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## A Commentarial Guide to the Brahma,jāla Sutta

[The header number and the paragraph symbol (§) refer the Sutta's paragraph number.  
The lemmata or headwords are quotes from the Sutta proper.]

### Introduction

#### 1.1 Thus have I heard.

The opening words, “Thus have I heard” (*evam me sutam*), is traditionally said to have been spoken by **Ānanda**, the Buddha personal attendant for the last 25 years of his life. The Dīgha Commentary,<sup>1</sup> in its long exegesis on them, attributes these words to Ānanda who recited the Dharma, that is, the teachings as preserved in the Suttas (such as the Brahma,jāla Sutta), during the First Council held in Rājagaha three months after the Buddha's passing (DA 1:2-34).<sup>2</sup>

#### 1.2 At one time, the Blessed One.

This line celebrates the presence of the Buddha's teaching (*Buddha,sāsana*) in the world. The purpose of the teaching here is to inspire a sense of spiritual urgency (*samvega*)<sup>3</sup> in those intoxicated with the frivolities of life, motivating them to hear the True Teaching. After all, even the Buddha, the one with the ten powers,<sup>4</sup> too, has passed away: who then can hope to live forever? (DA 1:34)

#### 1.3 (The five fulfillments).

The Sutta opening presents the fivefold fulfillment or “presence” (*sampatti*) of the teaching, namely: “**Thus**” (*evam*) = the fulfillment or presence of the teaching (*desanā,sampatti*).

“**Have I heard**” (*me sutam*) = the fulfillment or presence of the listeners or disciples (*sāvaka.sampatti*), that is, the audience.

“**At one time**” (*ekam samayam*) = the fulfillment of the time (*kāla,sampatti*), that is, the right time and the testimony to the presence of right conditions for the teaching and learning of the Dharma. This is not historical or clock time, but spiritual time, that is to say, whenever the Suttas are taught or studied, the Dharma door opens giving one an opportunity to enter it, or at least have a look inside.

<sup>1</sup> Called Sumaṅgala,vilāsinī (The Illuminator of the Good Blessings), compiled by Buddhaghosa (a northern Indian monk working in Sri Lanka), 5<sup>th</sup> cent CE.

<sup>2</sup> On the 1<sup>st</sup> Council, see Piya Tan, *History of Buddhism*, Singapore, 2005:1.7.

<sup>3</sup> *Samvega*, “A feeling of urgency,” ie an overpowering experience of awe or a religious experience that induces one to ask the deep questions of life and seek their answers: see SD 9.1(7f).

<sup>4</sup> “The One with the Ten Powers,” *dasa,bala* or more fully *dasa,bala,ñāṇa*. The 10 powers are: (1) knowledge of the possible and the impossible (*thānāthāna ñāṇa*), such as in the analysis of karma (M 57, 135, 136), and the possibility regarding the realm, circumstances, time and effort, all of which would impede or reinforce the result; and also the cause of karma, etc; (2) knowledge of the result of karma (*kamma,vipāka ñāṇa*); (3) knowledge of the way leading to all destinies and goals (*sabbattha,gāminī,paṭipadā*); (4) knowledge of the world with its various elements (*nānā,dhātu ñāṇa*) (M 115.4-9/3:62 f); (5) knowledge of the different dispositions of beings (*nānādhimuttika ñāṇa*); (6) knowledge of the maturity level of beings in terms of faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom (*indriya,paropariyatta ñāṇa*) (Vbh §§814-827); (7) knowledge of the defilements, cleansing and emergence in the cases of the meditations, liberations, concentrations and attainments (*jhān'ādi,sāṅkiles'ādi ñāṇa*); (8) knowledge of the recollection of (his own) past lives (*pubbe,nivāsānussati ñāṇa*); (9) knowledge of the passing away and arising of beings (according to their karma) (*cutūpapāta ñāṇa*); (10) knowledge of the destruction of the mental defilements (*āsava-k,khaya ñāṇa*) (M 1:69; A 5:33; Vbh 336). See **Mahā Sīhanāda S** (M 12.9-20/ 1:69-71) for details.

“**The Blessed One**” (*bhagavā*) = the fulfillment or presence of the teacher (*desaka, sampatti*), or more specifically here, the presence of the Teacher (*sattā*) himself.

“**Amba, laṭṭhikā**” = the fulfillment of the place. The Commentary lists the preceding four (DA 1:34) but not this fifth fulfillment, which is common in Mahāyāna Buddhism.

**Amba, laṭṭhika** (Skt *Āmra, yaṣṭikā*)<sup>5</sup> is located halfway between Rājagaha and Nālandā, and where the Buddha stops on his first lap of the northbound final journey. It is a royal park, surrounded by a rampart and the royal rest-house is adorned with paintings (DA 1:14). “The royal rest-house” or “the rajah’s lodg- ing” (*rāj’āgaraka*), says the Commentary, is a well-crafted building built by the rajah for his sport (id).

#### 1.4 with a great community of monks (*mahatā bhikkhu, saṅghena saddhim*).

There are some 500 monks accompanying the Buddha; as such, it is a “great” (*mahata*) community of monks. The number is of course an approximate. More importantly, says the Commentary, the commu- nity is “great” because of its noble qualities (moral virtue, wisdom and liberation). (DA 1:35)

### Suppiya and Brahma, datta

#### 1.5 the wanderer Suppiya (*Suppiyo paribbājako*).

The opening paragraphs [§§1-3] report how while the teacher Suppiya speaks ill of the Three Jewels, his pupil Brahma, datta, on the other hand, speaks well of them. From the Commentary, it is not difficult to deduce Brahma, datta as a perceptive and intelligent young man who sees the virtues of the Buddha, his teachings and the early monks, and is clearly attracted to them [3.1.7, 3.2.1]. Suppiya is a clothed wander- er (that is, not a naked ascetic) and a pupil of the skeptic-agnostic Sañjaya,<sup>6</sup> who was also the teacher of Sāriputta and Moggallāna before they met the Buddha. In the Sutta, Sañjaya’s view is represented under ground 16 [§65], that is, as an “endless hedger” (*amara, vikkhepika*).

#### 1.6 speaking in many ways against the Buddha (*aneka, pariyāyena Buddhassa avannaṃ bhāsati*).

The Commentary says that “ways” (*pariyāya*) has the meanings of “turn (*vāra*), teaching (*desanā*), and reason (*kāraṇa*),” but here the last is meant (DA 1:36).

Before the Buddha, the wanderers<sup>7</sup> of the Ganges Plain generally enjoyed abundant gains and honour, but with the rise of the Buddha, public devotion is often transferred to him and the Sangha (DA 1:41 f). Understandably, Suppiya criticizes the Buddha (and the other two Jewels) out of envy. Moreover, Suppi- ya is also a pupil of Sañjaya (DA 1:35), who was the teacher of Sāriputta and Moggallāna before they met the Buddha. The duo’s departure to join the Sangha inevitably caused a split in Sañjaya’s wanderer com- munity—for which Suppiya understandably bears a grudge against the Buddha.

WHO WAS SAÑJAYA? **Sañjaya**’s full name is Sañjaya Belaṭṭhi,putta or Belaṭṭha,putta, (Skt) Sañjayin Vairatī,putra. Although he is put in unfavourable light in the Pali texts, we should not disregard the possibility that there is a serious note to his philosophy. It is likely that his standpoint is not made out of ignorance but based on the notion that knowledge was not necessary, even dangerous for salvation. In other words, when one really knows nothing, one then realizes everything.

Shosun Miyamoto, in his article, “The logic of relativity as the common ground for the development of the middle way,” asserts that Sañjaya’s “system is quite near to the Buddhist standpoint of [the] inde- scribable or inexpressible [*avyākata*]” and that “Sañjaya’s thought is not far removed from the logic of *Śūnya* of the Mādhyamika.”<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Or *Veṇu, yaṣṭika* (Lamotte, *History of Indian Buddhism*, 1988a:22).

<sup>6</sup> For a study of Sañjaya as a skeptic, see Jayatilke 1963:130-135, 336-339 (see index) & Jaini (1970) 2001:57-61. See foll section & **Sāmañña, phala S** (D 2.30-32/1:58 f) = SD 8.10.

<sup>7</sup> “Wanderers,” *paribbājaka*. See SD 25.1

<sup>8</sup> In S Yamaguchi (ed), *Buddhism and Culture*, Kyoto: Nakano Press, 1960:67-88.

**1.7** the youth Brahma,datta, on the other hand, spoke in various ways in praise of the Buddha, in praise of the Dharma, and in praise of the Sangha (*Brahma,datto māṇavo aneka,pariyāyena Buddhassa vaṇṇaṃ bhāsati Dhammassa vaṇṇaṃ bhāsati Saṅghassa vaṇṇaṃ bhāsati*).

Both Suppiya the teacher and Brahma,datta, his resident pupil (*antevasī*), are wanderers. Apparently, Suppiya is much older than Brahma,datta, who is a youth, *māṇava*, a term usually referring to a brahmin youth. The Commentary says, in colourful language and details, how the youth Brahma,datta disagrees with his teacher Suppiya because he (Brahma,datta) is aware of the virtues of the Three Jewels. Brahma,datta, for example, notices how disciplined the Sangha is (DA 1:36-38). [See next section]

**1.8** following closely step for step behind the Blessed One and the community of monks (*Bhagavantam piṭṭhito piṭṭhito anubaddhā honti bhikkhu,saṅghañ ca*).

This scene characteristically illustrates close physical proximity but great spiritual distance, the spirit of which is captured in this famous **Dhammapada** verse:

<i>Yāva,jīvam pi ce bālo paṇḍitaṃ payirupāsati na so dhammaṃ vijānāti dabbi sūparasam yathā</i>	Even though all his life a fool closely associates with [worships] the wise, he understands not the Dharma [the liberating truth] just as a spoon tastes not the soup. (Dh 64)
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The key phrase here, *piṭṭhito piṭṭhito anubaddhā*—the last word sometimes reading *anubandhā*—is translated here as “following closely behind step for step” is found in many other places in the Canon, sometimes differently worded. Let us examine a few contexts:

**(1) piṭṭhito piṭṭhito anubaddhā:**

Mahāparinibbāna Sutta  
(D 16.1.32/2:90 = U 8.6/89)  
= SD 9

At that time, Sunīdha and Vassakāra, chief ministers of Magadha, following closely step for step behind the Blessed One, said:

“The gate by which the recluse Gotama leaves today shall be called the Gotama Gate [Gotama,dvāra], and the spot where he crosses the Ganges river shall be called the Gotama Crossing [Gotama,tittha].”

[Note: As chief ministers, these two, especially the latter, have only approached the Buddha for advice on politics and power.]

Kumma Sutta  
(S 17.3.8-9/2:227)

[A turtle was warned by his colleagues not to go to a certain region where a harpooner lived hunted. However he did so, and on returning, was asked whether he was attacked.]

“I haven’t been hit or struck, but there is this cord following close behind me.”

“Indeed, you have been hit, dear turtle; indeed, you have been struck! Your father and grandfather, too, met with calamity and disaster on account of such a cord. Go now, dear turtle, you are no longer one of us.”

Asīvisopama Sutta  
(S 35.238.5/4:173)

“My good man, a sixth murderer, an insider (*antara,cara*), is closely pursuing you with drawn sword, thinking:

‘As soon as I see him, I will cut off his head right there!’ ...”

[In this parable, the first five murderers refer to the five aggregates; the sixth refers to desire and lust (*chanda,rāga*).]

Saṅghāṭi,kaṇṇā Sutta  
(It 3.5.3/90 f)

**[The Buddha:]** “Bhikshus, even if a monk, holding on to a corner of my upper robe (*saṅghāṭi*), were to follow closely step for step behind me, yet if he were covetous, thick in sense-pleasures, of malevolent thought, of troubled thoughts, inattentive, without full

awareness, whose mind is unconcentrated, mentally distracted, of worldly faculties, then this one is really far away from me, and I from him.

What is the reason for this? For this monk, bhikshus, sees not the Dharma, and in not seeing the Dharma sees not me.”

Vinaya (V 2:110 f=  
Cv 5.8.2)

[This is the account of how the monk Piṇḍola Bhāra,dvāja performs a psychic wonder in a market-place to retrieve a bowl from the top of a high greased pole.]

The people heard that the bowl of the Rājagaha seth was fetched down by the venerable Piṇḍola Bhāra,dvāja, and noisily followed closely behind the venerable Piṇḍola Bhāra,dvāja.

[The Buddha, on hearing the commotion, and discovering what Piṇḍola has done, reprimands him, explaining to him the import of his deed, and promulgates the rule that psychic manifestations should not be shown to householders. If this is done, it entails a “wrong-doing” (*dukkata*).]<sup>9</sup>

**(2) padā padam:**

Padhāna Sutta (Sn 446)

*Satta vassāni bhagavantaṃ anubandhiṃ padā padam,<sup>10</sup>  
otāram nādhigacchissam sambuddhassa satimato.*

For seven years, I have closely step for step followed the Blessed One:

I have not found a chance against the self-awakened one, the mindful.

[Here Māra the evil one shadows the Bodhisattva during the years of self-mortification hoping to distract him from reaching his goal, but fails.]

**(3) pacchato pacchato:**

Tela,patta Jātaka  
(J 96/1:397)

This expression is found only in the Commentaries and later works. **The Jātaka** stories, for example, has numerous instances of its usage, but all in rather mundane circumstances. We shall only look at two of them:

*Ath’ekā yakkhini “atikharamanto vatāyam, aham tam khāditvā  
nivattissāmī ti bodhisattassa pacchato pacchato agamāsi,*

Then one of the ogresses followed closely behind the Bodhisattva, thinking, “How strongly resolves this one is. When he turns around, I will eat him!”

Maṇi,cora Jātaka  
(J 194/2:123)

*Paridevamānā pacchato pacchato agamāsi, “crying, as she  
followed behind step for step.”*

2 but the wanderer Suppiya’s pupil, the youth Brahma,datta, on the other hand, spoke in various ways in praise of the Buddha, in praise of the Dharma, and in praise of the Sangha (*Suppiyassa pana paribbājakassa antevāsī Brahmaddatto māṇavo buddhassa vaṇṇam bhāsati, dhammassa vaṇṇam bhāsati, saṅghassa vaṇṇam bhāsati*).

When night falls, both Suppiya and Brahma,datta arrive (after the Buddha and the community) at the

<sup>9</sup> Cf Pāc 8: “If any monk should announce a superhuman state to one who is not ordained, if it is true, there is an offence entailing expiation.” (V 4:25,22-23). See Thanissaro, *The Buddhist Monastic Code*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed, 1996: 285-288.

<sup>10</sup> Be (Phayre, 1882:80): *padānupadam*.

royal resthouse in the Amba, latthika grove. The lamps are burning everywhere like stars in the night sky. As the Buddha sits amidst the Sangha, not one monk fidgets or makes any sound, such as coughing or sneezing. They sit still like the flame of a lamp when there is no wind.

Seeing this wonder, the wanderers then look at their own company. Some are playing with their hands, some with their feet, some are chattering away, some are sleeping with their tongue hanging out, drooling, gnashing their teeth, snoring or snorting while they sleep.

Seeing this, Suppiya should be praising the Three Jewels, but due to his jealousy, speaks ill of the Three Jewels. Brahma, datta, on the hand, again speaks in praise of them. (DA 1:42)

#### 4.1 Then the Blessed One, having known the trend of talk (*Atha kho bhagavā tesam bhikkhūnam imam saṅkhiyā, dhammam veditvā*).

What is the Buddha doing just before this? At this point, the Commentary gives a detailed account of the Buddha's daily life. The Buddha's day (or his daily routine or round of duties, *Buddha, kicca*) is divided into five parts: the forenoon (dawn-noon), the afternoon (noon to dusk), the first watch (6.00-10.00 pm), the middle watch (10.00-2.00 am) and the last watch (2.00-6.00 am).

(1) THE FORENOON ACTIVITIES. This is also called the “fore-meal duties” (*pure, bhatta kicca*). Rising early, the Buddha first attends to his toilet. Then he remains in solitude until it is time for the almsround. Having taken his meal, the Buddha then surveys the mental dispositions of those present before him, and teaches them accordingly. Then he returns to the monastery and sits down in the pavilion to wait until the monks have finished their meal. Then he enters his fragrant cell.

(2) THE AFTERNOON ACTIVITIES. This is also called the “post-meal duties” (*pacchā, bhatta kicca*). Having washed his feet, the Buddha then stands on a footstool and exhorts the Sangha, inspiring samvega in them. Then some monks request a meditation-subject from him. After that, the monks pay homage to the Teacher and retire to their quarters—some to the forest, some to the foot of a tree, some to the hills, and some to a sense-sphere heaven.

Then the Buddha enters the fragrant cell and, if he so wishes, mindfully rests in the lion-posture during the first part of the afternoon (from about noon to 2.00 pm). After rising during the second part of the afternoon, he surveys the world to see who is ready to benefit from the Dharma (around 2.00-4.00 pm). During the last part of the afternoon (around 4.00-6.00 pm), those from the vicinity, well-groomed and well-dressed, come to the monastery with offerings of scents, flowers, etc. The Buddha admonishes them as appropriate.

(3) THE FIRST-WATCH ACTIVITIES (*purima, yāma kicca*). At dusk, the Buddha washes himself and then changes his robes. Then he spends a short time in solitary retreat. Meanwhile, monks arrive from everywhere to question him and to receive meditation instructions. This goes on for the rest of the watch (ending around 10.00 pm).

(4) THE MIDDLE-WATCH ACTIVITIES (*majjhima, yāma kicca*). When the monks have left, devas (of the sense-worlds and the first-dhyana Brahmās)<sup>11</sup> would visit the Buddha for spiritual admonition, up to around 2.00 am.

(5) THE LAST-WATCH ACTIVITIES (*pacchima, yāma kicca*). The last watch (2.00-6.00 am) is divided into three parts. Tired from the day's continuous sitting, the Buddha (during the first part of the last watch) exercises by walking up and down to dispel any discomfort. During the second part of the watch, he rests mindfully in the lion-posture. On rising during the third part of the watch (that is, at dawn), he surveys the world with the Buddha-eye to seek those who are disposed to benefit from his admonition.

On the day of the event recorded in **the Brahma, jāla Sutta**, the Buddha, after finishing his duties in the forenoon in Rājagaha, sets out on his journey in the afternoon. In the first watch, he explains a meditation-subject to the monks, and in the middle watch, answers the question of the devas. In the last watch, as he mindfully paces up and down, he learns of the monks' discussion and in due course goes to the pavilion to admonish them. (DA 1:44-51)

<sup>11</sup> Devas of the other form and the formless worlds have no communication with the sense-world.

