko aparivanto to tesam pi musā. Ye pi te samaṇa, brāhmaṇā evam āhaṃsu: ananto ayaṃ loko aparivanto to tesam pi musā. Ye pi te samaṇa, brāhmaṇā evam āhaṃsu: antavā ca ayaṃ loko ananto cāti tesam pi musā. N’ evāyaṃ loko antavā na panānanto ti.*

²⁵ TW Rhys Davids renders *amarā, vikkhepikā* as those “who wriggle like eels,” ie “eel-wrigglers” (D 1:37 ff).

The fourth lemma [of the *avyākata* points] seems to have meant hedging to early Buddhists. The rejection of this lemma, together with the explicit statements attributed to Gotama and his disciples to the effect that he knew what was to be known, should dispel the view that Gotama refused to assert the unexplained points because he was agnostic about them. (1972:318 f)

On the contrary, **the Brahma, jāla Sutta** declares, by way of a refrain after each section, the reason for the Buddha's refusal to affirm or deny the undeclared statements, thus in the Buddha's own words:

This [each of the 62 grounds for views], bhikshus, the Tathāgata understands. And he understands thus:

“These standpoints, thus grasped, thus misapprehended, will lead to such a future destiny, to such a state beyond.

And thus, the Tathāgata understands; he understands, too, what transcends this. Yet, even that understanding he does not misapprehend. And because he is free from wrong grasping, he has known for himself [within himself]²⁶ the cool [happy] state.

Having understood, as they really are, the arising, and the ending, and the gratification, and the danger, and the escape regarding feelings, the Tathagata, bhikshus, is liberated through non-clinging.

These truths, bhikshus, are deep, difficult to see, difficult to understand, peaceful, sublime, beyond the ken of reasoning, subtle, to be understood by the wise, which the Tathāgata, having realized for himself through direct knowledge, expounds to others—those who, rightly praising the Tathagata according to reality, would speak regarding these. (D 1.36/1:16 f, *passim*)

5.6 (V) DOCTRINES OF FORTUITOUS ARISING (*adhicca, samuppanna, vāda*) [grounds 17-18, §§67-70]. Those who subscribe to the notion of fortuitous arising (*adhicca, samuppanikā*), during the Buddha's time, were of two main types:

- (1) those who base their notion on conclusions drawn from their dhyanic meditation [§68], and
- (2) those who base their notion on reasoning [§69].

In modern philosophical terms, they can also be called “**indeterminists**.” The first type of **indeterminist**, it is said, learns to recollect their past with their retrocognitive vision “up to the moment of the arising of consciousness but no further” (*saññ'uppādam anussarati, tato param nānussarati*, D 1:28 f). Based on this experience, they argue, “I did not exist before, and not having existed, I have now come into being” (*aham pi pubbe nāhosim, so'mhi etarahi ahutvā sattatāya pariṇato*, D 1:28 f).²⁷

Indeterminism or non-action (*akiriya, vāda*) is the diametrical opposite of determinism. In such a scenario, one would not be able to gain spiritual liberation, since nothing is predictable, and karma and moral conduct would be meaningless, as one can experience neither cause nor effect of one's actions.

The reasoners (*takkī*) of indeterminism speculate on the nature of life and the self. Such speculations are also mentioned in **the Pañcattaya Sutta** (M 102).²⁸ The speculators of the early Upaniṣads, the skeptics, the materialists and most of the Ājīvakas came under this class. A reasoner, for example, might speculate that since he is happy in this life, he was therefore likewise in the past.²⁹ Such ideas are, at best, speculative and do not reflect reality.

Buddhism avoids the two extremes of strict determinism, on the one hand, and of indeterminism, on the other. Strict determinism means that everything is predetermined; as such there is no point in making any personal effort in moral virtue or working for one's salvation. In the case of indeterminism, every goes by chance; so there is no point making any personal effort either. The middle way of the Buddha

²⁶ *Paccattam*.

²⁷ See Jayatilleke 1963:445.

²⁸ M 102/2:228-238.

²⁹ M 102.14/2:233. See Jayatilleke 1963:271 f.

comprises the efficacy of personal effort and free will as stated by the Buddha in the short but important **Atta, kāri Sutta**.³⁰

(B) Speculators about the future (*apar'anta, kappika*)

5.7 (VI) IMMORTALITY. This subset or standpoint (or set of standpoints) deals with views regarding after-death survival. They are three standpoints, namely, conscious survival, non-conscious survival and neither conscious nor non-conscious survival, and their various grounds. In simple terms, these are three grounds for beliefs in life after death.

(1) DOCTRINES OF CONSCIOUS SURVIVAL (*saññī, vāda*) [grounds 19-34, §§75-77]. The advocates of this standpoint of conscious survival proclaim that the self or soul survives death, is healthy, conscious and are of 16 varieties, depending on their physical form, size, consciousness, and happiness.

(2) DOCTRINES OF NON-CONSCIOUS SURVIVAL (*asaññī, vāda*) [grounds 35-42, §§78-80]. The advocates of this standpoint of non-conscious survival proclaim that the self or soul survives death, is healthy, conscious and are of 16 varieties, and are of 8 varieties, depending on their physical form and size.

(3) DOCTRINES OF NEITHER CONSCIOUS NOR NON-CONSCIOUS SURVIVAL (*n'eva, saññī, nāsaññī, vāda*) [grounds 43-50, §§81-83]. The advocates of this standpoint of non-conscious survival proclaim that the self or soul survives death, is healthy, neither conscious nor non-conscious and are also of 8 varieties, depending on their physical form and size.

5.8 (VII) DOCTRINES OF ANNIHILATIONISM (*uccheda, vāda*) [grounds 51-57, §§84-92]. There are seven standpoints here. The first is that of the materialist for whom there is only this physical body that totally perishes at death. In other words, he does not believe in life after death. The other six standpoints all comprise of belief in some sort of soul that is transhuman, that is, of the sense-world, the form world, or the formless world. It is this soul that utterly perishes at death (along with the body).