#### 4.2 he sat down on the prepared seat (*paññatte āsane nisīdi*).

In the Buddha's time, it is said, wherever a monk dwells, he would prepare a seat for the Teacher. Why? When a monk has received a meditation-subject from the Buddha and goes into solitary practice, the Buddha will direct his mind to see how the monk is progressing. Should the Buddha come to admonish the monk, he would not be inconvenienced by having to arrange a seat for the Teacher.

Some would prepare a chair, while others who have none would prepare a bed, a bench, a log, a rock, or a heap of sand, or even a heap of dry leaves spread over with a rag. However, here (in the royal rest-house), there is a royal seat. While the monks are cleaning this seat, they praise the wonder of the Buddha's knowledge of the disposition of others. (DA 1:48 f)

#### 4.3 [The four grounds for teaching a sutta (*sutta, nikkhepa*)]

There are four grounds for teaching a sutta, together with their examples:

(1) personal inclination (*att'ajjhāsaya*), that is, the Buddha teaches unprompted, for example:

Ākaṅkheyya Sutta	(M 6/1:33-36),
Vattha Sutta	(M 7/1:36-40),
Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta	(D 22/2:290-315) = SD 13.2, <sup>12</sup>
Mahā Saḷ'āyatana Sutta	(M 137/3:215-222),
Ariya,vaṁsa Sutta	(A 4.3.8),

and many other suttas on right effort, the bases of spiritual power, the spiritual faculties, the spiritual powers, the awakening-factors, and the path-factors;

(2) the inclinations of others (*par'ajjhāsaya*), that is, the Buddha teaches after considering the disposition of the audience, for example:

Cūḷa Rāhul'ovāda Sutta	(M 147/3:277-280),
Mahā Rāhul'ovāda Sutta	(M 62/1:420-426),
Dhamma,cakka-p,pavattana Sutta	(S 56.11/5:420-424) = SD 1.1, and
Dhātu Vibhaṅga Sutta	(M 140/3:237-247) = SD 4.17;

(3) in response to a question (*pucchā,vasika*), such as numerous suttas of the Sāmyutta Nikāya, and

Sakka,pañha Sutta	(D 21/2:263-289),
Cūḷa Vedalla Sutta	(M 44/1:299-305) = SD 21.7,
Mahā Vedalla Sutta	(M 43/1:292-298), and
Sāmañña,phala Sutta	(D 2/1:47-86) = SD 8.10;

(4) in response to a special occasion (*aṭṭh'uppattika*), for example:

Dhamma,dāyāda Sutta	(M 3/1:12-16) = SD 2.18,
Cūḷa Sīha,nāda Sutta	(M 11/1:63-68),
Cand'upama Sutta	(S 16.3/2:197 f),
Putta,maṁsa Sutta	(S 12.63/2:97-100) = SD 20.6,
Dāru-k,khandhūpama Sutta	(S 35.241/4:179-181), <sup>13</sup>
Aggi-k,khandhūpama Sutta	(A 7.68/4:128-135),
Phena,piṇḍūpama Sutta	(S 22.95/3:140-143) = SD 17.12, and
Pāricchattakūpama Sutta	(A 6.65/4:117-120).

Of these four, the Brahma,jāla Sutta is taught on account of the arising of a special occasion. And what is that occasion? Praise and blame. First the teacher Suppiya speaks ill of the Three Jewels, and his pupil Brahma,datta speaks their praise. (DA 1:50 f)

<sup>12</sup> See also **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10/1:55-63) = SD 13.3.

<sup>13</sup> See also S 35.242/4:181; A 6.41/3:340.

Dealing with the opinions of others

5 if you were to become angry or offended...it would only be an obstacle for you (*tatra ce tumhe assatha kupitā vā anattamanā vā, tumham yevassa tena antarāyo*).

In the first statement at §5, by saying, “[O]n account of that you should not feel resentful, nor dejected, nor discontented in your heart,”<sup>14</sup> the Buddha prohibits ill-will. By the second, “if you were to become angry or offended...it would only be an obstacle for you,” he shows the danger of ill will, that anger or displeasure would present an obstacle to the attaining of dhyana, etc. By the third statement, that is, the question, “[W]ould you be able to know whether what they said is well spoken or ill spoken?” he shows the inability of an angry person even to recognize the meaning of a statement. So it is said:

<i>Kuddho attham na jānāti</i>	The angry knows not the meaning,	
<i>kuddho dhammam na passati</i>	The angry sees not the Dharma,	
<i>andham tamam tadā hoti</i>	There is that blinding darkness	
<i>yam kodho sahate naram</i>	When anger overcomes a man.	
<i>Anattha,janano kodho</i>	Anger brings forth harm,	
<i>kodho citta-p,pakopano</i>	Anger disturbs the mind,	
<i>bhayam-antarato jātam</i>	Wherefrom arises fear	
<i>taṃ jano nāvabujhāti</i>	That people do not understand.	(A 7.60.8/4:96) (DA 1:51 f)

**6 [The proper course of practice.]**

While it is true that if others were to praise the Three Jewels, “you should not feel joyful, nor happy, nor elated in your heart,” you should not remain silent either. You should acknowledge it, thus: “What you say is true. It is true for this reason.”

If asked, “Are you morally virtuous?” you may declare, “I am morally virtuous.”

If asked, “Have you gained the first dhyana?” or, “Are you an arhat?” and so on, you may admit the fact, but only to fellow monks. In this way, evil desires are avoided, and the fruitfulness of the Buddha’s Teaching is declared. (DA 1:54 f)

**II. THE ANALYSIS OF MORAL VIRTUE****7.1 [The Sutta’s sequential structure, *anusandhi*.]**

What is the Sutta’s sequential structure? This Sutta is bound together by two words: praise and blame. Blame is refuted by pointing out, “For such and such a reason, this is false, this is untrue,” etc. And praise is confirmed by acknowledging the fact, “For such and such a reason, this is true.”

**Praise** (*vaṇṇa*) is of two kinds: that spoken by Brahma,datta, and that spoken by the community of monks. Here, the Teacher will begin to show the sequence (*anusandhi*) to Brahma,datta’s praise. Later, in the section on the elucidation of emptiness (*suññatā,pakāsana*) [that is, the “refrain of praising the Tathagata rightly”] [§§36-37, etc], the Teacher will show the sequence to the community of monks’ praise.

**7.2** it is only the minor and the insignificant points of mere moral virtue (*Appamattakam kho pan’etaṃ...oramattakam sīla,mattakam*).

Although moral virtue is said to be “the supreme ornament of a yogi,” it is less significant when compared to the excellence of mental concentration, and concentration does not attain to the excellence of wisdom (DA 1:56 f). When we look at the Bodhisattva’s struggle, he perfected his moral virtue for the

<sup>14</sup> *tatra tumhehi na āghāto na appaccayo na cetaso anabhiraddhi karaṇīyā.*

sake of mental concentration, but the highest excellence was his attainment of wisdom, which made him Buddha.

### 7.3 that a worldling would speak of (*yena puthujjano...vadeyya*).

Those who are not saints of the path, that is, neither adepts (*asekha*) nor learners (*sekha*),<sup>15</sup> are called “worldlings” (*puthujjana*), so called because they generate (*janana*) a crowd (*puthu*) of defilements (DA 1:59). Literally rendered, *puthujjana* is “many man” or “herd man,” that is, an member of an unthinking crowd, a non-individual.

The Pali *puthu* has two Sanskrit cognates: *pr̥thu*, “many, numerous” and *pr̥thak*, “separate, distinct.” While the Pali sense is closer to *pr̥thu*, the Sanskrit form is *pr̥thagjana*, “one set aside,” not a class member, an outcaste. Interestingly, we can see both senses used in the Commentary for the two kinds of worldlings, that is, the blind worldling (*andha puthujjana*) and the good worldling (*kalyāṇa puthujjana*).

The blind worldling is not who has studied (*uggaha*), questioned (*paripucchā*), learned [listened] (*savana*), memorized (*dharāṇa*), and reviewed (*paccavekkhaṇa*) such teachings the aggregates, the elements, and the sense-bases. The good worldling has done so. They are twofold thus:

<i>Puthūnaṃ janana'ādīhi</i>	He generates a crowd of things,
<i>kāraṇehi puthujjano</i>	For that reason, he is a worldling:
<i>puthujjana'antogadhattā</i>	Because he is drowned in the herd;
<i>puthuvāyaṃ jano</i>	Because he is a distinct generation. (DA 1:59)

In line c we have the sense of the Sanskrit *pr̥thu* (many, numerous), while in line d, we see the Sanskrit *pr̥thak* (separate, distinct). The former can be taken to refer to the blind worldling (*andha puthujjana*), while the latter is the good worldling (*kalyāṇa puthujjana*). It should be noted however that the Sanskrit cognate is *pr̥thagjana*, “the generation set aside.” The Commentary quotes a long passage from **the Mahā Niddesa** defining the worldling, as follows:

They generate a crowd of defilements; hence they are worldlings.

They have not destroyed the numerous forms of self-identity view.<sup>16</sup> They look up to a crowd of teachers. They have not emerged from the crowd of destinies. They create various karma-formations. They are swept away by the various floods, afflicted by a crowd of afflictions, consumed by a crowd of fevers—hence they are worldlings.

They are lustful and greedy for a crowd of the five cords of sense-pleasures, and therein they are bound, intoxicated, addicted, attached, fastened and confined—hence they are worldlings.

They are obstructed, hindered, and enveloped by the five mental hindrances,<sup>17</sup> and therein they are enclosed, concealed, and imprisoned—hence they are worldlings. (Nm 191; DA 1:59)

### 8 Thus...would the worldling speak (*Iti vā hi...puthujjano...vadeyya*).

As a member of the unthinking crowd, the worldling tends to follow it and go by conventional wisdom. We know, for example, that the first of the threefold training is that of moral virtue, which on a simple level, allows communal life: moral virtue is the basis of a good society. This is the political dimension of life or tribalism, where thinking and deliberating go along party lines.

Understandably, such a person (the blind worldling) would praise the Buddha mainly, even merely, in terms of moral virtue [§§7-28]. These are the more palpable or “thick” (*puthu*), and as such easily discernible, qualities of a person. However, although the good worldlings and the nobler disciples have a good idea that the Buddha’s qualities consists of more than mere moral virtue, they are unable to praise

<sup>15</sup> See **Sekha S** (M 53/1:353-359) = SD 21.14.

<sup>16</sup> See SD 15.1(8.3).

<sup>17</sup> “The five mental hindrances” (*pañca, nīvaraṇa*) are: sensual desire (*kāma-c, chanda*), ill will (*vyāpāda*), sloth and torpor (*thīna, middha*), restlessness and worry (*uddhacca, kukkuccha*), and spiritual doubt (*vicikicchā*) (A 3:62; Vbh 378). See **Listening Beyond the Ear** (essay) = SD 3.2.5 & (**Nīvaraṇa**) **Saṅgārava S** (S 46.55/5:121-126) = SD 3.12.



the Buddha for those excellent qualities that he does not share with other, that is, his wisdom, as illustrated here [§§30-100]. Only the Buddha can speak of them. (DA 1:71)

### III. SPECULATIONS ABOUT THE PAST

**28.1** deep, difficult to see, difficult to understand, peaceful and sublime, beyond the sphere of reasoning, subtle, to be known by the wise (*gambhīrā duddasā duranubodhā santā paṇīṭā atakkāvacarā nipuṇā paṇḍita,vedanīyā*).

The Commentary explains the terms as follows, with additional comments within parentheses:

“deep” (*gambhīra*), just as a mosquito cannot find a footing on the great ocean, even so no knowledge, except that of the Buddha, can find a footing in these truths [not easily expressed by words];

“difficult to see” (*duddasa*), because of their depth [because one is blinded by defilements];

“difficult to understand” (*duranubodha*), because they are difficult to see [because one has delusion];

“peaceful” (*santā*), because all the fevers of passion are cooled here, or it brings about a peaceful mental state [because it teaches one to look within];

“sublime” (*paṇīṭa*), because, like one’s tasting delicious food, one cannot get enough of it [in other words, the Dharma or nirvana can only be personally experienced];

“beyond the sphere of reasoning” (*atakkāvacara*), because the domain of the supreme knowledge are not accessible by reasoning [because ultimately it has to be personally experienced and is beyond the domain of language or thought];

“subtle” (*nipuṇa*), because they are abstruse (*saṅha*) and refined (*sukhuma*) by nature [because when put into language, it appears to be different things to different people];

“to be known only by the wise” (*paṇḍita,vedanīya*), because they are beyond the domain of the foolish [only those with some level of mental focus and clarity will be able to understand and experience it]. (DA 1:99 f, 2:464)

**28.2** which the Tathagata, having realized for himself with direct knowledge, expounds to others (*ye tathāgato sayam abhiññā sacchikatvā pavedeti*).

The Buddha’s spiritual awakening and liberation are won through personal effort and direct knowing of reality. He is not God, god or prophet, but very much more, in the sense that the Buddha’s true nature is beyond the ken of language and thought. His knowledge is unlimited: he is **omniscient**, all-knowing (*sabbaññū*).<sup>18</sup> There are two important senses of the term “omniscient” that we need to understand: *what* it is that the Buddha knows, and *how* he knows things.

28.2.1 WHAT IS THE “ALL” THAT CAN BE KNOWN? **The Sabba Sutta** (S 35.23) canonically defines “the all” as the six sense-faculties and their respective sense-objects.<sup>19</sup> **The Sār’attha-p,pakāsinī** (Saṃyutta Commentary) to this sutta additionally gives the following senses of *sabba* (“all”):

(1) The all-inclusive all (*sabba,sabba*), that is, everything knowable, all of which comes into the range of the Buddha’s omniscience.

(2) The all of the sense-bases (*āyatana,sabba*), that is, the phenomena of the four planes.

(3) The all of self-identity (*sakkāya,sabba*), that is, the phenomena of the three (mundane) planes.

(4) The partial all (*padesa,sabba*), that is, the five physical sense-objects. (SA 2:357)

Each of these four has a successively narrower range than the preceding. In this sutta, the “all” of the sense-bases is intended. The “four planes” are the three mundane planes (the sense world, the form world and the formless world) and the supramundane plane (the four paths, their fruits and nirvana).

<sup>18</sup> The Buddha’s objective field or purview is unthinkable (*Buddha,visayo acinteyyo*, A 4.77/2:80).

<sup>19</sup> S 35.23/4:15 = SD 7.1.

The first of the commentarial “all” is supposedly larger in scope than even that of the Sabba Sutta, namely, the “all” of the Buddha’s omniscience (literally, all-knowledge, \**sabbañña*, Skt *sarvājña*). The Commentary says this despite the fact that the sutta says that the notion of such an “all” lies beyond anyone’s range.<sup>20</sup>

It might be logically asserted that if the six senses—the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind—comprises all that *can* be known, does this mean that the unknowable “remainder” could be “God” or some higher power? As stated earlier, the wisdom of awakening (*bodhi*) is suprasensual (beyond the senses) and supralingual (beyond language), but at least in the case of the Buddha’s awakening, it includes the understanding of what this “unknowable remainder” is, too. In a sense, we can say that this unknowable remainder is nirvana itself, since nirvana is not included in the “all.”

This raises the question: if the word “all” does not include nirvana, does that mean that one may infer from the statement, “all phenomena are not-self,” that nirvana is self? The answer is clearly no. As **the Mahā Koṭṭhita Sutta**<sup>21</sup> states, to even ask if there is anything remaining or not remaining, or both, or neither, after the cessation of the six sense-spheres is to differentiate what is by nature undifferentiated.<sup>22</sup> The range of differentiation goes only as far as the “all.” Perceptions of self or not-self, which would count as differentiation, would not apply beyond the “all.” When the cessation of the “all” is experienced, all differentiation is allayed.

28.2.2 HOW IS THE “ALL” TO BE KNOWN? Here, the dharmas or states are said to be “deep, difficult to see,…” and “to be known by the wise” (*pañḍita,vedanīya*), or more fully stated, “to be known by the wise for himself” (*paccattam veditabbo viññūhi*).<sup>23</sup> The liberation knowledge is self-knowledge. The path to liberation begins with the realization that one is unliberated, imprisoned by ignorance, craving, views and life itself. The journey gains momentum when one’s mind desires to seek the truth and thus opening one’s mind to learning and growing. The open mind sees more clearly, and soon sees a cyclic pattern in all existence, and that suffering is really a part of one’s learning process. Hence, from one’s suffering, faith arises.<sup>24</sup> It is easy to see impermanence pervading all conditioned existence. Reality here is stated in the plural as dharmas or “states” (*dhammā*) because, says the Commentary,

It is associated with a crowd (*puṭhu*) of consciousness (*citta*), and because it takes a crowd of objects (*ārammaṇa*). For, the omniscient knowledge is found in the four great classes of functional consciousness associated with knowledge (*catūsu ñāṇa,sampayutta,mahā,kiriya,cittesu*).<sup>25</sup> It is not so that it does not take any dharma as object.<sup>26</sup> Hence, it is said:

It knows all the past; thus it is omniscient knowledge. Nothing there is obstructed, hence it is unobstructed knowledge (*anāvaraṇa,ñāṇa*)... (Pm 1.55.1/131)

Therefore, because it is associated with a crowd of consciousness, and because it takes a crowd of objects on its arising again and again, it is described in the plural. (DA 1:100)

Thus far, **the Paṭisambhidā,magga** agrees with the early Buddhist teaching of omniscience, but it goes on to include unobstructed knowledge of the future (*anāgataṃ sabbaṃ jānātī ti sabbaññuta,ñāṇaṃ, tattha āvaraṇaṃ n’atthī ti anāvaraṇa,ñāṇaṃ*). It is difficult to reconcile this statement with the teachings of

<sup>20</sup> For further discussion, see **Sabba S** (S 35.23) = SD 7.1(5).

<sup>21</sup> A 4.174/2:161-163.

<sup>22</sup> See Thanissaro’s intro to his tr of **Madhi,piṇḍika S** (M 18), <http://www.accesstoinsight.org>.

<sup>23</sup> This is the last of the 6 qualities of the Dharma: see **Dhammānussati** = SD 15.9(6).

<sup>24</sup> See **Upanisā S** (S 12.23) = SD 6.12 & **Āpaṇa S** (S 48.50) = SD 10.4(2.3).

<sup>25</sup> That is, it is associated with multiple classes of consciousness. Bodhi: “These are the four sense-sphere classes of consciousness accompanied by knowledge which occur in the active *javana* phase of the cognitive processes of a Buddha or an arahat. They are functional (*kiriya*) rather than wholesome (*kusala*) because they no longer bring about the accumulation of kamma. The four are obtained according to whether they are associated with joy or equanimous feeling, and are prompted or spontaneous.” (1978:128n). See Abhs:BRS 1.15/49.

<sup>26</sup> *Na c’assa koci dhammo ārammaṇaṃ nāma na hoti*. Bodhi freely render this as “And the knowledge of omniscience does not take only a single dhamma as its object” (1978:128).

such suttas as the **Kaṇṇaka-t,thala S** (M 90),<sup>27</sup> and especially the **Pāsādika Sutta** (D 29), where it is specifically stated that

with regard to the past, the Tathāgata shows boundless knowledge and vision, but it is not so with the future... He can recall as far back as he wishes. But as for the future, the Tathāgata's knowledge, born of enlightenment, arises in him, thus, "This is the last birth, there is no more rebirth here!"<sup>28</sup> (D 29.27/3:134)

In other words, the Buddha is omniscient not in the sense that he could comprehend all things at the same time, but that he may know anything he wishes by turning his attention to it.<sup>29</sup>

### 29.1 There are, bhikkhus, certain recluses and brahmins (*santi bhikkhave eke samaṇa, brāhmaṇā*).

Of all the religious teachers, only the Buddha is able formulate comprehensive teachings to discipline his disciples, to present the true teaching, and to expose false views. The Commentary<sup>30</sup> says that there are four occasions when the greatness of the Buddha's wisdom (*Buddha, ñāṇa*) is clearly seen "sealed with the three characteristics, connected with emptiness,"<sup>31</sup> that is, namely:

- (1) The formulation of the discipline (*vinaya, paññatti*). Here only the Buddha has the wisdom to effectively identify the various offences and introduce such training-rules as the occasion arose, that is to say:

<i>lahuka</i>	a light offence,
<i>garuka</i>	a grave offence,
<i>satekiccha</i>	a curable offence,
<i>atekiccha</i>	an incurable offence,
<i>āpatti</i>	an offence,
<i>anāpatti</i>	a non-offence,
<i>chejja, gāminī</i>	an offence entailing expulsion,
<i>vuṭṭhāna, gāminī</i>	an offence entailing rehabilitation,
<i>desanā</i>	an offence entailing confession,
<i>loka, vajjā</i>	a fault in the eyes of the world,
<i>paññatti, vajja</i>	a fault in the eyes of the monastic code.

- (2) The classifications of the grounds of reality (*bhūm'antara*), that is, the analysis of the twenty-four aspects of conditionality [see (3)] (as preserved in the Abhidhamma tradition) and the teaching methods (or models) leading up to them, that is, the seven sets of teachings, namely.<sup>32</sup>

<i>cattāro satipaṭṭhānā</i>	the four focusses of mindfulness, <sup>33</sup>
<i>samma-p, padhānā</i>	the four right efforts, <sup>34</sup>
<i>iddhi, pādā</i>	the four paths to spiritual power, <sup>35</sup>
<i>pañc'indriyāni</i>	the five spiritual faculties, <sup>36</sup>
<i>pañca, balāni</i>	the five spiritual powers, <sup>37</sup>

<sup>27</sup> SD 10.8(2).

<sup>28</sup> *Atītam kho addhānam ārabha samaṇo Gotamo atīrakam ñāṇa, dassanam paññāpeti, no ca kho anāgatam... So yāvatakam ākaṅkhati tāvatakam anussarati. Anāgatañ ca kho addhānam ārabha Tathāgatassa bodhijam ñāṇam uppajati: ayam antimā jāti, n'atthi dāni punabbhavo ti.*

<sup>29</sup> See DA 1:100; DAṬ 1:175 f; VismṬ 190 f (tr at Vism:Ñ 212 n7).

<sup>30</sup> DA 1:100-102; see also DA 2:591.

<sup>31</sup> *Tilakkhaṇāhatā suññatā, paṭisamyuttā* (DA 1:100).

<sup>32</sup> See **Bodhi, pakkhiyā Dhammā** = SD 10.1.

<sup>33</sup> D 1:56, 339, 2:83, 290-315, 3:101; S 3:96, 153; A 2:218, 3:12. See SD 13.

<sup>34</sup> V 1:22; D 2:120; M 3:296, 2:96; A 2:74, 15 f. See SD 10.2.

<sup>35</sup> D 2:213, 221; M 1:103 = 2:11; A 1:39, 297, 2:256, 3:82; Vbh 213. See SD 10.3.

<sup>36</sup> M 1:295; S 3:46, 225, 4:168; A 2:151. See foll n & SD 10.4.

<sup>37</sup> D 2:120, 239; M 2:12, 3:296; S 3:96, 153, 4:366; A 3:10, 12; Vbh 342. See SD 10.5.

<i>satta bojjhaṅgā</i>	the seven limbs of awakening, <sup>38</sup>
<i>ariyo aṭṭh'āṅgiko maggo</i>	the noble eightfold path. <sup>39</sup>
And also such teachings as follows:	
<i>pañca-k,khandha</i>	the five aggregates, <sup>40</sup>
<i>dvādasā āyatanāni</i>	the twelve sense-bases, <sup>41</sup>
<i>aṭṭhārasa dhātuyo</i>	the eighteen elements, <sup>42</sup>
<i>cattāri ariya,saccāni</i>	the four noble truths, <sup>43</sup>
<i>bāvīsāt'indriyāni</i>	the twenty-two faculties, <sup>44</sup>
<i>nava hetū</i>	the nine roots, <sup>45</sup>
<i>cattāro āhārā</i>	the four kinds of food, <sup>46</sup>
<i>satta phassā</i>	the seven contacts, <sup>47</sup>
<i>satta vedanā</i>	the seven feelings, <sup>48</sup>
<i>satta saññā</i>	the seven perceptions, <sup>49</sup>
<i>satta cetanā</i>	the seven volitions, <sup>50</sup>
<i>satta cittāni</i>	the seven consciousnesses. <sup>51</sup>

And among others, there are numerous teachings concerning the three spheres, that is, the sense-spheres, the form-sphere and the formless sphere.

- (3) The aspects of conditionality (*paccay'ākāra*) refers to the analysis of dependent arising<sup>52</sup> in various ways, that is to say:

<i>ti,vaṭṭa</i>	the three rounds, <sup>53</sup>
<i>ti-y-aḍḍha</i>	the three periods of time, <sup>54</sup>
<i>ti,sandhi</i>	the three links, <sup>55</sup>
<i>catu,sankhepa</i>	the four sections, <sup>56</sup>

<sup>38</sup> D 2:79, 83, 120, 302, 3:101, 128, 251, 282; M 1:11, 2:12; S 1:54, 5:83; A 1:14, 4:23; Vbh 277. See SD 10.15.

<sup>39</sup> D 1:256 f, 165, 312; M 1:61, 118, 3:251; It 18; Sn 1130; Vbh 235.

<sup>40</sup> Form, feeling, perception, formations and consciousness. S 3:47; Vbh 1. See SD 27.2-6.

<sup>41</sup> The sense-faculties and their respective sense-objects. See **Sabba S** (S 35.23/4:15) = SD 7.1.

<sup>42</sup> The sense-faculties, and their respective sense-objects and sense-consciousnesses. See **Mahā Taṇhā,sāṅkhaya S** (M 38.8/1:259) = SD 7.10.

<sup>43</sup> See **Dhamma,cakka-p,pavattana S** (D 56.11/5:420-424) = SD 1.1.

<sup>44</sup> Comprising 6 sense-bases, 2 sexual faculties, vitality (life faculty), 5 feelings, 5 spiritual faculties, and 3 supramundane faculties. See **Āpaṇa S** (S 48.50) = SD 10.4; also Vbh 122; Vism 491; Abhs 7.18 = Abhs:SR 175 f.

<sup>45</sup> That is, the 9 roots of action: 3 wholesome (rooted in non-greed, non-hate, non-delusion), 3 unwholesome (rooted in greed, hate, delusion), and 3 neutral (unrooted). (Vbh 985/402)

<sup>46</sup> Edible food, contact, mental volition, consciousness. See **Mahā Taṇhā,sāṅkhaya S** (M 38.15/1:261) = SD 7.10.

<sup>47</sup> Eye-contact, ear-contact, ear-contact, nose-contact, tongue-contact, body-contact, mind-element-contact, mind-consciousness-element-contact. (Vbh 986/403)

<sup>48</sup> Feelings arising through eye-contact, through ear-contact, through nose-contact, through tongue-contact, through body-contact, through mind-element-contact, through mind-consciousness-element-contact. (Vbh 987/403)

<sup>49</sup> Perceptions arising through eye-contact, through ear-contact, through nose-contact, through tongue-contact, through body-contact, through mind-element-contact, through mind-consciousness-element-contact. (Vbh 988/403)

<sup>50</sup> Volitions arising through eye-contact, through ear-contact, through nose-contact, through tongue-contact, through body-contact, through mind-element-contact, through mind-consciousness-element-contact. (Vbh 989/403)

<sup>51</sup> Eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, tongue-consciousness, body-consciousness, mind-element (*mano,dhātu*), mind-consciousness element (*mano,viññāṇa,dhātu*) (Vbh 990/403 f). While the mind-element performs the initial functions of sense-perception process (see BDict: *mano-dhātu*), the mind-consciousness-element generally refers to the later stages (see BDict Table I.40, 41, 56, 71, 72).

<sup>52</sup> See **Dependent Arising** = SD 5.16; see also Pm 1.271/1:50.

<sup>53</sup> On the 3 rounds, see Vism 17.298/581.

<sup>54</sup> See Vism 17.284-287/579.

<sup>55</sup> On the 3 links (cause-effect-cause), see Vism 17.288 f/579.

- vīsati'ākāra* the twenty modes.<sup>57</sup>
- (4) The classification of cults (*samay'antara*) is the analysis and exposition of the sixty-two grounds for wrong views, thus:
- |                                    |   |
|------------------------------------|---|
| <i>sassatika</i>                   | the 4 eternalists,                                      |
| <i>ekacca sassatika</i>            | the 4 partial-eternalists,                              |
| <i>antānantika</i>                 | the 4 extensionists,                                    |
| <i>amara vikkhepika</i>            | the 4 endless hedgers,                                  |
| <i>adhicca,samuppannika</i>        | the 2 fortuitous originationists,                       |
| <i>saññī,vādī</i>                  | the 16 conscious survivalists,                          |
| <i>asaññī,vādī</i>                 | the 8 non-conscious survivalists,                       |
| <i>n'eva,saññī,nāsaññī,vādī</i>    | the 8 neither-conscious-nor-non-conscious survivalists, |
| <i>uccheda,vādī</i>                | the 7 annihilationists,                                 |
| <i>diṭṭha,dhamma,nibbāna, vādī</i> | the 5 who hold the view of nirvana here and now.        |

Only someone like the Buddha, with his all-knowing wisdom and active compassion, is able to formulate these comprehensive teachings that encompasses the roots of all religious and philosophical ideas and systems.

## 29.2 There are, bhikkhus, certain recluses and brahmins who are speculators about the past (*santi bhikkhave eke samaṇa,brāhmaṇā pubb'anta,kappikā*).

They speculate about the past in this way:

- (1) Because of craving or views,<sup>58</sup> they *construct* (*kappetvā*) thoughts or ideas about the past.<sup>59</sup>
- (2) When their thoughts gather strength through repetition and mental proliferation, they go on to *speculate* (*vikappetvā*) about it.
- (3) Through the constructed thoughts based on craving or views—as craving leads to clinging—they form assumptions (*gaha*), to which they then *cling* (*gaṇhati*). (DAṬ 1:181 f)

The Dīgha Sub-commentary explains the phrase “because of craving or view” (*taṇhā,diṭṭhi,vasena*) as follows:

The thoughts about the past arise by way of craving which is

- (1) the proximate support (*upanissaya*) for a wrong view, and
- (2) the conascent (*sahajāta*) delight (accompanying a wrong view),

and by way of the false assumption (*micchā,gāha*) of one clinging to eternalism, etc. (DAṬ 1:183)

The expressions *pubb'anta* (“paste portion”) is used in the text since the speculation concerns states that occur in the past (*pubba*). The word *anta* is used because there is really no basis for speculation apart from the aggregates of form, etc. The Sub-commentary explains *anta* as *koṭṭhāsa* (portion), but *anta* also means “border, limits.” In other words, such speculations are not within the purview of the aggregates, and as such are purposeless and meaningless.

## 29.3 who hypothesize about the past (*pubb'antānudiṭṭhino*).

Bodhi literally renders this as “who hold settled views about the past” (1978:65, 134). Here *anudiṭṭhi* means an unproven or unfounded notion, dogmatically held. The Commentary explains:

<sup>56</sup> On the 4 sections or grounds (ignorance & formations; consciousness, name-and-form, sense-bases, contact & feeling; craving, clinging & existence; and birth, decay & death), see Vism 17.290/579.

<sup>57</sup> The 20 modes, viz, 5 causes in the past; fivefold fruit; 5 causes; fivefold fruit in the future; see Vism 17.291-297/579-581.

<sup>58</sup> **Mahā Niddesa** says there are 2 types of thought-constructions: thoughts constructed by craving (*taṇhā,kappanā*) and thoughts constructed by views (*diṭṭhi,kappanā*) (Nm 72). Bodhi: “The word *kappa* comes from the root *kapp*, meaning both to think and to construct, hence the rendering ‘thought-construction.’” (1978:133n)

<sup>59</sup> *Purima,siddhehi taṇhā,diṭṭhi,kappehi kappetvā*.

In this way, they continuously speculate about the past, their views that, by repeatedly occurring, become settled on the past—thus they hypothesize about the past.

*Tesaṃ evaṃ pubb'antaṃ kappetvā t̥hitānaṃ pubbantam punappunāṃ uppajjana,vasena pubb'antam eva anugatā diṭṭhī ti pubb'antānudiṭṭhino.* (DA 1:103)

**29.4** who assert various dogmas regarding the past on eighteen grounds (*pubb-antam ārabha aneka, vihitāni adhvutti, padāni*<sup>60</sup> *abhivadanti aṭṭhā, dasahi vatthūhi*).

“Dogmas” (*adhivutti, pada*), that is, “points strongly spoken about,” which the Commentary glosses as *adhivacana, pada*, “designational word.”<sup>61</sup> The Commentary further explains:

“On account of holding such views regarding the past, they work to convert other people to their views by asserting various hypotheses [dogmas] on eighteen grounds.” (*Te evaṃ, diṭṭhino taṃ pubbantam ārabha āgamma paṭicca aññam pi janaṃ diṭṭhi, gatikaṃ karontā aneka, vihitāni adhvutti, padāni abhivadanti aṭṭhārasahi vatthūhi*). (DA 1:103)

The Subcommentary notes that views are said to be *adhivutti* (dogmatic) because of their excessive character (*adhika, vuttitā*). For, views superimpose (*ajjhāropetvā*) upon the specific-natured dharmas a superfluous, unreal meaning, such as eternity, nature, substantiality, soul, body, etc. (DAṬ 1:184).<sup>62</sup>

GROUNDS FOR VIEWS. It is important to note that these 18 grounds (*vatthu*),<sup>63</sup> like the rest of the 62 *diṭṭhi-t, thānā* (standpoints) are “grounds for views,” rather than “views” (*diṭṭhi*) in themselves, only major examples of which are given in this sutta. In other words, while the sutta gives an exhaustive list of possible grounds for views—a veritable “a perfect net” (*brahma, jāla*) in which are caught all bases for speculative views—only 62 examples (common in the Buddha’s time) are given.<sup>64</sup>

## 1. Eternalism (*sassata, vāda*), grounds 1-4

**30** There are, bhikshus, certain recluses and brahmins who are eternalists, who on four grounds proclaim the self and the world to be eternal (*Santi bhikkhave eke samaṇa, brāhmaṇā sassata, vādā sassataṃ attānañ ca lokañ ca paññāpentī catūhi vatthūhi*).

[Ground (1)] Taking one of the aggregates (form, feeling, perception, formations, consciousness) to be the self and the world, they proclaim it to be eternal, immortal, permanent, and stable.

Thus is it said: “They proclaim the self and the world thus: ‘The self and the world are form; it is eternal.’ So too they proclaim thus, ‘The self and the world are feeling, ...are perception, ...are formations, ...are consciousness; it is eternal.’” (DA 1:104 = MA 4:23 = UA 344)<sup>65</sup>

<sup>60</sup> Here Be & Se read *adhivutti, padāni* (conviction, inclination), but I follow Ce & Ee as the better reading (as Bodhi does, 1978:134 n).

<sup>61</sup> DA 1:103; MA 3:430; AA 3:376

<sup>62</sup> Bodhi: The notion of **superimposition** (Skt *adhyāropana, adhyāsa*) plays a central role in the philosophy of Advaita Vedānta, according to which the phenomenal world and individual soul are false superimposition upon the undifferentiated substratum of ultimate reality, Ātman or Brahman. According to the position taken here, the reverse is the case. The impermanent mental and material events springing from a concurrence of conditions are the ultimate realities, and the notions of a self, substance, and substratum the illusory superimpositions. (1978:135 n).

<sup>63</sup> “Grounds” (*vatthu*), §§29, 30, 35, 38, 50, 53, 58, 61, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 70a, 71, 74, 75, 77a, 78, 80a, 81, 83a, 84, 92, 93, 99a, 100a, 101, 102, 105-146b, clearly syn with *diṭṭhi-t, thāna* [§39n].

<sup>64</sup> See Bodhi 1978:4-6, 147 f.

<sup>65</sup> Untraced, but cf Pm 1.2/135-161.

The wrong views discussed here constitutes what is collectively called “self-identity view” (*sakkāya, diṭṭhi*), that is, the view that one’s identity or personality (*sakkāya*) is either a self or part of a self.<sup>66</sup> The **Pāṛileyya Sutta** (S 22.81), for example, relates how an uninstructed ordinary person tends to regard any of the five aggregates (form feeling, perception, mental formations, consciousness) in these ways:

- (a) as the self or
- (b) the self as possessing the aggregate or
- (c) the aggregate as in the self or
- (d) the self as in the aggregate. (S 22.81/3:94-99) = SD 6.1<sup>67</sup>

The **Paṭisambhidā, magga** explains the four basic modes of self-identity view in connection with form with the following analogies:

<u>form as self</u>	a burning oil-lamp’s flame and its flame are identical;
<u>self as possessing form</u>	the shadow of a tree possesses;
<u>form as in self</u>	the scent in the flower;
<u>self as in form</u>	a jewel in a casket. <sup>68</sup>

The **Mahā Puṇṇama Sutta** (M 109)<sup>69</sup> and the **Cūḷa Vedalla Sutta** (M 44)<sup>70</sup> list all the 20 kinds of self-identity view<sup>71</sup> in connection with the five aggregates.