The **Sāmañña, phala Sutta** gives a good example of the annihilationist view, that of Ajita Kesa, -kambala. When questioned by the rajah Ajāta, sattu on the visible fruit of the holy life, Ajita answers with what we would today identify as notions of materialism, which is closely associated with annihilationism:

Ajita Kesa, kambala, venerable sir, said to me, ‘Maharajah, there is nothing given, nothing offered, nothing sacrificed. There is no fruit or result of good or evil actions. There is no this world, no next world,³¹ there is no mother, no father, there are no spontaneously born beings;³² there are no recluses and brahmins who, living rightly and practising rightly, having directly known and realized for themselves this world and the hereafter, proclaim them.³³

³⁰ A 6.38/3:337 f = SD 10.10 Introd (2).

³¹ “There is no this world, no next world,” *n’atthi ayam loko, n’atthi para, loko*, lit “this world does not exist, the next world does not exist” (D 3:265, 287; M 1:286, 401, 515 (bis), 3:22, 52, 71; S 3:204, 348, 355, 351 (bis); A 1:269, 4:226, 5:265, 284; Nc:Be 276). While the Lokāyata materialists may be known to deny the next world, it is difficult to understand why they should deny the existence of this world as well. However, the problem is solved when one examines the only extant authentic Lokāyata text, *Tattvopaplava-Simha* (ed Saṅghavi & Parekh, Gaekwad Oriental Series 87, Baroda, 1940), by Jayarāśi Bhaṭṭa, a devoted Bṛhaspati adherent of the 8th century CE. According to this work, there was a Lokāyata materialist school that denied the existence of this world as well. While the pluralistic school of metaphysical materialists believed in the reality of the primary elements and denied only the next world, the nihilist school of pragmatic materialists denied the reality of both this world and the next. Basically, the latter asserted that our perception is always false. “Was Ajita also a pragmatist Materialist like Jayarāśi? The more probable explanation seems to be that the Buddhists identified all the known materialist views with Ajita, who symbolizes the philosophy of Materialism, inconsistently putting together the tenets of mutually opposed schools since they both (or all) happened to be in some sense (metaphysical or pragmatic) materialists” (Jayatilleke 1963:91; also 79 f, 92).

³² *opapātika*, said of the rebirth of a non-returner, but also refers to all divine and hell beings. See **Mahāli S** (D 1:27 156).

³³ Also occurs at **Sāleyyaka S** (M41.10/1:287). See **Apaṇṇaka S** (M 60.5-12/1:401-404) where this wrong view is answered.

‘A person is a composite of the four primary elements. At death, the earth (in the body) returns to and merges with the (external) earth-substance. The fire returns to and merges with the external fire-substance. The liquid returns to and merges with the external liquid-substance. The wind returns to and merges with the external wind-substance. The sense-faculties scatter into space.

Four men, with the bier as the fifth, carry the corpse. His eulogies are sounded only as far as the charnel ground. The bones turn pigeon-colored. The offerings end in ashes.

Generosity is taught by fools. The words of those who speak of existence after death are false, empty chatter.

With the break-up of the body, the wise and the foolish alike are annihilated, destroyed. They do not exist after death.’

23 Thus, venerable sir, when asked about a fruit of recluseship, visible here and now, Ajita Kesakambala answered with **annihilation**. (D 2.22-23/1:55) = SD 8.10³⁴

In the **Kaccāna,gotta Sutta** (S 12.15/2:17), the **Acela Kassapa Sutta** (S 12.17/2:20), the **Aññatara Brāhmaṇa Sutta** (S 12.46/2:75 f) and the **(Sabba) Jāṇussoṇī Sutta** (S 12.47/ 2:76 f), the Buddha comments on the extremes of “all exists” (*sabbam atthi*) and “nothing exists” (*sabbam n’atthi*), and of eternalism (*sassata*) and annihilationism (*uccheda*), and how, “not following either of these extremes, the Tathagata teaches the Dharma by the middle” (*ete te ubho ante anupagamma majjhena tathāgato dhammam deseti*). The “middle” here refers to dependent arising (*paṭicca samuppāda*).

5.9 (VIII) DOCTRINES OF SUPREME NIRVANA HERE AND NOW (*dittha,dhamma,nibbāna,vāda*) [grounds 58-62, §§93-99]. In discourses such as the **Mūla,pariyāya Sutta** (M 1), the Buddha admonishes his disciples in higher training or the “learners” (*sekha*)—those who already have experienced stream-entry and is practising for the higher stages of awakening—to avoid conceiving and delighting in any phenomenon, even nirvana.³⁵ Those who fail to do so, says Mūla,pariyāya Sutta, lacks understanding, that is, wisdom leading to liberation:

He perceives nirvana as nirvana.³⁶ Having perceived nirvana as nirvana:

- he conceives (himself as) nirvana;
- he conceives (himself) in nirvana;
- he conceives (himself apart) from nirvana;
- he conceives, “Nirvana is mine”
- he delights in nirvana (as identity).

Why is that? Because he lacks full understanding, I say. (M 1.26/1:4) = SD 11.8³⁷

The Commentary says that nirvana here refers to the five kinds of “supreme nirvana here and now” (*parama,dittha,dhamma,nibbāna*) of the 62 grounds for wrong view listed in the **Brahma,jāla Sutta** [§§93-99], that is, nirvana identified with the total enjoyment of sense-pleasures, or with dhyanic pleasure. Craving causes one to enjoy this state or to lust after it. Conceit causes one to pride oneself as having attained it. Views makes one conceive of this illusory nirvana to be permanent, pleasurable and as being of an abiding nature. (MA 1:38).

This notion of instant nirvana is becoming more common as Buddhism becomes more widespread and fashionable. The advocates of instant nirvana tend to reject any teaching that is not immediately or

³⁴ On the possibility that Vassakāra, one of Ajātasattu’s chief ministers, is a *lokāyata*, see Jayatilleke 1963:92 f.

³⁵ M 1.50/1:4,30 = SD 11.8.

³⁶ “Nirvana as nirvana” (*nibbānam nibbānato*), lit “nirvana from nirvana.” Comy says that nirvana here refers to the 5 kinds of “supreme nirvana here and now” (*parama,dittha,dhamma,nibbāna*) of the 62 wrong views listed in **Brahma,jāla S** (D 1.3.19-25/1:36-38), ie nirvana identified with the total enjoyment of sense-pleasures or with each of the 4 absorptions (*jhāna*). Craving causes one to enjoy this state or to lust after it. Conceit causes one to pride oneself as having attained it. Views makes one conceive of this illusory nirvana to be permanent, pleasurable and as an abiding self. (MA 1:38).

³⁷ See esp Introd 3.

empirically verifiable. Most of them do not believe in karma and rebirth, simply because these teachings cannot really be verified by our physical senses.³⁸ Unfortunately, without a spiritually cultivated mind, one can never really see the truth of karma and rebirth. As such, the instant nirvanite is a material Buddhist concerned only with the moment.

The instant nirvana syndrome includes the quest for liberation outside of oneself, instead of looking within. One seeks teachers, without following teachings. One canonizes arhats of admired gurus, instead of following the stream. One seeks fashionable teachings instead of seeking the true teachings. Indeed, the symptoms of instant nirvana may be the most difficult to notice nowadays.

5.10 SPIRIT OF THE 62 GROUNDS. The 62 grounds of the Brahma, jāla Sutta are not a standard of faith that defines one as a Buddhist or not. Rather, they are a litmus test that one for one's spiritual progress, or lack of it. It is important to remember that *diṭṭhi*, views wrong and right, persist as long as one has not reached arhathood.³⁹ All views are ways of looking through tinted lenses. They may get better polished or focussed, and trained in the right direction, as one grows spiritually. But only when one is able to see directly with natural eyes that direct knowledge arises.

To be aware of the 62 grounds for wrong view, and to understand them, is to forewarn oneself against being grounded and mired in them. They are the symptoms of spiritual illness and weakness, identifying which one should then take the appropriate remedy. Let us now examine these symptoms: what follows is a diagram of the 62 grounds with a summary of their main points:

³⁸ For a recent example of such a misconception of nirvana, see **Chann'ovāda S** (M 144) = SD 11.12 Introd 2 (on Julius Evola).

³⁹ See Ñāṇananda 1971:36 f.

The 62 Grounds for Wrong Views

[abridged paraphrased translation: see also Bodhi 1978:345-347]

Speculations about the past

<p>I Eternalism [§§30-37]</p> <p>A MEDITATOR gains mental concentration of such a level that his mind is thus concentrated...</p>	<p>1 ...he recalls his manifold past existence, <u>up to 100,000 births</u>.</p> <p>2 ...he recalls his manifold past existence, <u>up to 10 world cycles</u>.</p> <p>3 ...he recalls his manifold past existence, <u>up to 40 world cycles</u>.</p>	<p>He says thus, "The self and the world are eternal, barren, steadfast as a mountain peak, standing firm like a pillar. And though these beings roam and wander through samsara, fall away and re-arise, yet the self and the world remain the same just like eternity itself."</p>	
<p>4 A RATIONALIST fabricates a view through reasoning, having it investigated through mental inquiry, by way of his own intelligence...</p>			
<p>II Partial eternalism [§§38-52]</p> <p>A MEDITATOR gains mental concentration of such a level that his mind is thus concentrated.....</p>	<p>...he recollects [<u>his immediate</u>] <u>past life</u>, but recollects not what is before that. He claims:</p>	<p>5 "God [Brahmā] is eternal: we are created by him; we are impermanent."</p>	
<p>A RATIONALIST fabricates a view through reasoning, having it investigated through mental inquiry, by way of his own intelligence, claim...</p>		<p>6 "Some devas, undefiled by play, are eternal; we are impermanent."</p>	
<p>A RATIONALIST fabricates a view through reasoning, having it investigated through mental inquiry, by way of his own intelligence, claim...</p>		<p>7 "Some devas, undefiled by mind (ie not covetous) are eternal; we are impermanent."</p>	
<p>III Extensionism [§§53-60]</p> <p>A MEDITATOR gains mental concentration of such a level that his mind is thus concentrated...</p>	<p>...he dwells perceiving the world as <u>finite</u>. He says thus:</p>	<p>9 "This world is finite, bounded by a circle." Everyone else is wrong.</p>	
<p>A RATIONALIST fabricates a view through reasoning, having it investigated through mental inquiry, by way of his own intelligence...</p>		<p>10 "This world is infinite, unbounded." Everyone else is wrong.</p>	
<p>A RATIONALIST fabricates a view through reasoning, having it investigated through mental inquiry, by way of his own intelligence...</p>		<p>11 "This world is both finite and infinite." Everyone else is wrong.</p>	
<p>IV Endless hedging [§§61-66]</p> <p>A HEDGER <u>does not really know</u> what is wholesome or unwholesome. He fears that if he expresses any opinion, desire, lust, hate or aversion might arise...</p>	<p>13...which would be <u>falsehood</u>, which would vex him, becoming an obstacle: so he fears falsehood; and</p>	<p>resorts to evasive statements, saying 'I do not it in this way. I do not take it in that way. I do not take it in any other way. I do not take it as not so. I do not take it as not not so.'</p>	
<p>He fears that if he expresses any opinion, he might be questioned...</p>			
<p>He fears that if he expresses any opinion, he might be questioned...</p>	<p>14...which would cause <u>clinging</u>, which would vex him, becoming an obstacle: so he fears clinging; and</p>		
<p>He fears that if he expresses any opinion, he might be questioned...</p>		<p>15...and <u>might be unable to reply</u>, which would vex him, and so become an obstacle for him: so he fears debate; and</p>	
<p>16 One dull and stupid, when questioned on the 14 theses [§65],...</p>			
<p>V Fortuitous arising [§§67-73]</p> <p>17 A NON-CONSCIOUS DEVA, reborn here, recalls only his last birth, none before that.</p>		<p>The self and the world have arisen by chance.</p>	
<p>18 A RATIONALIST fabricates a view through reasoning, having it investigated through mental inquiry, by way of his own intelligence...</p>			