### The stationary and unproductive view of the world<sup>72</sup>

**31.1** He says thus: ‘The self and the world are eternal, barren, standing like a peak, steadfast as a firm pillar (*So evam āha sassato attā ca loko ca vañjho kūṭattho esika-ṭ, thāyi-ṭ, thito*).

“Barren” (*vañjha*) is used as in barren cattle or barren land, even so, the self and the world do not bear fruit nor produce anything new (that is, they not produce anything not already in existence). By this, one denies the dhyanas, etc, taken to be the self and the world produce anything such as material form, etc. (DA 1:105). If they had a productive capacity, they would exist in dependence on conditions, like material form, etc, and like happiness, etc, and therefore would have a origin. And if they had an origin, they would inevitably also have an ending, and as such there would be no case for their permanence. (DAṬ 1:185 f).

The implication of this is that change is not real, that its ontological status is subsidiary to that of the eternally existent self and world. A doctrine of denying the reality of change seems to clash so violently with the immediate evidence of perception, which uncovers changes taking place internally and externally at every moment, that it is difficult to see how anyone can question its occurrence. But philosophers are clever people, and have found two devices to reconcile the discrepancy between observed fact and their theoretical posulates.

One is by regarding change as mere appearance, a surface illusion wrongly superimposed upon an unchanging reality. The other is by taking change to be the real transformation of a durable substance retaining its identity through the alteration of its adventitious modes.

(Bodhi 1978 18 f)

<sup>66</sup> “Personality-view, *sakkāya, diṭṭhi*, is the viewing of the aggregates constituting the personality (*sakkāya*) as either a self or the adjuncts of a self. The suttas list 20 kinds of personality-views. Five are obtained by identifying each aggregate with the self, the remaining 15 by regarding the self as possessing, as containing, and as contained within, each of the aggregates in turn.” (Bodhi 1978:136 n1)

<sup>67</sup> See esp Introd 4.

<sup>68</sup> Pm 2.50, 74, 77, 90 = 1:143-145.

<sup>69</sup> M 109.10/ 3:17 f = SD 17.10.

<sup>70</sup> M 44.7 f/1:300.

<sup>71</sup> That is, the 4 basic modes × 5 aggregates = 20 kinds of self-identity view.

<sup>72</sup> This is Bodhi’s subheading in his Comy tr (1978:136).

It is possible to combine these two philosophical views with the self and the world by way of four eternalist alternatives:<sup>73</sup>

1. The self and the world are identical, and change is merely apparent. This is main teaching of the Advaita Vedānta, the Indian philosophy of non-dualism, which teaches an illusionist view of change (*vivarta, vāda*), according to which all phenomena are mere appearances superimposed on the absolute as a result of ignorance.
2. The self and the world are identical, and change is transformation of state. This view seems to be held by some of the qualified non-dualistic Indian philosophies (*visiṣṭādvaita*), that arose soon after the Buddha. It regards God, the individual souls, and the world, as modes of a single absolute, and their changes are the real modification of the absolute.
3. The self and the world are distinct, and change is merely apparent. It is difficult to think of an example of this, because appearance theories generally operate with a monistic metaphysic.
4. The self and the world are distinct, and change is transformation of state. This view is called the evolution doctrine (*pariṇāma, vāda*), held by the Sāṅkhya system, the chief philosophical rival of Vedānta, and which seems to be the main target of the Buddhist critique. According to the Sāṅkhya system, the self or spiritual entity (*puruṣa*) and nature (*prakṛti*) are forever distinct. The self, which is unique to each person, is as such a real plurality, and is the pure witness of experience, free from change and alteration. The field of awareness is nature, which remains self-identical throughout, merely transforming its substance. All sensory and mental activities are forms change and pertain not to the self, which is changeless, but to nature, whose range is their both mental and physical.

One of the Sāṅkhya tenets, that of emergent manifestation, is critiqued in the Subcommentary, which attempts to show its inconsistency in maintaining simultaneously that an effect can pre-exist in its cause, and yet manifest itself later.<sup>74</sup> We shall examine this in some detail.

### The eternalist doctrine of emergent manifestation (*abhivyatti, vāda*)<sup>75</sup>

**31.1.1** The phrase “standing like a peak, steadfast as a firm pillar” (*kūṭaṭṭho esika-ṭ.ṭhāyi-ṭ.ṭhito*) illustrates the indestructibility of the world.<sup>76</sup> The Commentary mentions an alternative reading as *īsika-ṭ.ṭhāyi-ṭ.ṭhito* (standing like a reed),<sup>77</sup> that is, “the world stands like a reed (*īsika*) in a sheath of muṅja grass.”<sup>78</sup> That which is born emerges as something already existing (*vijjamānam eva nikkhamati*), like a reed that comes out from a sheath of muṅja grass. Because the self and the world exist immanently like a reed, it is said: “These beings roam about in samsara, from here elsewhere.” (DA 1:105).

The Subcommentary says that “something already existing” (*vijjamānam eva*) here means that by showing the existence of the effect in the cause, one indicates the doctrine of “emergent manifestation” (*abhivyatti, vāda*). “It emerges” (*nikkhamati*) means it comes to full manifestation (*abhivyatti gacchati*).

Bodhi uses the term “**emergent manifestation**” for *abhivyatti* (or *abhibyatti*),<sup>79</sup> the better known, of which is the Sanskrit form *abhivyakti* or *abhibyakti*, which has been identified as a tenet of the Sāṅkhya

<sup>73</sup> The following section is mostly summarized from Bodhi 1978:19 f.

<sup>74</sup> See Surendranath Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Cambridge, 1922 1:254 ff.

<sup>75</sup> This is Bodhi’s subheading in his Comy tr (1978:137): see 1978:137-139 for further discussion based on the Ṭikā (subcomy) and Nava,ṭikā (new subcomy).

<sup>76</sup> *Kūṭaṭṭha* = Skt *kūṭastha* (SED), which occurs in Bhagavadgītā (1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> cent): *Dvāv imasu puruṣau loke kṣaraś cākṣara eva ca | Kṣaraḥ sarvāni bhūtāni kūṭastho’ kṣara ucyate | Uttamaḥ puruṣas yav yaḥ paramātmetya udānataḥ*, “Two kinds of spirit [entity] (*puruṣa*) are found in the world: the perishable and the imperishable. All beings are perishable. That which is imperishable, standing like a peak, is the highest spirit called the supreme soul (*paramātmān*).” (Bhagg 15.16 f)

<sup>77</sup> See CPD: *esikaṭṭhāyitṭhita*.

<sup>78</sup> This simile is used in connection with the mind-made body (*mano, maya kāya*) in **Mahā Sakul’udāyi S** (M 77.30/2:17 f). See MA 3:228.

<sup>79</sup> 1978:20, 137-139.



school.<sup>80</sup> In evolutionary theory, the term “emergence” refers to the rise of a system that cannot be predicted or explained from antecedent conditions. George Henry Lewes, a mid-19<sup>th</sup> century philosopher of science, distinguished between resultants and emergents—phenomena that are predictable from their constituents, and those that are not. For example, a physical mixture of sand and flour, versus a chemical compound such as salt, which look nothing like its constituents, sodium or chlorine. One of the founders of animal psychology, C Lloyd Morgan (early 20<sup>th</sup> century), however, emphasized that nothing should be called emergent unless it can be shown that not to be a resultant.<sup>81</sup>

Some eternalists, according to the New Subcommentary, claim that the self (or soul) is pre-existent (“already existing”) in its mode of potentiality (*satti, rūpa*),<sup>82</sup> and is said to “emerge” subsequently in the mode of manifestation (*vyatti, rūpa*), meaning that it is fully manifested. The phrase “already existing” means that the effect is inherent in the cause without having to occur separately. The mode of potentiality (pre-existence) is like the ear of rice pre-existing still encased in the rice-sheath; the mode of manifestation is like the ear of rice that has emerged from the sheath.<sup>83</sup>

**31.1.2 DHAMMAPĀLA’S REBUTTAL.**<sup>84</sup> How can something already existing (pre-existing) (in the mode of potentiality), previously unmanifest, afterwards come to full manifestation?

Opponent’s reply: Just as a jar hidden in darkness becomes manifest in the light.

REBUTTAL:

(1) What does the light really do? It is said that the light reveals the jar by producing cognition (*buddhi*) with the jar as its object, which implies the arising of a previously unarisen cognition.<sup>85</sup> Hence, the doctrine of emergent manifestation is invalidated.

(2) If it is held that the light reveals the jar by dispelling the darkness that obstructs the cognition of the jar (existing in the mode of potentiality), the doctrine of emergent manifestation is again invalidated. For if the jar exists, how can the darkness obstruct it? If this cognition (*buddhi*) arises through the meeting of the sense-faculty, sense-objects, etc, the doctrine of emergent manifestation is invalidated by the very word “arises” (*uppatti*). For that term exceeds the bounds of the mere manifestation of something pre-existent but unmanifest, and signifies the arising of an unarisen cognition.

(3) Suppose now it is held that the cognition arises by the dispelling of delusion, which here obstructs the occurrence of the cognition.<sup>86</sup> Again, if the cognition exists, how can delusion obstruct it? The doctrine of emergent manifestation is again invalidated.

(4) Furthermore, the doctrine of emergent manifestation is invalidated because of the existing diversity of cognition and its object. The diversity of things (such as the jar) cannot be made manifest when there are many manifestors (*abhivyañjanaka*), such as the sun, the moon, gems and lamps. Similarly, the diversity in cognition cannot occur through the diversity in the objects. This is because the cognition arises in accordance with its object.<sup>87</sup>

<sup>80</sup> SN Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy* vol 1 1922:254 ff.

<sup>81</sup> See Ency Brit (15<sup>th</sup> ed) Micro sv: emergence.

<sup>82</sup> *Satti*, Skt *śakti*, energy, force, potentiality, capability.

<sup>83</sup> DAṬ 1:186 f; DAaṬ:CSCD 1:396 f.

<sup>84</sup> This is a summary and paraphrase of Dhammapāla’s rebuttal found in DAṬ 1:186, 194 f and Ñāṇābhivamsa’s more elaborate version at DAaṬ 1:396; for these Pali passages, see Bodhi, 1978:349 f (App 2 no 2).

<sup>85</sup> Bodhi: The origination of cognition contradicts the notion of the manifestation of something already existent, and hence invalidates the doctrine. (1978:138 n1)

<sup>86</sup> Bodhi: The position set forth here assumes the cognition to be present in the mode of potentiality, but only obstructed in its actual occurrence due to delusion. The dispersal of delusion does not, on this view, originate the cognition, but only allows it to become manifest in its functional mode. (1978:138 n2)

<sup>87</sup> Bodhi: If all cognitions exist *a priori* [before the fact] in a state of potentiality, then a sufficient reason must be given why, on a particular occasion, a cognition of one kind rather than of another, eg a jar rather than a pencil, comes to pass. If it is said that the cognition is existent but obstructed by darkness, or by delusion in place of darkness, then the cause for manifestation of the particular cognition should be the manifestor, ie the source of the illumination. In such a case one would expect the cognition to reflect the differences in the sources of illumination. But contrary to expectation, the same cognition occurs despite differences in the manifestors, implying the dependence

(5) In speaking of the manifesting of something previously unmanifest, one admits the identity (separateness) of the function (the activity of manifesting) and the agent performing that function. But in reality, there is no difference between the activity of manifesting (previously unmanifest) existence, and the agent performing this function. That is to say, there is no difference between the state of contacting (*phusana*), etc, from the contact (*phassa*) itself. In simple terms, there is no difference between the deed and the doer. Hence, the doctrine of emergent manifestation is invalid.

### The eternalist view of change

**31.2** And though these beings roam and wander through samsara, fall away and re-arise,... (*Te’va sattā sandhāvanti saṃsaranti cavanti upapajjanti*).

The Commentary says that these beings are only “reckoned thus” (*evaṃ saṅkhyāṃ gacchanti*), as dying and re-arising (DA 1:105). The Subcommentary explains this as because of the eternalist’s view that there is no real passing away or re-arising—that is, because of the self’s permanence (*nicca, sabhāva-attā*)—and because of its omnipresence (*sabba, byāpitāya*), it does not really roam and wander. (DAṬ 1:187)

The Commentary notes how the theorist here undermines his own dogma. First, having said, “The self and the world are eternal,” but then says, inconsistently, “These beings roam and wander” [implying impermanence, DAṬ 1:187].

This is fickle, like a stake planted in a heap of chaff. The good and the bad (*sundaram pi asundaram pi*) are mixed together like bits of cake, faeces, cowdung, etc, in a madman’s basket!<sup>88</sup>

(DA 1:105)

**31.3** What is the reason for this? For I,...recall my manifold past existence ... Thus I know this: The self and the world are eternal (*Taṃ kissa hetu? Ahaṃ hi... aneka, vihitam pubbe, nivāsam anussarāmi... iminā-m-ahaṃ etaṃ jānāmi: yathā sassato attā ca loko ca*).

Now to prove his claim that the self and the world are eternal, the theorist gives his reason, thus: “Through my excellent achievement (namely, the recollection of my manifold past existence), I know this through direct experience (*paccakkhato*). I do not speak from mere faith.”

(DA 1:106)

The Subcommentary further explains this argument:

This is his argument: “Throughout the course of these many hundreds of thousands of births, this my self and the world have remained one and the same, as shown by the fact of recollection. For, he who recollects an experience is the same as he who originally experienced it, not someone else. It is not possible for one person to recollect something experienced by another person, eg, Dhammarakkhita cannot recollect what was experienced by Buddharakkhita,

And as it is with these existences (recollected by me), so it is with the earlier ones, too. Therefore my self and the world are eternal.

And as it is with me, so it is with other beings: for them too, the self and the world are eternal.”

Thus, leaping into the jungle of views by way of eternalism, the theorist establishes others in his view as well. According to the statements in the text, “they assert various conceptual theories” and “he speaks thus,” the argument is intended for the purpose of converting others.

of cognition on something external to the cognizing mind, and hence its actual origination, not merely its passage from a state of potentiality to a state of manifestation. And the cognition does invariably conform to the object, which proves its *a posteriori* [after the fact] origination in dependence on the object. (1978:139 n1)

<sup>88</sup> “[I]n a madman’s basket,” *ummattaka.pacchiyam*. CPD (sv *ummattaka, pacchi*) renders it as “a basket of thorn apples,” quoting DAṬ 1:464,11 ad DA 357,24, but fails to incl the sense here where “thorn apple” (sv *ummattaka* 2) does not fit the context.

(DAṬ 1:187 f; Bodhi's tr)

**31.4** Bhikshus, this is the first reason (*Idam bhikkhave paṭhamam thānam*).

This is the first of the four grounds, referred to by the word *vatthu* in the phrase *catūhi vatthūhi*. It means the first cause (*kāraṇa*) consisting in the recollection of some hundred thousand past births. (DA 1:106).

The New Subcommentary (*Abhinava, tīkā*) here states that there are **three kinds of causes** (*kāraṇa*):

- (1) cause by way of attainment (*sampāpaka, kāraṇa*), for example, the noble path is the cause for the attaining of nirvana;
- (2) cause by way of growth (*nibbattaka, kāraṇa*), for example, the seed is the cause for the growth of the sprout; and
- (3) cause by way of communication (*ñāpaka, kāraṇa*), for example, the conditioned arising of things (*paccay'uppannatā*), etc, is the cause for communicating the truth of impermanence, etc.

Here, the cause by way of communication alone is meant. For that which communicates is the cause for the knowledge that has the communicated meaning as its domain [means].<sup>89</sup>

My understanding here is that these conditions for the arising of knowledge refers to (1) spiritual knowledge gained through the path; (2) the knowledge arising from wise attention; while (3) is simply knowledge through the voice of another (*parato, ghosa*).

**32-33** [The second and third grounds for eternalism]

[Grounds (2)-(3)] The difference between the three grounds for eternalism is only a matter of the length of time that one recalls one's past lives. The Commentary says that a sectarian of keen intelligence (*tikkha, pañña*) can recall up to 40 aeons (cycles) of the pulsating universe, but no more; one of middling intelligence (*majjhima, pañña*), up to 10 aeons; and one of weak intelligence (*manda, pañña*), up to several hundred thousand past lives (DA 1:106).

The New Subcommentary explains that these sectarians could not see more of their past lives due to their lack of knowledge delimiting name and form (*nāma, rūpa, pariccheda*),<sup>90</sup> that is,

the ability to analyze and define, accurately and completely, experiential data into their basic categories, down to mentality and materiality [*nāma, rūpa*]. Because such a mode of analysis is not found outside the Buddha's dispensation, sectarian yogins are limited in their capacity for recalling past lives. (Bodhi 1978:143 n)<sup>91</sup>

**34** a certain recluse or brahmin is a rationalist, an investigator [experimenter]. Fabricating it through reasoning, having it investigated through mental, by way of his own intelligence, he says thus (*ekacco samaṇo vā brāhmaṇo vā takkī hoti vīmaṃsī. So takka, pariyāhatam vīmaṃsānucaritam sayam, paṭibhānam evam āha*).

[Ground (4)] Both the term "rationalist" (*takkī*) and "investigator" (*vīmaṃsī*) clearly refers the academician, philosopher or scientist of our times. Here *takkī hoti vīmaṃsī* may be taken as either a dvandva (a reasoner and an investigator) or as tatpuruṣa (a reasoner and investigator, ie one who investigates through reasoning). In fact, the term *takkī, vīmaṃsī* may be taken as synonymous with *ākāra, parivittakka* ("rational investigation" or "investigative reasoning"). This is one of **the five courses of knowledge**, namely, faith (*saddhā*), approval (*ruci*), oral tradition (*anussava*), investigative reasoning (*ākāra, parivittakka*), and reflective acceptance of a view (*diṭṭhi, nijjhāna-k, khanti*).<sup>92</sup>

<sup>89</sup> DAaṬ:CSCD 1:399.

<sup>90</sup> DAaṬ:CSCD 1:399.