Speculations about the future

VI Immortality: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conscious survival [§§75-77] They proclaim that the self [soul], after death, does not decay, is <u>conscious</u> and:	19 has form	27 of unified consciousness
	20 formless	28 of diversified consciousness
	21 both has form and is formless	29 of limited consciousness
	22 neither has form nor is formless	30 on boundless consciousness
	23 finite	31 undividedly happy
	24 infinite	32 undividedly suffering
	25 both finite and infinite	33 both happy and suffering
	26 neither finite nor infinite	34 neither happy nor suffering
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-conscious survival [§§78-80] They proclaim that the self [soul], after death, does not decay, is <u>non-conscious</u> and:	35 has form	39 finite
	36 formless	40 infinite
	37 both has form and is formless	41 both finite and infinite
	38 neither has form nor is formless	42 neither finite nor infinite
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neither conscious nor non-conscious survival [§§81-83] They proclaim that the self [soul], after death, does not decay, is <u>neither conscious nor non-conscious</u> and:	43 has form	47 finite
	44 formless	48 infinite
	45 both has form and is formless	49 both finite and infinite
	46 neither has form nor is formless	50 neither finite nor infinite
VII Annihilationism [§§84-92] One holds this view:	51 The self has physical form, composed of the four great elements, born of mother and father.	The self is completely annihilated at death.
Another says that while he does not deny that such a self (51) exists, but it is not completely annihilated. For there is another self that is	52 divine, having physical form, of the sense-sphere, partaking of solid food.	It is <i>this</i> self that is completely annihilated at death.
	53 divine, having physical form, mind-made, complete with limbs, organs, and senses.	
	54 of the sphere of infinite space.	
	55 of the sphere of infinite consciousness.	
	56 of the sphere of nothingness.	
57 of the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception.		
VIII Nirvana here and now [§§93-99] One holds this view:	58 When this self enjoys <u>the pleasures of its senses</u> ,	<i>to that extent</i> , it has attained to supreme nirvana here and now.
Another says that while he does not deny that such a self (51) exists, but it is not completely annihilated. For there is	59 another self is dwelling in <u>the 1st dhyana</u> ,	
	60 another self is dwelling in <u>the 2nd dhyana</u> ,	
	61 another self is dwelling in <u>the 3rd dhyana</u> ,	
	62 another self is dwelling in <u>the 4th dhyana</u> ,	

6 The 62 grounds and wrong views

6.1 WRONG VIEWS. We will here briefly examine how the various common wrong views mentioned in the Suttas fit into the 62 grounds. In other words, we will see how the 62 grounds operate in practical terms. The Brahma, jāla Sutta contains the fullest canonical explanation of the ten (or fourteen) undeclared points or undetermined theses (*avyākata*),⁴⁰ by way of the 62 grounds for wrong views. Besides the undeclared points [3.2], the 62 grounds are also the bases for various other wrong views reported in a number of suttas [3.3-3.5]. As such, the Sutta deals with all the wrong views stated in the Canon.

Of these 62 grounds for wrong view, 49 appear to be related to various meditation attainments, namely:⁴¹

recollection of past lives:	grounds 1-3, 5-7, 17;
the divine eye:	grounds 31-34, 51-57;
kasina meditation	grounds 9-11, 19, 23-25, 29-30, 35, 39-42, 43, 47-49;
dhyana	grounds 20-22, 27, 36-38, 44-46, 59-62.

“This ration (nearly 80%),” notes Analayo, “constitutes an overwhelming testimony to the view-generating propensity of deep concentration experiences” (2003:181 n34). In other words, dhyanic experiences, especially in the unguided and the inexperienced, or what is perceived as dhyanic experiences, can easily lead to wrong views.⁴²

6.2 THE 10 UNDECLARED POINTS. Although the ten undeclared points or indeterminate theses are held and hotly debated by the sectarians of his days, the Buddha leaves them generally unanswered. As far as Buddhism goes these metaphysical speculative theses have nothing positive to do with spiritual liberation. On the contrary, as we shall see below, they are all caught up in the perfect net of views.⁴³

The ten undeclared points are a well known set in the early Canon, and important enough to warrant it a whole chapter of 11 suttas, that is, **the Abyākata Saṃyutta** (S 44).⁴⁴ All these suttas explain why the Buddha has not adopted any of the metaphysical theses. Bodhi, in his introduction to the chapter, writes:

The suttas in this chapter are enough to dispose of the common assumption that the Buddha refrained from adopting any of these metaphysical standpoints merely on pragmatic grounds, ie, because they are irrelevant to the quest for deliverance from suffering. The answers given to the queries show that the metaphysical tenets are rejected primarily because, at the fundamental level, they all rest upon the implicit assumption of a self, an assumption which in turn springs from ignorance about the real nature of the five aggregates and the six sense bases. For one who has fathomed the real nature of these phenomena, all these speculative views turn out to be untenable. (S:B 1132; emphasis added)

While the Pali Canon knows of only ten undeclared points, the Mahāsaṅghikas mention fourteen points, by extending point 1 (the world is eternal, *sassato loko*) and point 3 (the world is finite, *antavā loko*), into a tetralemma each.⁴⁵ It is curious that the Pali Canon nowhere has the 14-point set.⁴⁶

⁴⁰ Refs to the *avyākata*: **Cūḷa Māluṅkyā,putta S** (M 63/2:426-432) = SD 5.8; **Aggi Vacchagotta S** (M 72/1:-483-489) = SD 6.15 Introd 2-3; **Pañcattaya S** (M 102/2:228-238); **Vacchagotta Saṃyutta** (S 33/3:257-263); **Avyākata Saṃyutta** (S 10/4:374-403). Besides **Brahma, jāla S** (D 1.28-104/1:12-39 = SD 25), see also **Mahāli S** (D 6.16-19/1:157 f, on *jīva*), **Poṭṭhapāda S** (D 9.25-34/1:187-193 = SD 7.14); **Mahā Nidāna S** (D 15/2:55-71 = SD 5.17); **Pāsādikā S** (D 29.30-33/3:135-138, the *tathāgata*); **Diṭṭhi Saṃyutta** (S 3:213-224); **Nānā Titthiyā S** or **Āhu S** (U 6.4/66-69) = SD 21.16; **Titthā S** (U 6.5/69 f) **Milinda, pañha** (Miln 144 ff); **Abhidharma, kośa Bhāṣya**, App (Pudgala, viniścaya); **Madhyamika Kārikā** 27, 22, 25; **Aṣṭa, sāhasrikā Prajñā, pāramitā** (Bibl Indica) 269 ff; **Mahāvvyutpatti** 206/64; **Dharma, saṅgraha** 67. Cf a different list of speculative views at **Mahā Taṇhā, saṅkhaya S** (M 3823/1:264 f) = SD 7.10. See also Robinson 1972:317 f.

⁴¹ This “correlations given with the help of the commentary” has been made by Analayo (2003:181 n34).

⁴² See Chandima Wijebendera, *Early Buddhism: It religious and intellectual milieu*, Kelaniya (Sri Lanka): Kelaniya University, 1993:21.

⁴³ For an easy and helpful reading on the 10 points, see Gethin 1998:66-68.

⁴⁴ That is, S 44.1-11/4:374-402.

⁴⁵ See Murti 1960: 36-54 (ch 2), esp 38; Jayatilleke 1963:288, 339.

⁴⁶ Cf the survivalist tetralemma (23-26, 39-42, 47-50) regarding the nature of the afterlife self/soul.

The 10 undeclared points

The 62 grounds for wrong views

1. The world is eternal: (1)-(4) <u>The eternalists</u>	1-4 “The self and the world are eternal, barren, standing like a peak, steadfast as a firm pillar. ⁴⁷ And though these beings roam and wander through samsara, fall away and re-arise, yet the self and the world remain the same just like eternity itself.”
2. The world is not eternal: (5)-(8) <u>The partial eternalists</u>	5 “God [Brahmā] is eternal: we are created by him; we are impermanent.”
	6 “Some devas, undefiled by play, are eternal; we are impermanent.”
	7 “Some devas, undefiled by mind (ie not covetous) are eternal; we are impermanent.”
	8 “The body [ie the 5 physical senses] are impermanent, but the mind or consciousness is not.”
(51-57) <u>The annihilationists</u>	51 “The self has physical form, composed of the four great elements, born of mother and father.” 52-57 “It is not completely annihilated. For there is another self that is of mind-made form, or formless, etc.
3. The world is finite: (9), (11) <u>The extensionists</u>	9 “This world is finite, bounded by a circle.” Everyone else is wrong.
	10 “This world is infinite, unbounded.” Everyone else is wrong.
4. The world is infinite: (10), (11) <u>The extensionists</u>	11 “This world is both finite and infinite.” Everyone else is wrong.
	12 “This world is neither finite nor infinite.” Everyone else is wrong.
(Not applicable)	[13-16] (Endless hedging): see thesis 10. [17-18] (Fortuitous arising) [3.3]
5. The self & the body are the same: ⁴⁸ (19-50) <u>The survivalists</u>	19-34 (Conscious survival) They proclaim that the self [soul], after death, does not decay, is <u>conscious</u> , etc.
6. The self & the body are different: (19-50) <u>The survivalists</u>	35-42 (Non-conscious survival) They proclaim that the self [soul], after death, does not decay, is <u>non-conscious</u> , etc. 43-50 (Neither conscious nor non-conscious survival) They proclaim that the self [soul], after death, does not decay, is <u>neither conscious nor non-conscious</u> ...
7. The Tathagata exists after death	19-50 (Survival) They proclaim that the self [soul], after death, does not decay,...
8. The Tathagata does not exist after death	51-57 (Annihilationism)
(Not applicable)	[58-62] (Supreme nirvana here and now) [3.3]
9. The Tathagata both exists and not exist after death	5-8 (Partial eternalism)
10. The Tathagata neither exists nor not exist after death	13-16 (Endless hedging)

⁴⁷ *Sassato attā ca loko ca vañjho kūṭ’attho esika-ṭ,ṭhāyi-ṭ,ṭhito*. Immediately following this, **Sampasādaniya S** (D 28) adds: “I know the past, when the world rolled out [expanded] or when it rolled in [contracted], but I do not know the future, whether the world will roll out [expand] or whether it will roll in [contract]” (D 28.15(1)/3:109 = SD 10.12).

⁴⁸ It is noteworthy that the propositions regarding the self (or soul) and the body never appear in the Canon as a tetralemma, but only as a dilemma or dyad, ie, as these 2 points (5 & 6).

Here, an explanatory note regarding points 6-10 is in order. **HR Robinson**, in a useful essay, makes this helpful observation:

Thomas observes that for the early Buddhists *bhāva* [existence] is something perceptible to the senses.⁴⁹ This should be taken together with Schayer’s point that in ancient Indian discussions existence is always spatial.⁵⁰ Thus the question “Does the *tathāgata* exist (*hoti* or *atthi*) after death?” means “Does the deceased *tathāgata* have a spatial location, and is he perceptible to the senses?”