<sup>91</sup> See Vism 13.13-71/410-423, 18/587-597.

<sup>92</sup> M 95.14/2:170, 101.11/2:218, 102.15/1:234.

The “reasoners and investigators” (*takkī hoti vīmaṁsī*), listed here as the fourth kind of eternalist,<sup>93</sup> are also listed as the fourth kind of partial-eternalist.<sup>94</sup> **Analayo** remarks:

As the exposition of the grounds for eternalist views is meant to be comprehensive, the Brahma-jāla Sutta’s presentation entails that all those who hold an eternalist view do so either based on direct experience or else based on “thinking and reasoning.” Thus all those who have faith in an eternal god without having had a direct experience of this god would fall under the category “thinking and reasoning.” Hence in the eyes of the early Buddhists “faith” and “thinking and reasoning” may not have been as different from each other as one may at first sight have assumed, in the sense that thinking and reasoning may turn out to be merely tools to rationalize beliefs.

(*A Comparative Study of the Majjhima Nikāya* (draft), 2005, at M 2:211)

### 35 There is none beyond this (*n’atthi ito bahiddhā*).

This is the Buddha’s lion-roar, a statement that is truth-based so that none can rebut. But how valid is this? First, we have to examine how the sectarian form his view. First, through recollecting his past lives, he takes one of the aggregates (form, feeling, perception, formations, or consciousness) as an eternal self. He reasons only *after* he mixing with unwholesome company, listened to false teachings, emerged from unwise attention, acquired a perverted perception, overshot the bounds of rational proof by not understanding the moment-to-moment breaking up (*bhijjana*) of the aggregates, and wrongly applied the method of unity (*ekatta, nayaṁ micchā gahetvā*) (DAṬ 1:191).

This means that the sectarian mistakes the continuity and coherence of his experience as proof of a permanent underlying self. Due to his lack of right understanding in the Buddha’s teaching, he does not see that this coherence is only apparent due to the rapid cycle of momentary arising and passing away of the thought-moment without any abiding entity.

The New Subcommentary goes on to explain the two kinds of characteristics (*lakkhaṇa*) pertaining to ultimate reality (*paramattha dhamma*), namely:

- (1) specific characteristic (*sabhāva, lakkhaṇa*);<sup>95</sup> and
- (2) general characteristic (*sāmañña, lakkhaṇa*).<sup>96</sup>

The specific characteristic is comprehended through direct experiential knowledge (*paccakkha, ñāṇa*), while the general characteristic is seen through inferential knowledge (*anumāna, ñāṇa*).

Inferential knowledge is wisdom through hearing (ie learning) (*suta, mayī paññā*), such as by way of listening to scripture. Through reflecting on this acquired learning, there arises wisdom through thinking (*cintā, mayī paññā*). And the wisdom through cultivation (*bhāvanā, mayī paññā*) in due course brings about direct experiential knowledge.<sup>97</sup> But scripture does not transcend reasoning, and as such is included here in the commentary by reasoning through hearsay. Hence, it is correct to say, “There is none beyond this.” (DAṬ 1:192)

The meaning here is that, beyond the 62 grounds, there is no other ground for views simply because the unawakened mostly have inferential learning, that is, wisdom through hearing and through thinking. Even those who form views through the wisdom of cultivation, do so in a skewed manner, without seeing true reality. Their speculations and dogmas all fall inside the perfect new of views.

<sup>93</sup> *Ekacco samaṇo vā brāhmaṇo vā takkī hoti vīmaṁsī...sassata, vādā* (D 1.34/1:16) = SD 25.1.

<sup>94</sup> *Ekacco samaṇo vā brāhmaṇo vā takkī hoti vīmaṁsī...ekacca, sassatikā ekassa, asassatikā* (D 1.49/1:21) = SD 25.1.

<sup>95</sup> Or, “characteristic of specific nature,” ie the features particularizing each type of state (*dharma*).

<sup>96</sup> The general characteristics of all conditioned things (ie everything except nirvana) are those of impermanence and suffering; and the general characteristic of all things (incl nirvana) is that of not-self (Dh 277-279).

<sup>97</sup> D 33.1.10(43)/210; Vbh 324; Vism 14.14.439. See 1(4)n.

**36.1** These standpoints, thus grasped, thus misapprehended, will lead to such a future destiny, to such a state beyond (*ime kho diṭṭhi-ṭ,thānā evaṃ,gahitā evaṃ,-parāmatṭhā evaṃ,gatikā bhavissanti evaṃ,abhisamparāyā ti*).

Here, a “standpoint” (*diṭṭhi-ṭ,thāna*, literally, “stand for views”) refers to a set of grounds (*vatthu*) [§29].<sup>98</sup> In the **Kokanuda Sutta** (A 10.96), Ānanda, in answer to the wanderer Kokanuda’s question, replies that he sees (*passāmi*) them, as far as standpoints go, he understands them, seeing them as they are,<sup>99</sup> which its Commentary explains as constituting the path of stream-winning (AA 5:66). The same Commentary explains *diṭṭhi-ṭ,thāna* as arising in eight ways (*kāraṇā*, “reasons”): because of (1) the aggregates, or (2) ignorance, or (3) contact (sense-experience), (4) perception, (5) discursive thinking, (6) unwise attention, or (7) an evil friend, or (8) another’s word (*khandhā pi diṭṭhi-ṭ,thānaṃ avijjā pi phasso pi saññā pi vitakko pi ayoniso manasikāro pi pāpa,mitto pi parato,ghoso pi diṭṭhi-ṭ,thānam pi*) (id). Such speculations and opinions fuel the aggregates that push one on to further existences and suffering.

These standpoints and views are taken and mistaken by attaching eternal existence upon the self, which after all is non-existent in the ultimate sense. Here Bodhi notes that a double error is made: “first a self is assumed to exist, then eternal existence is ascribed to the self” (1978:148 n). Dhammapāla, in his Subcommentary goes on to say:

They are merely foolish prattle that persist only so long as the wise do not cross-examine them. But when they are cross-examined by the wise, they are without sustainable or steady ground. They break up and disappear like dew-drops, or a glow-worm’s light, in the rising sun.

(DAṬ 1:193 f)

### 36.2 [Dhammapāla’s examination of eternalism]<sup>100</sup>

If the self or the world were eternal, as postulated by some, then it would be impossible to take them as the basis for attaining any spiritual distinction. For, due to its unchanging nature, its will always keep its original form (*purima,rūpa*). If it cannot change, how can the eternalist instruct it to turn away from evil, and any effort to practise good would be vain.

Furthermore, for such a self, meritorious deeds such as giving, and demeritorious deeds such as violence, would be more than just empty space. Similarly, since karma cannot act on such a self, the eternalist cannot say that the self wills to feel pleasure and pain. And since the eternal self does not undergo birth, what need is there for it to be liberated?

The eternalist may claim that the self does show things such as action which, as the self’s mere attributes (*dhamma,matta*), arise and cease. The reply is that it is impossible to give any “mere attribute” to an unchanging self that always keeps its original form. Such modes (*avatthā*) have to be either different from the self or the same as it. If they are different (*aññe*), then those attributes through which the self acts, feels the results of actions, ceases and re-arises, have no effect whatsoever on it.

On the other hand, if the self and its attributes were identical (*anaññe*), then when it is in the arising or ceasing mode, the self, too, would similarly arise and cease. How then could this self be said to be permanent? Moreover, if one were to claim that both the attributes and the self are permanent, the result is bondage, and liberation is impossible. As such, eternalism is untenable.

There is no way an eternalist can have the final say (*yutti*) regarding any eternal existence of things. A teaching (*vacana*) that cannot be proven does not satisfy the wise. Hence, it is said, “They persists only so long as the wise do not cross-examine them” (*yāva paṇḍitā na samanujjuṇṇanti, tāva gacchānti pavattantī ti*) [36.1].

<sup>98</sup> “Standpoints,” *diṭṭhi-ṭ,thāna* [§§29, 51, 59, 66b, 70b, 72, 80b, 83b, 92a, 99b, 100b, 103], lit “view-stands,” are found only at the end of each sub-set of the grounds (*vatthu*) [§29n]. As such, they refer to the 8 subsets, viz: I eternalism, II partial eternalism, III extensionism, IV endless hedging, V fortuitious arising, VI immorality, VII annihilationism, and VIII nirvana here and now. See A 2:242; It 48 f; Pm 1:138; MA 2:10, 110.

<sup>99</sup> A 10.96/5:198.

<sup>100</sup> This section is based on Dhammapāla’s Subcommentary (DAṬ 1:194), but it is a free contemporary rendition. See Bodhi 1978:350 for the Pali text and 1978:149 f for a more traditional tr.

**36.3** he understands, too, what transcends this (*tato ca uttaritarāṃ pajānāti*).

The Buddha not only very well understands this fourfold speculation along with their grounds and goals, but he also understands what goes beyond this, that is, moral virtue, mental concentration, and all-knowing wisdom. (DA 1:108)

**36.4** Yet, he does not misapprehend [does not cling on to] that understanding (*Tañ ca pajānanāṃ na parāmasati*).

The Buddha understands that such speculations and views lead to further existence and suffering, and he also knows how to overcome them. However, the Buddha does not cling to this understanding, as this passage from the **Mahā Taṇhā,saṅkhaya Sutta** (M 38) clearly shows:

Monks, no matter how pure and clear this view may be, if you stick to it, prize it, be acquisitive about it,<sup>101</sup> treat it as a possession,<sup>102</sup> would you then understand that the Dharma has been taught **as being comparable to a raft**<sup>103</sup> that is for crossing over [the waters to the far shore], not for the purpose of grasping?"

"No, venerable sir."

"Monks, no matter how pure and clear this view may be, if you do *not* stick to it, do *not* prize it, are *not* acquisitive about it, do *not* treat it as a possession, would you then understand that the Dharma has been taught as being comparable to a raft, which is for crossing over [the waters to the far shore], not for the purpose of grasping?"

"Yes, venerable sir."

(M 38.14/1:261 = SD 7.10)

**36.5** Having understood, as they really are, the arising, and the ending, and the gratification, and the danger, and the escape regarding feelings, the Tathagata, bhikkhus, is liberated through non-clinging (*Vedanānaṃ samudayañ ca atthagamañ ca assādañ ca ādīnavañ ca nissaraṇañ ca yathā, bhūtaṃ viditvā anupādā vimutto bhikkhave tathāgato*).

36.5.1 The Tathagata, wishing to show how he has reached the state of peace (nirvana), now explains meditation (*kammaṭṭhāna*) [ie of the four noble truths, DAT] by way of those very feelings that delight the sectarians. Thinking they have found happiness here, they conjure up views and cling to them. (DA 1:108)

Here "**having understood, as they really are**" (*ca yathā, bhūtaṃ viditvā*) means that he has understood, according to reality, the arising (*samudaya*) of feelings by way of the following five characteristics, as stated in the **Paṭisambhidā, magga**, thus:

What five characteristics are seen by one who sees the arising of the feeling aggregate?

He sees **the arising of the feeling aggregate** by way of conditioned arising thus:

- (1) with the arising of ignorance, there arises feeling.
- (2) ... with the arising of craving, there arises feeling.
- (3) ... with the arising of karma, there arises feeling.
- (4) ... with the arising of contact, there arises feeling.
- (5) He who sees the characteristic of production (*nibbatti, lakkhaṇa*) see the arising of feeling aggregate. (Pm 1.288/56)

<sup>101</sup> "Be acquisitive about it," *dhanāyati* (denom of *dhana*, "treasure") lit "make a treasure of it," he desires (like money), wishes for, strives after. Also read as *vanāyati*, he hankers after.

<sup>102</sup> This verse up to here qu in Comy to **Alagaddūpama S** (M 22) (MA 22.21/2:109).

<sup>103</sup> "Being comparable to a raft," *kullūpamaṃ*. The whole phrase can be alt tr as "would you then understand the Dharma as taught in the parable of the raft...?" The parable is fully explained in **Alagaddūpama S** (M 22.13/1:134 = SD 3.13). "This is said to show the bhikkhus that they should not cling even to the right view of insight meditation" (M:NB 1233 n406).

He has understood, according to reality, the passing away (*atthaṅgama*) of feelings by way of the following five characteristics, as stated in **the Paṭṣambhidā, magga**, thus:

What five characteristics is seen by one who sees the passing away of the feeling aggregate?

He sees **the passing away of the feeling aggregate** by way of conditioned arising thus:

- (1) with the passing away of ignorance, there arises feeling.
- (2) ... with the passing away of craving, there arises feeling.
- (3) ... with the passing away of karma, there arises feeling.
- (4) ... with the passing away of contact, there arises feeling.
- (5) He who sees the characteristic of change (*vipariṇāma, lakkhaṇa*) see the arising of feeling aggregate. (Pm 1.288/56)

He has understood, according to reality, the gratification (*assāda*) in feelings, as stated in **the Assāda Sutta 1** (S 22.26), thus:

The pleasure and joy that arise in dependence on feelings: this is the gratification in feelings. (S 22.26/3:28)

Similarly, he has understood, according to reality, the danger (*ādīnava*) in feelings, thus:

That feelings are impermanent, suffering, subject to change: this is the danger in feelings. (S 22.26/3:28)

Similarly, he has understood, according to reality, the escape (*nissaraṇa*) in regards to feelings, thus:

The removal and letting go of lustful desire for feelings: this is the escape in regards to feelings. (S 22.26/3:28)

And having understood all this, “the Tathagata, monks, devoid of clinging through the disappearance of lustful desire, is liberated through non-clinging” [untraced]. (DA 1:109)

36.5.2 THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS AND FEELINGS. When feeling is mentioned, the form and formless dharmas that are coascent (*sahajāta*), support ( ), and object conditions ( ) for feeling are also included.

All the five aggregates of clinging are included in the feelings consisting in the truth that is suffering (*dukkha, sacca*).

The ignorance (*avijjā*), etc, included by mentioning the arising of feeling make up the truth that is the arising of suffering (*samudaya, sacca*).

The terms “passing away” (*atthaṅgama*) and “escape” (*nissaraṇa*) refer to the truth that is the ending of suffering (*nirodha, sacca*).

And the understanding of feelings “as they really are” (*yathā, bhūta*) refers to the truth that is the path (*magga, sacca*).<sup>104</sup>

Through this penetration of the four noble truths, the Buddha is able to analyze the speculative views together with their grounds and goals. (DAṬ 1:197)

36.5.3 THE NATURE OF FEELING. **Feeling** (*vedanā*),<sup>105</sup> according to Boisvert (1995:53), is more than mere “bare awareness” or “anoetic sentience” [sensing without knowing]” [Jayatilleke 1963:436], since it has some specific content: pleasure, pain, neutral feeling; and that *vedanā* is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition, for the arising of **craving** (the subsequent link in the dependent arising cycle).<sup>106</sup> Even in ordinary people, not all feeling produces craving.

It is also important to note here that the fact that feeling (*vedanā*) exists is due to karma from a past life. However, the contents of such feeling—that is, pleasant feeling, painful feeling, neutral feeling—are not always due to past karma. This is clearly stated in such suttas as **the Tittth’āyatana Sutta** (A 3.61)<sup>107</sup>

<sup>104</sup> This section on the four noble truths refers back to the Subcommentary above, stating the subject of the meditation (*kamma-t, thāna*) above.

<sup>105</sup> See **Feelings** = SD 17.3.

<sup>106</sup> On necessary and sufficient conditions, see SD 5.15(6).

<sup>107</sup> A 3.61/1:173-177. See SD 6.7.

and the **Devadaha Sutta** (M 101/2:228). In other words, it is important to make a distinction between *vedanā* as a fact and the contents of *vedanā*.

**Ñāṇābhivamsa**, in his New Subcommentary (Abhinava,ṭīkā) to the Dīgha,<sup>108</sup> gives **two methods of interpretation** as regards suffering and feeling. According to the first method of interpretation, the term “impermanent” (*anicca*) refers to equanimous feeling (*upekkhā,vedanā*) or to all feelings, by way of existential suffering (*sāṅkhāra,dukkha*); the term “suffering” (*dukkha*) refers to painful feelings, by way of affective change (*dukkha,dukkha*); and the term “subject to change” (*vipariṇāma,dhamma*) refers to pleasant feelings, by way of temporal change (*vipariṇāma,dukkha*). The second method applies all three terms to all three types of feeling (pleasant, painful and equanimous). Of this, Bodhi notes:

This interpretation gives a clear example of the intricate interconnections of the diverse categorical schemes underlying the Buddha’s teaching, and the exactness in the Master’s selection of words to bring home the significance of his discourse. (Bodhi 1978:153 n2)

## 2. Partial eternalism (*ekacca,sassata,vāda*), grounds 5-8

**38.1** There are, bhikshus, some recluses and brahmins who are eternalists regarding some things and non-eternalists regarding other things (*Santi bhikkhave eke samaṇa,brāhmaṇā ekacca,sassatikā ekacca,asassatikā*).

The Commentary says that there are two kinds of partial eternalists:

- (1) partial eternalists with regards to beings (*satt’ekacca,sassatikā*); and
- (2) partial eternalists with regards to formations (*sāṅkhār’ekacca,sassatikā*).

Both are meant here (DA 1:109). The first three grounds mentioned in the Sutta in terms of beings, and the fourth in terms of formations. Here, the expression “in terms of formations” refers to the Buddhist sense, not to that of the partial eternalist. What they conceive as eternal, they also regard as unconditioned (*asaṅkhata*). As such, they do not regard them as formations.

JAIN TEACHINGS. The Jain doctrine of the seven predicables (*satta,bhaṅga*)<sup>109</sup> and of relativism (*anekānta,vāda*)<sup>110</sup> both fall under the category of partial eternalism as well as endless hedging. The doctrine of the seven predicables maintains that entities possessing rise, fall, and stability [durability] can be describe thus:

- |                            |                        |   |
|----------------------------|------------------------|---|
| 1. p may be the case       | <i>syād asti</i>       | permanent ( <i>siyā aniccā</i> )                              |
| 2. not-p may be the case   | <i>syān nāsti</i>      | impermanent ( <i>siyā aniccā</i> )                            |
| 3. p.not-p may be the case | <i>syād asti nāsti</i> | both permanent and impermanent ( <i>siyā niccānicca</i> )     |
| 4. (p is inexpressible)    | <i>syād avaktavyaḥ</i> | neither permanent nor impermanent ( <i>siyā na vattabbā</i> ) |

The remaining three are obtained by combining the fourth with each of the preceding three.