Early Upaniṣadic asseverations place the realm of the immortal, the liberated variously in the *brahmaloka*, *svargaloka*, or the trans-solar region. It is quite literally and spatially the highest cosmic plane. In cosmological suttas such as the [Kevaḍḍha Sutta, D 11], however, the paradise of the god Brahma is merely a *devaloka*, and *devaloka* is not the abode of immortality. The question in the [Kevaḍḍha Sutta] is “Where do the great elements—earth, water, fire, etc—not occur?”⁵¹

The answer—in the *viññāṇa*, the spirit of the liberated man—in effect answers the question about the destination of the *tathāgata* after death. It is the *nirodhadhātu* (D 3:215),⁵² otherwise called *dhammadhātu* (*dhammaṭṭhiti*), which transcends the triple world (*tiloka*).

(RH Robinson 1972:321; refs & Pali normalized & corrected)⁵³

6.3 WRONG VIEWS REGARDING CAUSALITY. Let us return to our comparative study of the 62 grounds and various wrong views. The above comparative table shows how the ten undeclared points are related to the 55 of the 62 grounds, that is, except for ground 17-18 (fortuitous arising) and 58-62 (supreme nirvana here and now), which are grounds for the following wrong views regarding causality, mentioned in **the Acela Kassapa Sutta** (S 12.17)⁵⁴ and **the (Kamma,vāda) Bhūmija Sutta** (S 12.25):⁵⁵

Wrong views regarding causality	Grounds for the wrong views
1. Suffering is caused by oneself	1-4 Eternalism
2. Suffering is caused by another	51-57 Annihilationism
3. Suffering is by both oneself and another	1-4 Eternalism 5-8 Partial eternalism 51-57 Annihilationism
4. Suffering is by neither oneself nor another	13-16 Endless hedging 17-18 Fortuitous arising 58-62 Supreme nirvana here and now

When Kassapa the naked ascetic asks the Buddha whether suffering is self-caused, other-caused, both or neither, the Buddha answers in each case, not with a categorical negation, “It is not so” (*no h’etam*), but with “Think not so” (*mā h’evaṃ*). If the Buddha had simply answered, “It is not so,” he would be taking this merely as a philosophical discussion. The Buddha’s answer reflects his active compassion in gently telling Kassapa that these are wrong views and pernicious one, too.

The Buddha goes on to tell Kassapa that the first view, that suffering is self-caused leads to **eternalism** (*sassata,vāda*) (since one holds to the notion that the one who acts is the one who feels the result). The second view, that suffering is other-caused (since one holds that one acts but another feels the result), leads to **annihilationism** (*uccheda,vāda*). The third view entails **both eternalism and annihilationism**.

⁴⁹ EJ Thomas 1933:59, 61, 64, 128.

⁵⁰ S Schayer 1935:401-415.

⁵¹ D 11.67-85/1:215-223 = SD 1.7.

⁵² That is, **Saṅgīti S**, D 33.1.10(14)/3:215.

⁵³ See SD 5.8 Introd (4.6).

⁵⁴ S 12.17/2:18-22 = SD 18.5 (esp Introd).

⁵⁵ S 12.25/2:38 f = SD 18.6; see also S 12.24, 26.

The fourth view is a total denial of causality (*adhicca, samuppanna*): this fall under the category of “fortuitous arising” (grounds 17-18), which would include the fatalists and the materialists.

6.4 DOCTRINES OF NON-ACTION. The **Titth’āyatana Sutta** (A 3.61) contains another well known set of wrong views, declared by the Buddha to constitute doctrines of non-action (*akiriya, vāda*), that is, the contrary of the doctrine of karma, or personal moral accountability.⁵⁶ Here, the Buddha rebuts the following doctrines or notions:

1. determinism (everything is due to past action) (*pubbe, kata, hetu*),
2. theism (everything is due to God) (*issara, nimmāṇa, hetu*), and
3. fatalism (no causality) (*ahetu, paccaya*).

The Buddha’s basic rebuttal is that if any of these three notions were true, then no one would be morally responsible for things done or undone, and would follow the ten unwholesome course of actions (*akusala kamma, patha*),⁵⁷ that is, doing unwholesome deeds through the three doors (body, speech and mind).

Doctrines of non-action	Grounds for the wrong views
1. All our experiences are due to past karma	5-8 (Partial eternalism) 51-57 (Annihilationism)
2. All our experiences are due to God’s creation	1-4 (Eternalism) 5-8 (Partial eternalism) 9-12 (Extensionism)
3. All our experiences are uncaused and unconditioned	17-18 (Fortuitous arising).

6.5 THE 16 VIEWS. Besides the well known 10 undeclared points or theses [3.2], there is a more comprehensive, but lesser known, set of 16 views, mentioned in the **Nānā Titthiyā Sutta 2** (U 6.5). The various sectarians rely on these views for support (*nānā, diṭṭhi, nissaya, nissitā*). These 16 views are listed in sets of four (tetralemma), as follows:⁵⁸

- I (1-4) the duration of the self (soul) and the world;
- II (5-8) the cause of the self (soul) and the world;
- III (9-12) the duration of pleasure and pain, and of the self (soul) and the world;
- IV (13-16) the cause of pleasure and pain, and of the self (soul) and the world.

This listing may at first appear rather forced, but they are a summary of the views predominant amongst the sectarians of the Buddha’s time. The views of groups I and II are evidently contained in groups III and IV in their respective forms. These sets of views probably show that I and II were held or discussed separately, while sets II and IV form more elaborate versions of such views.⁵⁹

The view of group III appear to be simply extensions of the undeclared points (1) “the world is eternal” (*sassato loko*) and (2) “the world is not eternal” (*asassato loko*) [3.2]. There is an obvious link in the views of self and of the world: nowhere in the Canon do we find any example of a view combining the eternity of the self with the non-eternity of the world, and vice versa. We find in the Bṛhad Āraṇyaka Upaniṣad, for example, the statement that “one should regard the soul (*ātman*) as his world...” (*ātmānam eva lokam upāsīta*, BṛhadĀ 1.4.16). And in Buddhism, too, we find that the end of the world is where one’s experiences ends:⁶⁰

Monks, the end of the world cannot be known, seen or reached by going, I say. Yet, monks, I also say that without reaching the end of the world there is no making an end to suffering.⁶¹

⁵⁶ A 3.61/1:173-177 = SD 6.8. Similar views are discussed in **Sīvaka S** (S 36.21/4:230 f = SD 5.6) & **Devadaha S** (M 101/2:214-228 = SD 18). On causality, see Jayatilleke 1963:445-450.

⁵⁷ D 3:269, 290; A 5:264.

⁵⁸ U 6.5/69 f.

⁵⁹ For a detailed discussion, see Jayatilleke 1963:252-262.

⁶⁰ See Jayatilleke 1963:248.

⁶¹ On the meanings of “world,” see **Rohitassa S** in SD 7 Introd (1).

Nāham bhikkhave gamanena lokassa antaṃ nātayyaṃ daṭṭhayyaṃ pattayyaṃ ti vadāmi. Na ca panāham bhikkhave apatvā lokassa antaṃ dukkhassa anta, kiriyam vadāmi ti.

(S 35.116/4:93 = SD 7.4; A 9.38/4:430)

There is also a similar connection between the presence of the self or soul and its experience of pleasure and pain (*sukha, dukkha*), since if the self is eternal it follows that its feelings would also be eternal.

The 16 views

Grounds for the wrong views⁶²

I 1. The self and the world are eternal	1-4 Eternalism
2. The self and the world are not eternal	51-57 Annihilationism
3. The self and the world are both eternal and not eternal	1-4 Eternalism 51-57 Annihilationism 5-8 Partial-eternalism
4. The self and the world are neither eternal nor not eternal	13-16 Endless hedging
II 5. The self and the world are self-caused	1-4 Eternalism
6. The self and the world are other-caused ⁶³	51-57 Annihilationism
7. The self and the world are both self-caused and other-caused	1-4 Eternalism 5-8 Partial eternalism 51-57 Annihilationism
8. The self and the world have neither self nor other as cause, and are uncaused	13-16 Endless hedging 17-18 Fortuitous arising 58-62 Supreme nirvana here and now
III 9. Pain and pleasure, the self and the world, are eternal	1-4 Eternalism
10. Pain and pleasure, the self and the world, are not eternal	51-57 Annihilationism
11. Pain and pleasure, the self and the world, are both eternal and not eternal	1-4 Eternalism 5-8 Partial-eternalism ⁶⁴ 51-57 Annihilationism
12. Pain and pleasure, the self and the world, are neither eternal nor not eternal	13-16 Endless hedging
IV 13. Pain and pleasure, the self and the world, are self-caused	1-4 Eternalism
14. Pain and pleasure, the self and the world, are other-caused	51-57 Annihilationism
15. Pain and pleasure, the self and the world, are both self-caused and other-caused	1-4 Eternalism 5-8 Partial eternalism 51-57 Annihilationism
16. Pain and pleasure, the self and the world, have neither self nor other as cause, and are uncaused	13-16 Endless hedging 17-18 Fortuitous arising 58-62 Supreme nirvana here and now

⁶² For explanation of the grounds here, see (5) below.

⁶³ “Other-caused” (*param, kato*) here means that the self and the world are created by a another, such as Īśvara (Creator God), Puruṣa (primordial self), Prajāpati, Time, or Prakṛti (nature) (UA 344). A different list is found at Vism 16.85/511 (= Vism:Ñ 584 n23). For discussion on creator god, see Jayatilleke 1963:260 f.

⁶⁴ Jayatilleke identifies this view as that of the Trairāśika Ājīvikas (1963:159, 254).

This list is clearly a complicated one, which has led some scholars to think that it is a late systematization. Of the Nānā Titthiya Sutta 2, **Pande** says:

It expresses Buddha's opposition to Ekamsavāda⁶⁵ so well, correlating it with his Abyākatavāda [3.2], that it is difficult to resist considering it as old as Buddha himself. It stands on the same level as the parable of the poisoned arrow,⁶⁶ to which it is a valuable supplement. (1974:75)⁶⁷

7 The Buddha's authority

These comparative tables are clearly useful in showing that the ten undeclared points and various common wrong views (and their alternatives) are alluded to in the list of 62 grounds for wrong views. We may now ask a relevant question: on what ground does make such a claim? That answer is **self knowledge** (*sayam abhiññā*) or direct knowledge (*aññā*). This is more fully stated in §§101-104 of the Brahma, jāla Sutta itself:

101 <3.29> These, bhikshus, are the sixty-two grounds on which those recluses and brahmins who are speculators about the past, who are speculators about the future, who are speculators about both the past and future, who hold various dogmatic views about both the past and future, assert their dogmatic notions.⁶⁸

102 Whatever recluses or brahmins there may be who are speculators about the past, who are speculators about the future, who are speculators about both the past and future, who hold various dogmatic views about both the past and future, they do so on these sixty-two grounds, or on any one of them. There is none beyond this.

103 <3.30> This, bhikshus, the Tathagata knows, thus:

'These standpoints thus grasped, thus wrongly clung to, lead to such a destiny, to such a hereafter.'

And the Tathagata knows, too, what is beyond this. Yet he does not wrongly cling to even that understanding. Not wrongly clinging, he knows coolness [nirvana] for himself.

Bhikshus, having understood as they really are the arising and passing away of feelings, and their gratification, and their disadvantages, and the escape regarding them, the Tathagata is liberated through non-clinging.

104 <3.31> These truths, bhikshus, are deep, difficult to see, difficult to understand, peaceful, sublime, beyond the sphere of reasoning, subtle, to be known by the wise, which the Tathagata, having realized for himself through direct knowledge, declares it.

And those who would rightly praise the Tathagata in accordance with reality would speak of them. (D1.101=104/1:39)

The Buddha's list of 62 grounds for wrong views is comprehensive, and "There is none beyond this." However, he knows much more than this, but even then he does not cling to such knowledge. For, the Buddha is one liberated through non-clinging. And it is through a direct understanding of these grounds that he teaches them, not as theory, but as fact. As such, the Buddha is clearly no agnostic, but one who has truly and fully awakened to the liberating truth.