The Jain doctrine of relativism teaches that in everything there is something permanent, and something impermanent. For example, in a golden jar, the gold is permanent, but the shape, colour and other qualities rise and fall.<sup>111</sup> Dhammapāla refutes this view by pointing out that the gold itself is an aggregation of physical dharmas that are subject to rise and fall, and hence cannot provide a lasting substantial nature so that it could said to be permanent (DAṬ 1:198 f).

The partial eternalists in regards to beings are **the theists** (*issara,vāda*), who maintain that only God (*issara*, Skt *īśvara*) is permanent, while other beings are impermanent. Partial eternalists in regards to

<sup>108</sup> DAaṬ:Be (CSCD) 1:408 f. See also DAṬ:CSCD 1:196 f & *The All-embracing Net of Views*, tr Bhikkhu Bodhi, 1978:153 n2.

<sup>109</sup> Skt *sapta,bhaṅga*. See Jayatilleke 1963:121, 138, 156; Bodhi 1978:21.

<sup>110</sup> See Bodhi 1978:21, 155-157, 201.

<sup>111</sup> See M Hiriyanna, *The Essentials of Indian Philosophy*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1951:67 f.



formations include the followers of Kāṇāda,<sup>112</sup> who maintain that atoms (*paramāṇu*) are permanent and stable, but molecules (*aṇuka*), etc, are impermanent. This is to say, the combination of two or more atoms (*dvi,aṇuk'ādayo*) are impermanent. They also include those who maintain that the physical sense-organs are impermanent, but consciousness is permanent. (DAṬ 1:199)

### 38.2 [Is partial eternalism in part right view?]

Dhammapāla asks: If the partial eternalist doctrine teaches that some dharmas are eternal, but some such as the eye, are not, isn't this in accordance with reality? If so why is it a wrong view?

The wrong view here is the adherence to notion that *some* of the impermanent things are eternal. It is true that such things as the eye are impermanent. However, when the two notions are mixed together, it is like mixing the cream of ghee with poison. It cannot be classified as right view because it is incapable of fully functioning as right view. Furthermore, although the eye, etc, are regarded as impermanent, they are still attributed with the nature of a soul (*samāropita,jīva,sabhāva*) when they say: “The eye...the body: that *self* is impermanent...” and so on. (DAṬ 1:200)<sup>113</sup>

**Dhammapāla**, in his Subcommentary, is careful to distinguish the Buddhist position—“the doctrine of analysis” (*vibhajja,vāda*)—from the doctrines of partial-eternalism. Both assert a dichotomy between eternal and non-eternal states, but the partial-eternalist commits a double error which the Buddhists avoid. First, he mistakes non-eternal conditioned states to be eternal and unconditioned. Then, he attributes selfhood to the states that he regards as eternal.

The Buddhists, however, distinguishes between the conditioned states of phenomenal existence which are invariably impermanent and the unconditioned dharma or nirvana, which alone is permanent. He further does not attribute selfhood to anything, not even to nirvana, since self-notion is a fundamental error.

## The Creator-God idea

**39.1** beings are mostly reborn in the Ābhassara [streaming radiance] Brahmā world (*yebhuyyena sattā ābhassara,samvattanikā honti*).

[Ground (5)] The Ābhassara heaven is one of the 2<sup>nd</sup>-dhyana worlds.<sup>114</sup> **Buddhaghosa**, commenting on the key word, “**mostly**” (*yebhuyyena*) here, says that it is used because the other beings are born either in higher Brahmā realms or in the formless realms” (DA 1:110). **Dhammapāla**, in his subcommentary on Buddhaghosa’s commentary, however, adds:

“*or* in world-systems other than those in the process of contracting” is the alternative to be understood by the word *or*. For it is impossible to consider that all beings in the planes of misery (*āpaya*) at that time are born in the form existence or formless existence, since it is impossible for those beings in the planes of misery with the longest life-span to be reborn in the human realm.

(DAṬ 1:201, see Gethin 1997:198 f)

Thus Dhammapāla deals with Buddhaghosa’s failure to take into account the karma of those beings who have committed one of the five karmas “with immediate result [arising in this life or the following birth]” (*ānantariya,kamma*, ie matricide, parricide, killing an arhat, wounding the Buddha, splitting the Sangha) when the aeon (*kappa*) ends. If the karma of such beings have not run out, then surely, Dhammapāla concludes, they must be reborn in the hells of other world systems.<sup>115</sup>

<sup>112</sup> Kāṇāda (100-300 CE), wrote the Vaiśeṣika Sūtras and founded the Vaiśeṣika system, one of the six traditional Indian schools of philosophy (*darśana*).

<sup>113</sup> See also Bodhi 1978:21-24.

<sup>114</sup> For a good introductory reading on Buddhist cosmology, see Gethin 1998:112-132 (ch 5, with a diagram, 116 f).

<sup>115</sup> “Cf Kvu 13.1/476.

### 39.2 There they dwell, mind-made (*So tattha hoti mano,mayo*).

They are said to be “mind-made” (*mano,mayo*) because they are reborn by way of the dhyana-mind (*jhāna,manena*) (DA 1:110).

The Subcommentary says that although all beings re-arise or are reborn through karmically formative states of consciousness, the beings of the form sphere (*rūpāvacara*) are said to be “mind-made” because they are through mind alone without external (ie physical) conditions. The term however is clearly implicit for beings for the formless sphere (*arūpāvacara*) since they are born through mind alone. In conventional usage, the term “mind-made” is applied only to the form beings. (DAṬ 1:201 f)

### 40.1 an empty Brahmā-mansion appears (*suññaṃ brahma,vimānaṃ pātubhavati*).

The Commentary explains that the plane or world of Brahmā’s host (*brahmā,kāyika,bhūmi*) arises (*nibbattati*)—usually termed a Brahmā-mansion (*brahma,vimāna*)—but it is empty since no beings have arisen in it yet. It has no creator, but is rich in gems, arising through (the Brahmā’s) karmic support (*kamma,paccaya*) and heat-produced (*utu,samuṭṭhāna*), in the way described in **the Visuddhi,magga**.<sup>116</sup> And here too gardens, kalpa (“wish-fulfilling”) trees, etc, arise in their natural places. (DA 1:110).

What we have here is the description of an offworld lush paradise, very similar to an unpolluted green and idyllic tropical haven on earth. According to **the Paṭhama Kosala Sutta** (A 10.29), the Buddha declares that there are numerous (“a thousand,” *sahassa*) other inhabited world-systems or galaxies (*loka,dhātu*) very similar to our own.<sup>117</sup> Allowing for the rich colour of ancient and pre-modern literary style, it is easy to translate such mythologies and descriptions into modern visions of other worlds and parallel universes. The true nature of such worlds are, of course, only just beginning to be explored.<sup>118</sup>

### 40.2 Then a certain heavenly being, due to the exhaustion of his life-span, or due to the exhaustion of his merit, passes away from the Ābhassara realm and arises in the empty Brahmā-mansion (*Ath’aññataro satto āyu-k,khayā vā puñña-k,khayā vā ābhassara,kāyā cavitvā suññaṃ brahma,vimānaṃ upapajjati*).

How is it, as the Subcommentary says, that beings living in the superior plane of the second dhyana (ie the Ābhassara world) fall from there to re-arise in the inferior 1<sup>st</sup>-dhyana plane (ie in Brahmā’s host)? (DAṬ 1:203).

The Commentary explains that, in due course, an attachment (*nikanti*) to their abode spontaneously arises among the Brahmās. Having cultivated the first dhyana, they descend (*otaranti*)<sup>119</sup> from there (to be reborn in a lower plane). **Divine beings fall from their heavens** in the following ways:

- (1) Due to the exhaustion of their life-span (*āyu-k,khaya*). Those beings with great meritorious karma who are reborn in a celestial world with a short life-span cannot remain there by virtue of their merit, but pass away on account of in that world’s lifespan.
- (2) Due to the exhaustion of merit (*puñña-k,khaya*). Those beings, with weak meritorious karma, who are reborn in a celestial world with a long life-span cannot remain there for that world’s whole lifespan, but pass away mid-way. (DA 1:110 f)

The Subcommentary gives the following list of lifespans for the various realms:

the gods and hell-beings                      fixed limits (but the actual duration differs from realm to realm)

<sup>116</sup> Vism 17.190/559.

<sup>117</sup> A 10.29/5:59-65 = SD 16.15.

<sup>118</sup> Such movies and TV series like Star Trek (and its offspins) and Stargate gives us some idea what such off-worlds and their inhabitants might be like.

<sup>119</sup> This is almost a euphemism: the more common term for brahmas and devas dying is “they fall” (*cavanti*; sg *cavati*) (D 1:14, cf DA 1:105; Kh 8.4 = KhA 220; It 99 = Nm 235.2; It 177; Sn 1073). The n *cuti* is also common (D 1:162; S 2:3 = 42, 3:53; M 1:49; Sn 643; Dh 419; J 1:19, 434; Vism 292, 460, 554; DhA 4:228). All this point to the fact that divine beings, as a rule, “fall” to lower planes when they die (due to their unwholesome dying thoughts).

human beings of Uttara,kuru      fixed limit<sup>120</sup>  
 animals, ghosts,<sup>121</sup> humans      no fixed limits (variable life-span).      (DAṬ 1:203)

**41** unrest, discontent, agitation arise in him (*nibbusitattā anabhirati paritassanā uppajjati*).

The Commentary explains the key terms thus:

“**Discontent**” (*anabhirati*) is the longing for the arrival of another. Dissatisfaction (*ukkaṇṭhitā*) associated with aversion (*paṭigha*) does not exist in the Brahmā world.

“**Agitation**” (*paritassanā*) is the anxiety (*ubbijjanā*), trembling (*phandanā*), of which there are four:

- (1) **Agitation through fear** (*tasa,tassanā*): Fear, fright, shock, hair-raising, mental unease, that arise on account of birth, of decay, of disease, of death.<sup>122</sup>
- (2) **Agitation through craving** (*taṇhā,tassanā*): That is, the thought, “O that other beings might come here, too!”<sup>123</sup>
- (3) **Agitation through views** (*diṭṭhi,tassanā*): That is, “agitation and vacillation.”<sup>124</sup>
- (4) **Agitation through knowledge** (*ñāṇa,tassanā*): Such as in the passage: “(Those gods,) having heard the Tathagata’s Dharma-teaching, generally feel fear, samvega [spiritual urgency], terror.”<sup>125</sup>

In the passage here [§41], both agitation through craving and agitation through views apply (DA 1:111).

The Subcommentary adds that in the passages on the agitation through knowledge—that is, in **the (Mahā) Sīha Sutta** (S 22.76) and **the Sīha Sutta** (A 4.33)—“fear” (*bhaya*) is the knowledge of fearfulness (*bhaya,ñāṇa*) arisen as the fear of all formations in one practising the contemplation of dissolution (*bhaṅgānupassana*).<sup>126</sup> “Spiritual urgency” (*samvega*) is knowledge together with moral fear, or only moral fear (*ottappa*). “Terror” (*santāsa*) is knowledge of being terrified by the formation, resulting from the contemplation of the danger<sup>127</sup> and of revulsion (*ādīnava,nibbidā’nupassanā*).<sup>128</sup>

#### 42.1 What is the reason for that? (*taṃ kissa hetu*).

After claiming to be the supreme lord and creator, Brahmā he desires to support this with a reason (*kāraṇato sādhetu,kāmo*) (DA 1:112).

The Subcommentary explains that although Brahmā had acquired the knowledge of the karma in his previous births, he has rejected it because of the instability of a worldling’s views. Led on by the idea that he has created creatures through a mere conscious act by way of the psychic power of transformation, and seizing on the notion of “God’s work” (*issara,kutta,dassana*), thinking, “I am the Lord, the Maker, the Creator, etc.,” his view becomes a strong conviction.

This statement, however, does not yet convert others, since it is said: “(he) thought thus” (*tassa evaṃ hoti*). And to show that this conviction was also made to convert others to his view, it is said: “After claiming...” (*paṭiññam katvā*) and “he desires to support with a reason” (*kāraṇato sādhetu,kāmo*) (DAṬ 1:205)

<sup>120</sup> According to Indian Buddhist mythology, this is a region in Central Asia, where the lifespan is 120 years. For details, see **Paṭhama Kosala S** (A 10.29.2/5:59) = SD 16.15 (n on Uttara,kuru).

<sup>121</sup> *Peta*, ie departed ones.

<sup>122</sup> Vbh 921/367: *Jātim paṭicca...jāraṃ paṭicca...vyādhiṃ paṭicca...maraṇaṃ paṭicca bhayaṃ bhayānakam chambhitattam lomahaṃso cetaso utrāso.*

<sup>123</sup> **Brahma,jāla S** (D 1.41/1:17, 1.42/1:18) = **Pāṭika S** (2.15/3:29).

<sup>124</sup> See V.1 = §§105-117, each of which ends with “...the agitation and vacillation of those overcome by craving” (*taṇhā,gatānaṃ paritasita.vipphanditam eva*) (D 1:39-41).

<sup>125</sup> *Te pi tathāgatassa dhamma,desanaṃ sutvā yebhuyyena bhayaṃ samvegaṃ santāsam āpajjanti, (Mahā) Sīha S* (S 22.76.8/3:85) = **Sīha S** (A 4.33/2:33). See also S:B 1069 nn105,107.

<sup>126</sup> See Vism 21.29-34/753-755.

<sup>127</sup> As *ādīnavānupassanā*, also tr as “contemplation of misery (as the result of evil actions).”

<sup>128</sup> See Vism 21.35-44/755-759. See also **Bhāvanā** = SD 15.1(10.2).

**42.2** By this Lord Brahmā, have we been created (*Iminā mayam bhotā brahmunā nimmitā*).

Although they [the brahmas of Brahmā's Host] have passed away and re-arose by way of their own karma, merely through pure imagination (*maññanā, matten'eva*) they conceive (*maññamānā*) that they have been created by him. So bowing before him at his feet like crooked pegs in crooked holes.<sup>129</sup> (DA 1:112)

Now, the Subcommentary asks, don't devas, immediately upon re-arising, have reviewing knowledge (*paccavekkhanā*), thus "Having passed away from such a destiny, we have re-arisen here as a result of such and such karma"? This is true, replies the Subcommentary, for those who were inclined to well-grounded in the knowledge of the ownership of karma, but in previous lives, these beings had also adhered to the notion of "God's work" with a strong conviction. Therefore, they think that God has created them. (DAṬ 1:206)

**44** He is permanent, stable, eternal, not subject to change (*so nicco dhuvo sassato avipariṇāma, dhammo*).

Not having seen Brahmā re-arise, they say that he is "**permanent**" (*nicca*). Not seeing him die, they say he is "**stable**" (*dhuva*). He is said to be "**not subject to change**" (*sassato avipariṇāma, dhamma*) because he is not seen to age. (DA 1:113)

ORIGIN OF CREATOR-GOD BELIEF. The partial eternalists in regards to beings are the theists (*issara, vāda*), who maintain that only God (*issara*, Skt *īśvara*) is permanent, while other beings are impermanent. **Bodhi** gives an instructive summary of the origin of the God-idea:

In the sutta<sup>130</sup> the origin of the God-idea in a myth reminiscent in some ways of the Biblical story of man's fall and expulsion from the Garden of Eden. Between these two, however, there is an important difference, in that the Biblical story upholds the veracity of ideas communicated by the myth, ie the eternity and omnipotence of God and the reality of his creative act, while the Buddhist account is set against an altogether different cosmological background.

According to the Buddhist cosmology, no temporal beginning can be found for the universe, which consists of an incalculable number of world-systems repeatedly evolving and dissolving in patterns governed by impersonal law. The belief in God takes place through a misinterpretation of the events described in the sutta, a misinterpretation fostered on the one hand by "Mahā Brahmā's" wrong understanding of the cosmological story, and on the other, by man's concession to this wrong understanding and subsequently misconstrued yogic experience.

In correct perspective the so-called Creator is seen to come into being through the same law that governs his creation, and a look into the future would show that he is likewise bound to pass away when the kamma that brought him to his exalted position exhausts its force. He is not the creator and ruler he imagines himself to be, but only a superior being abiding supreme in a higher plane of existence by reason of some good kamma performed in the past. Together with his company and realm, he is just as much subject to the law of impermanence, of becoming, or birth, ageing, and death, as all other beings. It is only the enlightened ones, the Buddhas and the arahats, who have broken the bonds of kamma, escaped from the cycle, and reached the one true permanent state where ageing and death reign no more. (Bodhi 1978:22 f)

<sup>129</sup> *Vaṅka-c.chidde vaṅka, āṇī viya onamitvā tass'eva pāda, mūlam gacchantī ti*. Bodhi freely renders this as: "... bowing before him like crooked pegs being inserted into crooked holes, they flocked to his feet (ie, they became his devotees)" (1978: 165).

<sup>130</sup> See §§39-44, & also **Aggañña S** (D 27.10-20/3:83-93) = SD 2.19.

However, it is curious that the Brahma,jāla Sutta gives this account [§§39-44]<sup>131</sup> as the only case for the origin of the God idea, Bodhi continues,

when anthropology and the history of religion cite other causes which can account for the genesis of the idea with perhaps greater plausibility. Most prominent would be the gradual fusion of the animistic spirits posited by primitive man to account for natural phenomena into a single figure, all-powerful and intimately concerned with man's welfare.

Speculative theology too provides an instance of a rationalistic origin, or at least justification, of the notion of a creator God, but this is not included in the section on the rationalistic basis for partial-eternalism.

Nevertheless, the sutta does indicate an important source for theism in misconstrued meditative experience, which cautions against too hasty a leap upon the revelations of supernatural states of consciousness as conclusive evidence for the ideas they reveal.<sup>132</sup> (Bodhi 1978:23)

In the 1930s, the American philosopher and educator **John Dewey** (1859-1952), the founder of pragmatic naturalism, delivered the Terry Lectures at Yale University (Yale, Massachusetts, USA). In three short chapters, he recast his pragmatic naturalism as a religious way of life, and published it as *A Common Faith* in 1934. Toward the end of his lecture, Dewey said:

Men have never fully used the powers they possess to advance the good in life, because they have waited upon some power external to themselves and to nature to do the work they are responsible for doing. Dependence upon an external power is the counterpart of surrender of human endeavor... Were the naturalistic foundations and bearings of religion grasped, the religious element in life would emerge from the throes of the crisis in religion. Religion would then be found to have its natural place in every aspect of human experience that is concerned with estimate of possibilities, with emotional stir by possibilities as yet unrealized, and with all action in behalf of their realization. All that is significant in human experience fall within this frame.

(John Dewey, *A Common Faith*, 1934:43, 46)<sup>133</sup>

## The second and third grounds for partial eternalism

**45** There are, bhikshus, devas called “defiled by play.”<sup>134</sup> They dwell much of the time immersed in the delights of laughter and play. From dwelling much of the time immersed in the delights of laughter and play, they become forgetful, and on account of their forgetfulness, these devas fall from that realm. (*Santi bhikkhave*

<sup>131</sup> However, cf **Pāṭika S** (D 24.1.5, 2.14.-21) on why the Buddha does not explain the world's origin; **Aggañña S** (D 27.10-20/3:83-93) = SD 2.19 (see **Mahāvastu**, Mvst 1:52, 228-248 for the Skt version; also Vasubandhu, *Abdhk* 3:97cd-98ab). See also **Tevijja S** (D 13) = SD 1.8 on the falsity of the God-idea.

<sup>132</sup> For a fuller account of the Buddhist attitude towards theism, see Nyanaponika Thera, *Buddhism and the God Idea*, Wheel Publication 47, Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1962.

<sup>133</sup> **John Dewey** wrote prolifically on pragmatic naturalism and education (some 50 vols) but only one small book on religion, but “a fully articulated theory of religious experience that is consistent with empirical naturalism” (John J Holder, “On the possibility of a naturalistic theory of religious experience,” 2004:3). He continues: “Why Dewey was so reluctant to deal with religion is hard to grasp, but some scholars have suggested that this has something to do with Dewey's conservative Christian upbringing—one scholar has even traced Dewey's reluctance to write about religion to the particular fact that when Dewey was young his mother nagged him every day with the question: ‘Are you right with Jesus?’ In any way, Dewey's failure to probe more deeply into religious experience is precisely why the early Buddhist tradition has something of profound importance to offer pragmatism in a way that is consistent with pragmatism's own philosophical commitments.” (op cit 2004:4).

<sup>134</sup> Only mentioned in 2 other suttas: in a list of gods in **Mahā Samaya S** (D 20/2:260) & in a passage on the beginning of things in **Pāṭika S** (D 24/3:30 x2, 31, 34).

*khiddā,padosikā nāma devā. Te ativelam hassa,khidd'ārati,dhamma,samāpannā vibharanti. Tesam ativelam hassa,khidd'ārati,dhamma,samāpannānam viharatam sati mussati. Satiyā sammosā te devā tamhā kāyā cavanti.)*

[Ground (6)] Here, says the Commentary, “they are defiled” (*padussanti*)—the verb for *padosikā*—means “destroyed” (*vinassanti*). Basically, these devas fall (die) from their state due to their forgetting to take their food. It is said that these gods are so carried away frolicking and revelling in their great beauty and splendour that they become oblivious of whether they have taken their meals or not. And when the time for a single meal has passed, even though they eat or drink, they pass away immediately afterwards.

This is because of the power of their karma-generated heat element (*kamma,ja,teja*) and the delicacy of their physical body (*kara,ja,kāya*).<sup>135</sup> In human beings, the karma-generated heat element is delicate, but the physical body is strong. As such, humans can stay alive for even a week on warm water, clear gruel, and so on.

But in the case of these gods, the heat element is strong, but their body is delicate. They cannot survive if they miss even a single meal. Lotus placed on a hot rock at noon during the hot season would wilt by the evening, and even if one were to pour a hundred jars of water over it, it would still perish. In the same way, even though these devas eat and drink after missing a meal, they cannot survive: they pass away.

The Old Commentaries do not say who these gods are. But according to Buddhaghosa, since it is said, “In the case of these gods, their heat element is strong, but their body is delicate,” without any distinction, we can take it as referring to those gods sustained by material food in this manner. Some however say that only the Nimmāna,rati god (who delight in creating) and the Para,nimmita,vasavatti (who lord over others’ creations) are meant.<sup>136</sup> (DA 1:113 f)

While the first partial-eternalist ground deals with the origin of the creator-god idea [44], these two grounds for partial eternalism seems to represent two kinds of polytheism. Both these beliefs arise through the misinterpretation of the events recalled through dhyanic experience.

**47** There are, bhikshus, devas called “defiled by mind” (*Santi bhikkhave mano,padosikā nāma devā*).

[Ground (7)] These gods are defiled, that is, destroyed, by mind.<sup>137</sup> They are the Cātum,mahārājika devas (of the heaven of the Four Great Kings).<sup>138</sup> For example, a young god, wishing to join in a festival celebration, set out by chariot with his retinue. Another god, out on a walk, sees the first riding on the chariot ahead of him. Becoming angry (out of envy), he exclaims:

“That wretch! There he goes all puffed up with rapture to bursting point, as if he had never seen a festival before!”

Then the first god, turns around and notices that the other god is angry—and angry people are easy to notice—become angry, too. He retorts:

“So you’re angry: what business is it of yours! This fortune of mine is won on account of giving, moral virtue and so on, and not on your account!”

Now if one of them becomes angry, but the other does not, the latter prevents the former’s destruction. But when both are angry, the anger of one adds on to the other’s anger, and both will pass away, leaving their harems weeping. This is the nature of things. (DA 1:114)

**49** [The rationalist dualism of an impermanent body and an eternal mind]

49.1 THE RATIONALIST. The rationalist (*takka,vādī*) sees the the eye, etc, disintegrating, but because every preceding conscious state (*citta*), when it ends, conditions the arising of the next, he does not notice

<sup>135</sup> VbhA 498.

<sup>136</sup> That is, the gods of the two highest sense-sphere heavens.

<sup>137</sup> Like the Khiddā,padosika devas, mentioned only in 2 other suttas: in a list of gods in **Mahā Samaya S** (D 20/2:260) & in a passage on the beginning of things in **Pāṭika S** (D 24/3:32 x2, 33).

<sup>138</sup> That is, the lowest of the sense-sphere heavens.

the disintegration of consciousness, which even though more marked than the disintegration of the eye, etc, is unnoticed. Not seeing consciousness disintegrating, he assumes that when the body breaks up, the consciousness goes elsewhere, just as a bird leaves one tree and sits on another. (DA 1:114)

As each conscious state arises, it appears to hide the absence of the preceding state. Only the presence phase (*bhāva, pakkha*) is gross and clear, not the absence phase (*abhāva, pakkha*). So he does not see the disintegration of consciousness. This point is clearly shown by the example of the fire-wheel (that is, when a full flaming circle is formed by rapidly swinging a firebrand in a circle).

49.2 METHODS OF DIVERSITY AND OF UNITY. Because the rationalist partial-eternalist is still far from understanding and applying the method of diversity (*nānatta, naya*), he wrongly applies the method of unity (*ekatta, naya*), and so strongly holds to the conclusion that it is this consciousness itself, always occurring with a single nature, that is a permanent self [entity].<sup>139</sup> (DAṬ 1:209)

According to Buddhism, impermanence and continuum can be properly understood by way of these two complementary methods of investigation. **The method of unity** (*ekatta, naya*) discloses the coherence of the succession of discrete conscious moments making up the continuum (*santana*).<sup>140</sup> It shows them as connected in a single series, “participants in a process of transmission and development, interconnected members unified through a law of conditional dependence.”<sup>141</sup>

**The method of diversity** (*nānatta, naya*) balances this approach by pointing out the difference. Though unified, the current of conscious moments is still a chain of discrete links, some of which function as causes, other as effects, or working as effects, and then as causes. Sometimes, the continuum is interrupted: the death-moment and the rebirth-linking break it up into separate life-terms which show marked differences despite being part of the same series. They are the same yet not the same.<sup>142</sup>

When the method of unity is misunderstood or misapplied, it generally leads to the view of an identical self, leading on to a view of eternalism. A wrong understanding of the method of diversity misleads one into viewing the apparently discontinuous process of existence as being absolute, and so leads to annihilationism. A proper understanding of both methods will reveal

the continuum to be a causally connected succession of momentary processes, which continues so long as the causes retain their efficacy, and ceases when the causes are deactivated, in either case without harbouring a persisting core to be grasped as a personal self. This is the middle way which avoids the two extremes. (Bodhi 1978:20)

### 3. Doctrines of the World’s Finitude and Infinity (*antānanta, vāda*): grounds 9-12

#### 53-57 [Extensionism]

[Grounds (9)-(12)] (1) THE EXTENSIONISTS. “Extensionists” (*antānantika*) are those who hold the doctrines of finitude or of infinity, that is, doctrines arising in connection with finitude, infinity, finitude and infinity, or neither finitude nor infinity. (DA 1:115)

<sup>139</sup> Bodhi: “He does not apply the method of diversity which reveals the discreteness of the acts of consciousness making up the mental continuum, and wrongly applies the method of unity by taking similarity of form and function to indicate identity of substance.” (1978:169 n)

<sup>140</sup> A “continuum” (*santāna*) means a single beginningless series of life-processes extending into the indefinite future, and contains within itself a number of individual life-terms. The word “continuity” (*santati*) is used here for this individual life-term, with its distinct birth, life and death. Each continuity, in turn, comprises of a rapid succession of dharmas or momentary mental and physical factors, held together by laws of causal relationship. How the methods of diversity and of unity, when misapplied, gives rise to the wrong view of annihilation is explained in Bodhi 1978:20. (Summarized from Bodhi 1978:192 n1.)

<sup>141</sup> Bodhi 1978:20.

<sup>142</sup> There is the sandy beach simile: Seen from afar a sandy beach appears to be smooth and flat, but on careful examination (especially with a magnifying glass), the beach is seen as made of discrete particles of sand, which on a microscopic level actually do not touch each other.

The finitude or infinity here is that of the self (*attā*), here called “the world” (*loka*) because it “is looked upon” (*lokīyati*) by those led by views,<sup>143</sup> wishing to escape from samsara, or that merit, demerit and their fruits “are looked for” therein by those led by views. Therefore, the Blessed One spoke thus, “**They proclaim the world to be finite or infinite**” (*antānantam lokassa paññāpentī*) [§53].

(2) WHAT IS THIS SELF? It is the kasina sign that is as the objective field of dhyana,<sup>144</sup> which is what those led by views take to be the world. Thus it is said (in the Commentary), “Having taken that as the world” (*taṃ lokō ti gahetvā*). But there are those who say that the dhyana itself together with its concomitant dharmas<sup>145</sup> are taken as the self or the world.

While the first three are grounds for forms of extensionism [§§9-11], how can the last [§12] be taken as a ground for extensionism, when it rejects both terms (finitude and infinity)? The very reason is that it rejects both terms, that is, it refers to the notion, with the world’s finitude and infinity as its objective field.

Let us further examine how **the rationalist’s views of extensionism** (finitude-infinity) arise through his misapprehension of meditative experience. After extending the previously unextended “counterpart sign” (*paṭibhāga nimitta*) or “conceptualized image,”<sup>146</sup> he does not, in either case, experience the self thought to be experiencable, either before or during the extension of the sign.

He comes to two conclusions. Falling back to the time when the sign is extended, he declares, based on mere hearsay, etc, that the self is not finite. And falling back on the time when the sign is unextended, he declares that the self is not infinite. This notion should not be taken to mean that both are absent, but should be understood like the term “neither perception nor non-perception,” that is, as an elliptical expression.<sup>147</sup> If this were not the case, then the fourth ground would be classified as a type of hedging.

Some, however, explain the fourth ground as arising from the process of reasoning thus: “If the self were finite, then its rebirth in distant places could not be recalled. And if it were infinite, one living in this world would be able to experience the happiness of the heavens and the sufferings of hells, etc. If one holds it to be both finite and infinite, then one would fall into the errors of both the positions. Therefore the self cannot be said to be either finite or infinite.” (DAṬ 1:209-211)

(3) THE ORIGIN OF THE FOUR GROUNDS. When he does not extend the counterpart sign to the limits [horizon] of the world-sphere, taking it as the world, he dwells perceiving the world as finite. But one who has extended the counterpart sign to the limits of the world-sphere, perceives the world to be infinite. When he does not extend the sign vertically [upward and downward], but laterally [across], he perceives the world as finite vertically and infinite across. These four theorists are included amongst the speculators of the past because they hold their view as a result of what they have themselves previously experienced. (DA 1:115; DAṬ 1:211)<sup>148</sup>

According to Buddhaghosa, there are four kinds of infinities (*anantāni*): 1. space; 2. the number of world systems; 3. the number of living beings, and 4. the Buddha’s wisdom. This is only mentioned in **the Buddhavaṃsa** and the Commentaries, where *anantaka* is used (B 1.64/6),<sup>149</sup> and where it is translated as “impossible to ascertain.”<sup>150</sup>

<sup>143</sup> “[T]hose led by views,” *diṭṭhi, gatika*, which Bodhi tr as “theorists,” which more properly applies to those with some kind of systematic approach. However, the sense here I think is more general.

<sup>144</sup> *Jhāna, visaya, bhūta, kasīna, nimitta*.

<sup>145</sup> *Jhānaṃ taṃ, sampayutta, dhammā ca*.

<sup>146</sup> Also called “counter-sign” or “counterpart image.” This is the purified and stable conceptualized (or internalized) image of the meditation subject which appears at a high point of meditation focus. Once developed, the sign or image can be extended to cover successively larger area of the inner visual space. See *Vism* 6.31/130 f & 4.126-128/158 f & also *Bhāvanā* = SD 15.1(9.3)

<sup>147</sup> This is Bodhi’s term, which “signifies neither the complete absence of perception nor its non-absence, but rather that the perception has become so subtle as to evade characterization.” (1978:171 n2). See *Vism* 10.49/367.

<sup>148</sup> For further discussion on this section (Comy & Subcomy trs), see Bodhi 1978:169-172.

<sup>149</sup> See also MA 2:184; BA 135.

<sup>150</sup> B:H 1.64/7; BA:H 194.



## 4. Doctrines of Endless Hedging (*amarā, vikkhepa, vāda*): grounds 13-16

### 61 [Meaning of *amara, vikkhepa*]

The Commentary gives two meanings of *amarā, vikkhepa*:

- (1) Undying (*amara*), that is, endless; that is to say, the view and speech of this view-holder or speculator (*ditṭhi, gatika*) consists of endless hedging. Hedging (*vikkhepa*), that is, flipping back and forth in various ways (*vividha khepa*). Hence, “endless hedging” (*amara vikkhepa*), that is, endless views and talk.
- (2) *Amara* is the name of a kind of fish (*maccha*) (probably an eel. Since they move about in the water, diving it and out, it is impossible to catch them. In the same way, this doctrine meanders so that it is impossible to get a hold of it. Hence, it is called “eel-wriggling” (*amara vikkhepa*).

**62.1** (He) does not understand according to reality, ‘This is wholesome’;... ‘This is unwholesome.’ (*Idaṃ kusalan ti yathā, bhūtaṃ na-p, pajānāti, idaṃ akusalan ti yathā, bhūtaṃ na-p, pajānāti*)

[Grounds (13)] The Sutta mentions two kinds of endless hedgers: (1) those who are ignorant and (2) those who are dull. In both cases, they are hedgers on account of their ignorance, the only difference being the former acknowledges while the latter does not.

(1) The endless hedgers who are ignorant form three sub-groups by way of the reasons behind their hedging. The Sutta says that these ignorant hedgers “do not know according to reality what is wholesome or what is unwholesome” [§§62-64]. The Commentary says that this refers to the ten wholesome courses of action (*dasa kusala, kamma, patha*) and of the ten unwholesome courses of actions (*dasa akusala, -kamma, patha*),<sup>151</sup> the nature of karma. We can take this to mean that they either are simply ignorant of ethics or morality, or that they utterly reject them. This would mean, especially in the latter case, that they are amoralist<sup>152</sup> or agnostic,<sup>153</sup> or both. The only difference amongst these three sub-groups is the motivation behind their hedging.

**1a. The ignorant endless hedgers who fear speaking falsely** [§65]. This ignorant hedger first realizes that he really knows nothing about what is wholesome or unwholesome (or, good and evil). If he were thus to express an opinion on this matter, a negative emotion (“desire, or lust, or hate, or aversion”) might arise in him, which means that he is false: “Should desire, or lust, or hate, or aversion, arise in me, that

<sup>151</sup> DA 1:115. The 10 unwholesome courses of action are expressed through the 3 “doors” of the body, speech, and mind, thus, body: (1) killing, (2) stealing, (3) sexual misconduct; speech: (4) false speech, (5) divisive speech, (6) harsh speech, (7) frivolous talk; mind: (8) covetousness, (9) ill will, and (10) false views. The 10 wholesome courses of action are the opposite of these. For a detailed statement, see (**Kusalākusala**) **Saṅcetanika S** (A 10.206/5:292-297) = SD 3.9; see also: **Sāleyyaka S** (M 41.11-18/1:287 f) = SD 5.7; **Tiṭṭh’āyatana S** (A 3.61.2-4/1:173-175) = SD 6.8.

<sup>152</sup> **Amoralism** is the view or doctrine that rejects ordinary or conventional distinction between good and evil, or right and wrong. The amoralist, as such, may be a relativist or materialist who thinks that “good and evil is in the mind”(eg Sañjaya: see 1.6 here), or he may be a theist who goes by “God’s laws” (eg Purāṇa Kassapa, **Sāmañña-phala S**, D 2.16-17/52 f = SD 8.10; see also **Tiṭṭh’āyatana S**, A 3.61.3/1:174 = SD 6.8). An amoralist, as such, would not feel accountable for his own actions.

<sup>153</sup> The term was coined by TH Huxley (1825-95), an agnostic himself. An **agnostic** is one who holds the thesis or idea that, contrary to what theists (God-believers) and atheist (non-believers in God) alike assume, it is impossible to know (in practice or in principle) whether or not God exists. More broadly, an agnostic is one who holds that ultimate principles of life and the world are unknowable (hence inexpressible). The Buddha has been labelled by some scholars as being agnostic since he speaks of certain higher truths (such as the 10 undeclared theses: see 1.3 & §65) and the highest truth (nirvana) as being inexpressible. However, this view finds no canonical support: see 1.4.

would be falsehood (*musā*) on my part.”<sup>154</sup> This would trouble him to the extent to becoming an obstacle to attaining any religious goal (ie “heaven or the path”).