In **the Saṅgārava Sutta** (M 100), we find the Buddha classifying **holy persons** before and during his time in terms of their ways of knowing in three classes, namely:⁶⁹

⁶⁵ That is, "one-sided" categorical statements, esp asserting only this is right, everything else wrong.

⁶⁶ M 63.5b/2:429 = SD 5.8.

⁶⁷ H Robinson, however, cautions: "This argument, though, presupposes that something well said was probably said by the Buddha; it is an argument from doctrine rather than a strictly textual and formal argument. Consequently, conclusions based on it cannot be used to support philosophical reasoning without the danger of circularity." (1972: 317)

⁶⁸ "Dogmatic notions," *adhivutti, pada*.

⁶⁹ M 100.7-8/2:211 = SD 10.9 (esp Introd 2). See Jayatilleke, *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*, 1963, esp ch 4.

- (1) **The traditionalists** (*anussavikā*), who, like the brahmins of the Three Vedas, on the basis of oral tradition, proclaim the fundamentals of the holy life after they have reached the consummation and perfection of direct knowledge here and now. The traditionalists derive their knowledge and claims wholly from “listening” (*suta*),⁷⁰ that is, rote, revelation, tradition and interpretation of teachings and scripture.
- (2) **The rationalists and speculators [metaphysicians]** (*takkī vīmaṃsī*), who, entirely on the basis of mere faith. Using reasoning and speculating—that is, knowledge through thinking (*cinta*)⁷¹—to reinforce that faith, they proclaim their dogmas and ideas. The rationalists derive their knowledge and claims through reasoning and speculations without any claim to extrasensory perception. The speculators of the early Upaniṣads, the skeptics, the materialists and most of the Ājīvakas come under this class.
- (3) **The experientialists** have some sort of direct or personal knowledge of the truth (*sāmaṇiyeva dhammaṃ abhiññāya*). This mode of knowing—gained through cultivation (*bhāvanā*)⁷²—includes extrasensory perception. Many of the thinkers of the middle and late Upaniṣads, some of the Ājīvakas and Jains can be put in this class. The materialists, as empiricists (those who advocate reality as known only through personal experience, that is, the senses), may also be classed here, “if not for the fact that they denied the validity of claims to extrasensory perception.”⁷³ The Buddha declares himself to be a teacher in this category.⁷⁴

After explaining these three classes of teachers and thinkers of his time, the Buddha declares that his statements are made through direct knowledge:

I, Bhāra,dvāja, am one of those recluses and brahmins who, having directly known the Dharma for themselves regarding things not heard before,⁷⁵ proclaim the fundamentals of the holy life after they have reached the consummation and perfection of superknowledge here and now. As to how I am one of those recluses and brahmins who, having directly known the Dharma for themselves, proclaim the fundamentals of the holy life after they have reached the consummation and perfection of direct knowledge here and now, that may be understood in the following way. [The Buddha then details his life from his renunciation to his awakening.]

(M 100.8/2:211 = SD 10.9)

Aggi,vessana, a monk whose mind is liberated thus, sides with no one and disputes with no one.⁷⁶ He uses speech that is spoken and current in the world without being attached to it.⁷⁷

(D 74.13/1:500)

Whatever view that an unawakened person could possibly present or subscribe to would be caught in the divine net (*brahma,jāla*), debating, arguing, and evangelizing, but unwittingly led by the unwhole-

⁷⁰ Here, *suta*, “listening,” or more fully *suta,maya paññā* (wisdom through listening), refers, generally, to the most common mode of learning and knowing, and, specifically, to religious or academic learning. This might be said to be “third-hand” knowledge. The other two modes of learning that follow are, namely: *cinta,maya paññā* (wisdom through thinking) and *bhāvanā,maya paññā* (wisdom through cultivation). (D 33.1.10(43)/210; Vbh 324)

⁷¹ Here, *cinta,maya paññā* (wisdom through thinking) refers generally to what is thought out, and specifically to philosophical knowledge.

⁷² Here, *bhāvanā,maya paññā* (wisdom through cultivation) refers generally to knowledge arising from meditation (including dhyanic experiences), and specifically to insight knowledge (*vipassanā*), which is liberating. See 3.35.

⁷³ Jayatilleke, *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*, 1963:170.

⁷⁴ M 100.7/2:211 = SD 10.9.

⁷⁵ “Regarding things not heard before,” *pubbe ananussutesu dhammesu*, as at A 3:9; cf D 2:33; S 2:9, 105. AA glosses *dhammesu* as *catu,sacca,dhammesu*, “in the four noble truths” (AA 3:225).

⁷⁶ Comy says that he does not concur with the eternalists nor dispute with the partial eternalists (MA 3:208).

⁷⁷ *Evaṃ vimutta,citto kho Aggi,vessana bhikkhu na kenaci saṃvadati na kenaci vivadati, yaṅ ca loke vuttam tena voharati aparāmasan ti*. On the Buddha’s use of language, see SD 16.1 Introd (4).

some roots of greed, hate and delusion. Whatever negations (rejection of propositions) other teachers, thinkers, scholars or one unawakened may claim, they are merely relative negations, where the negation of x still entails some y. In the case of the Buddha, however, his negations are so complete as not to entail any y at all.⁷⁸ For this reason, the Buddha declares in **the Puppha Sutta** (S 22.94):

I do not quarrel with the world, monks. It is the world that quarrels with me. Monks, no speaker of Dharma quarrels with anyone in the world. (S 22.94/3:138)

060617; 071118; 080106

⁷⁸ See eg **Dīgha,nakha S** (M 74), where Dīgha,nakha claims “I do not accept everything” (ie he rejects all views), which the Buddha says is also a view! (M 74.1-8/1:497-499 = SD 16.1). In simple terms, with the wisdom of awakening, one’s wisdom is always has some important dimension (esp the ethical, moral or spiritual) missing. See Katz, *Buddhist Images of Human Perfection*, 1982:217 f