The Sutta then says, out of fear and loathing to speaking falsely,<sup>155</sup> he gives an evasive reply, negative all possible premises. The Commentary explains that this fear (*bhaya*) and loathing (*parijeguccha*) is actually moral shame (*hiri*) and moral fear (*ottappa*)<sup>156</sup> (DA 1:115). In other words, this person hedges because of self-respect and other-respect (deference to others). Technically, self-respect refers to having a sense of shame, that is, commanding respect from others, while other-respect refers to fearing the karmic consequences. This is the basis for moral virtue, which although not good in itself (in the Buddhist system), serves as the foundation for mental cultivation. In so far as they take this moral sense to be its own end, they remain short-sighted hedgers, concerned mostly with social conceit and standing. He hedges because he fears losing face through being branded a liar.

**1b. The ignorant endless hedgers who fear clinging.** Like the first ignorant hedger, this second one, too, first realizes that he really knows nothing about what is wholesome or unwholesome (or, good and evil). However, he next reasons that if he were thus to express an opinion on this matter, a negative emotion (“desire, or lust, or hate, or aversion”) might arise in him, which means that he has clinging: “Should desire, or lust, or hate, or aversion, arise in me, that would be clinging (*upādāna*) on my part.”<sup>157</sup> This would trouble him to the extent to becoming an obstacle to attaining any religious goal (ie “heaven or the path”).

Then, out of fear and loathing to clinging, this second hedger gives evasive replies, out of self-respect and other-respect. Both the first and the second ignorant hedgers hedge because they fear losing face. But while the first does hedges so as not to be branded a liar, the second hedges so as not to have clinging.

**1c. The ignorant endless hedgers who fear being cross-questioned.** This third sub-group of ignorant endless hedgers, too, realize their ignorance of what is wholesome or unwholesome. However, unlike the previous two cases, there is mention neither of the fear of negative emotions nor of “fear and loathing.” One might conclude that this third ignorant hedger is at least not immediately concerned with face or modesty. In fact, his rationale for hedging is this:

“Now, there are recluses and brahmins who are wise, subtle, experienced in debate, who go about shooting down, indeed, tearing asunder, the views of others with their wisdom. They might cross-examine me, ask me for reasons, invite me to address issues therein” [§64].

This third kind of ignorant hedger hedges from fear of being cross-examined by others, and not then being unable to give proper answers. The rationale here looks more like self-pride or, perhaps because of what one might today call professional image. This third person hedges probably because of his pride and also to put up a front, perhaps for the sake of political or material gain.

EVALUATION OF THE FIRST 3 SUB-GROUPS. In all these three cases of ignorant endless hedgers, they hedge out of fear that their respective actions would result as “an obstacle” (*antarāya*), that is, a hindrance to moral or spiritual progress, or more specifically, as the Commentary says, “This would be for me an

<sup>154</sup> *Yattha me assa chando vā rāgo vā doso vā paṭigho vā taṃ mam’ assa musā.*

<sup>155</sup> *Musā, vāda, bhayā musā, vāda, parijegucchā.*

<sup>156</sup> Moral shame (*hiri*) is often paired with moral fear (*ottappa*) (eg M 1:271; S 2:220; A 2:78; It 34; Tikap 61; J 1:127; Vism 221; DhA 3:73), and, as the foundation for morality, called “the world-protectors” (*loka, pāla*, A 1:51), since they are the preconditions for a functional society. According to Visuddhi, magga, the proximate cause for moral shame is self-respect, while for moral fear it is respect for others. Out of self-respect (*attāna garu katvā*), one, like the daughter of a good family, rejects evil-doing through moral shame. Out of respect for others (*param garu katvā*), one, like a courtesan, rejects evil-doing through moral fear (Vism 14.142/464 f). The former is sometimes known as self-regarding moral conduct (motivated by the *shame* the deed entails), while the latter as other-regarding moral conduct (motivated by the healthy *fear* of karmic repercussion). As such, these two actions are known as the two bright states that protect the world, if not for which “one would neither respect one’s mother, nor one’s mother’s sister, nor one’s brother’s wife, nor one’s teacher’s wife ....” (A 1:50). For detailed n, see **Abhabba S** (A 10.76.20/-5:146) = SD 2.4 n. See **Hiri Ottappa S** (A 2.9/1:50 = SD 2.5).

<sup>157</sup> *Yattha me assa chando vā rāgo vā doso vā paṭigho vā taṃ mam’ assa upādānaṃ.*

obstacle to attaining heaven or the path” (*so mama saggassa c’eva maggassa ca antarāyo assa*) (DA 1:115). Insofar as this is true, it is a positive point is that they are *aware* of their ethical, moral or spiritual ignorance. There is also a broad hint that they hope to find true reality, or at least higher happiness.

However, I think that in the third sub-group—that of the ignorant hedger who fear being cross-questioned—the word “obstacle” does not have any other-worldly sense (*pace* the Commentary),<sup>158</sup> but that his inability to give clever answers would be an obstacle to social, political and material advantages. This is likely due to the lack of mention of any ethical or moral qualities as in the first two sub-groups.

(2) **The endless hedgers who are dull and stupid** [§63]. The second group of endless hedgers stand on its own, and for good reason: they are not only ignorant, but also foolish. Although the Sutta does not mention it, it is likely that they, too, like the hedgers, are ignorant of the courses of action (*kamma, patha*). However, while the first three kinds of hedgers know that they know not,<sup>159</sup> it is likely here that *they know not that they know not*. As a result, he replies evasively, negating all possible premises.

**The Dīgha,nakha Sutta** (M 74) records an interesting incident where the wanderer Dīgha,nakha (Sāriputta’s nephew) approaches the Buddha and declares, “I do not accept everything!” (*sabbam me na khamati*), that is, he rejects all views. The Buddha’s reply is simple: that too is a view!<sup>160</sup> 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.

<b>62.2</b> But I do not say it is this.	<i>Evam pi me no.</i>
I do not say it is that.	<i>Tathā ti pi me no.</i>
I do not say it is otherwise.	<i>Aññathā ti pi me no.</i>
I do not say it is not so.	<i>No ti pi me no.</i>
I do not say it is not not so.	<i>No no ti pi me no.</i>

These are the five points of hedging or eel-wriggling, which the Commentary explains as follows:<sup>161</sup>

“I do not take it as this” ( <i>evam pi me no</i> )	This is indeterminate equivocation.
“I do not take it as that.” ( <i>tathā ti pi me no</i> )	He rejects the eternalist doctrine that the self and the world are eternal.
“I do not take it as otherwise” ( <i>aññathā ti pi me no</i> )	In some way other than eternalism: he rejects partial-eternalism.
“I do not take it as not so” ( <i>no ti pi me no</i> )	He rejects the annihilationist doctrine that “the Tathagata does not exist after death.”
“I do not take it as not not so” ( <i>No no ti pi me no</i> )	He rejects the rationalist doctrine that “the Tathagata neither exists nor not exist after exist.” (DA 1:116)

Alternatively, this is how he answers in regards to what is wholesome or unwholesome:

<u>Question</u>	<u>Hedging</u>
“Is this wholesome?”	“I do not take it as this.”
“Is this unwholesome then?”	“I do not take it as that.”
“Is it something other than these two, then?”	“I do not take it as otherwise.”
“If it is not any of these three, then what is your opinion?”	“I do not take it to be not so.”
“So, in your opinion, it is neither this nor that?”	“I do not take it to be not not so.” (DA 1:116)

<sup>158</sup> DA 1:115.

<sup>159</sup> Cf. “A fools who considers his foolishness [who knows he is a fool] | is wise to that extent. | But if a fool thinks highly of himself being wise | he is said to be a fool indeed ” (*yo bālo maññati bālyam | paṇḍito vā’pi tena so | bālo ca paṇḍita,mānī | sa ve bālo’ti vuccati, Dh 63*)

<sup>160</sup> M 74.2-8/1:497-499 = SD 16.1.

<sup>161</sup> DA 1:116.

**63** ‘on that account, desire, or lust, or hate, or aversion, might arise in me’  
(*tattha me assa chando vā rāgo vā doso vā patigho vā*).

[Grounds (14)] The Commentary explains that if someone wise were to praise the hedger, saying that he has correctly explained what is wholesome and unwholesome, then he might think, “As a wise man, I have no equal,” thus “desire or lust might arise in me.” Here, “desire” (*chanda*) is weak lust (*dubbala rāga*), and “lust” (*rāga*) is strong lust (*balava rāga*).

On the other hand, if he had explained wrongly, then someone wise might point the fact out. Then he might think, “I don’t even know this much,” thus “hate or aversion might arise in me.” Here “hate” is weak anger (*dubbala kodha*), and “aversion” is strong anger (*balava kodha*). (DA 1:115)

**64** ‘...that would be clinging on my part...it would vex me’ (*tam mam’assa upādānaṃ...so mam’assa vighāto*)

[Grounds (15)] The meaning is this, “The pair, desire and lust, would be clinging on my part. The pair, hate and aversion, would vex me.”

Or, both pairs are clinging, because they are forms of holding firmly, and both are vexation [distress] because they vex one.

For lust takes hold of one like a leech, not wishing to let go of it. And hate takes hold of one like a poisonous snake, wishing to destroy one. And both pairs vex one because they bring suffering. (DA 1:116 f)

**66** [How does “endless hedging” come to be included under eternalism?]

[Grounds (16)] Because he does not hold the conviction of annihilationism. Besides, there is to be found in his view a fragment of eternalism (indicated by the assumptions in his statements):

“Considering the multitude of (philosophical) disputations in the world, there is no one who has understood things as they really are. Yet, since the beginningless time, there has been reflection upon teachings leading to such exclamations as ‘This is the way it is’.” (DAṬ 1:216)<sup>162</sup>

## 5. Doctrines of Fortuitous Arising (*adhicca,samuppanna,vāda*): grounds 17-18

**67** (they) proclaim that the self and the world to arise [originate] fortuitously  
(*adhicca,samuppannaṃ attānaṃ ca lokaṃ ca paññāpentī*).

[Grounds (17)-(18)] Here, “**arise fortuitously**” (*adhicca,samuppanna*) means to arise without a cause (*akāraṇa*). **TW Rhys Davids**, in his translation of the Brahma,jāla Sutta, makes this note:

This *adhicca* (which must be distinguished from the other *adhicca*, derived from *adhīyati*, occurring at J 3:218 = 4:301) recurs in M 1:443, where it is opposed in the sense of “occasional” to *abiṇha* at M 1:442 in the sense of “habitual.” Udāna 6.5 throws light on its use here. It is there associated with words meaning “neither self-originated, nor created by others.” It is explained by Buddhaghosa on our passage (DA 1:118) as “springing up without a cause.” The derivation is doubtful. (D:RD 1:41 n1)

<sup>162</sup> *Natthi koci dhammānaṃ yathā,bhūta,vedī vivāda,bahulattā lokassa, “evam evan” ti pana sadd’antarena “dhamma,nijjhānaṃ anādīkālīka loke” ti.* This section is from **Bodhi**’s tr of the Subcomy, 1978:178, who also notes: “The meaning of this passage is obscure, and the translation, therefore, tentative. The eternalist assumption seem to be conveying by such words as *koci*, ‘anyone,’ and *vedī*, ‘one who understands.’ In the Pāli, these can suggest belief in a substantial subject. The word *anādīkālīka*, ‘since beginningless time,’ likewise may imply the eternal existence of those subjects.”

**68** There are, bhikshus, devas called ‘**non-percipient beings**’ (*santi bhikkhave asaṅṅā, sattā nāma devā*).

[Grounds (17)-(18)] The “**non-percipient beings**” (*asaṅṅā, satta*) are so called because their arise without consciousness (*acitt’uppāda*), their individual forms consist of only pure form (*rūpa, matt’atta-bhāva*).<sup>163</sup> This is how they arise:

One who has gone forth in a sectarian [non-Buddhist] order<sup>164</sup> does the preparatory exercises (*pari-kamma*)<sup>165</sup> on the wind kasina<sup>166</sup> and develops the fourth dhyana. After emerging from the dhyana, he sees a fault in consciousness (*citta*), thus,

“When there is consciousness, one faces such suffering as having one’s hands chopped off, etc, and to all kinds of fears. Enough with this consciousness! The unconscious state alone is peaceful!”

If he thus passes away without falling away from dhyana, he is reborn amongst the non-percipient beings. When his final death-consciousness ends and his mental process ends here in the human world, only the form aggregate arises in the non-percipient plane.

Just as an arrow is driven by the propulsive force of the bowstring travels through space in exact proportion to the bowstring’s force, even so, this being, taking rebirth thus through the propulsive force of dhyana, remains in that realm for a time exactly proportional to the dhyana’s force. When the dhyanic force is exhausted, the form aggregate disappears there (in the non-percipient being), and rebirth-linking perception (*paṭisandhi, saṅṅā*) arises here in the human world.

Because their passing away from the non-percipient realm is discerned by way of the arising of perception here, it is said, “When perception arises in them, those gods pass away from that plane.” [§68]<sup>167</sup> (DA 1:118)

**Now, how is it that after a lapse of many hundreds of aeons, can consciousness arise again from a consciousness process that has ceased so long ago?** No visual consciousness, for example, is ever seen to arise when the eye has ceased.

During the interval, when no consciousness of the same type arises, the consciousness that has ceased a long time ago can still act as a proximity condition (*anantara, paccaya*) for the rebirth consciousness. It is not the seed: only karma is the seed. On account of that karma functioning as the seed, when beings pass away from the non-percipient realm, a rebirth consciousness with its conditions such as object

<sup>163</sup> The non-percipient beings (*asana, satta*) are located in the 4<sup>th</sup>-dhyana heavens just below the Pure Abodes (*suddh’āvāsa*). Their life-span is 500 aeons (Vbh 1028/425); ie, they live for a maximum of 500 aeons (DAṬ 1:219 f), and they fall away with the arising of a single thought [§68] (DA 1:118).

<sup>164</sup> Subcomy notes that the non-percipient attainment (*asaṅṅā, samāpatti*) is an “inopportune plane” (*akkhaṇa, bhūmi*), but is not so regarded by the sectarians (*tiṭṭhiya*) (DAṬ 1:217). This plane is so regarded by Buddhists because “it is neither in itself a true deliverance from saṃsāra, nor, due to the absence of perception and mind [consciousness], a plane favourable to the development of the higher qualities which can issue in true deliverance. Particularly at a time when a Buddha appears in the world, the non-percipient plane is inopportune, since its inhabitants have no opportunity to see him or listen to his teachings.” (Bodhi 1978:180 n). See **Saṅgīta S** (D 33.3.2(4)/3:263); **Das’uttara S** (D 34.2.1(7)/3:287); **Akkhaṇa S** (A 8.3.9.3/4:226): “arising amongst the host of long-lived devas” (*dīgh’āyukam deva, nikāyam uppanno hoti*) is inopportune, and which Comy glosses as being born amongst the non-percipient beings (AA 4:116). Cf VvA 193.

<sup>165</sup> See **Bhāvanā** = SD 15.1(9.3). On why only the preliminary work is mentioned, see DAṬ 1:218 (tr Bodhi 1978:180 f).

<sup>166</sup> “Wind kasina” (*vāyo kasīna*). Pa-auk’s instructions: The wind kasina is developed through the sense of touch or sight. You should concentrate on the wind coming in through a window or door, touching the body; or, the sight of leaves or branches moving in the wind. Concentrate on the concept as “wind, wind.” You can do this by up to the fourth dhyana with another kasina object. Then, using the light of your concentration to see this movement externally, and discern the wind nimitta. The acquired sign (*uggaha nimitta*) looks like steam coming off hot milk rice, but the counterpart sign (*paṭibhāga nimitta*) is motionless. Develop the nimitta in the usual way. (Kasina meditation needs the close guidance of an experienced teacher.) See Pa-auk, TT talk 2, nd. On *kasīna*, see **Bhāvanā** = SD 15.1(9.2).

<sup>167</sup> See also **Pāṭika S** (D 24.2.20/3:33); Kvu 262.

condition (*ārammaṇa, paccaya*), etc, arises in the sense-sphere. Hence, the Commentator says, “rebirth-linking perception arises here (in the human world).” (DAT 1:220)

Here, the theorist makes a double error, as pointed out by **Bodhi**,

firstly, he does not realize that other existences preceded his sojourn in the non-percipient realm or that his reasoning is not as cogent as he imagines; and secondly, he attributes to the experience that he does remember the property of being a self. (Bodhi 1978:28)

#### IV. SPECULATIONS ABOUT THE FUTURE

(*apar’anta, kappa*)

##### 1. Doctrines of Conscious Survival<sup>168</sup>

(*saññī, vāda*): grounds 19-34

###### 76.1 [The first ground of the first tetrad]

[Ground (19)] ‘**The self [soul]...is material.**’ Taking the physical form of the kasina object as the self, and the perception (of the kasina) as the self’s perception, or simply by reasoning, as in the case of the Ājīvikas,<sup>169</sup> etc, they proclaim, “The self [soul], after death, does not decay, is conscious and material.” (DA 1:222)

The Subcommentary goes on to ask a few relevant questions. When it is said that the self is percipient (*saññī attā*), perception itself is not the self, but only a property of it. But it is said above “(taking)...the perception (of the kasina) as the self’s perception.” As such, **why is the physical form of the kasina taken as the self?**<sup>170</sup>

It should not be understood that the self is physical [material] in the sense that form belongs to it, but rather in the sense that it is “characterized by deformation” (*rappana, sīla*). It is this deforming of the kasina form that makes it resemble ordinary form, that differentiates it as being at times extended, at times unextended.

**In that case, isn’t it wrong to include this doctrine in eternalism?**<sup>171</sup> Not so. For, it is the non-decay [immutability] of the self following the body’s breakup that is meant. Thus, it is said, “The self [soul], after death, does not decay.”

Or, simply by reasoning, as in the case of the Ājīvikas. None of them have attained dhyana, for they are fatalists, and reject karma and its fruit.<sup>172</sup> Some of them maintain that there is a self [soul] amongst the six classes of humans.<sup>173</sup>

<sup>168</sup> “Conscious survival” is a more idiomatic tr of *saññī* here. Bodhi has “percipient immortality” for the sake of “a more literal rendering...to maintain consistency with the commentarial methods of explanation” (1978:80 n).

<sup>169</sup> **Ājīvikas**, a heterodox sect founded by **Makkhali Gosāla**, a contemporary of the Buddha. Makkhali was for 6 years the itinerant companion of the Jain leader, Mahāvīra, before parting company after a disagreement. Their practices are very similar: initiation (*abhiṣeka*) by plucking out the hair, and a lifestyle of extreme austerity (nakedness, penances, and ordeals). Their beliefs differ: while the Jains, along with the Buddhists, accept the doctrine of karma, the Ājīvikas deny the existence of free will. During the Buddha’s time, they were an important sect, and remained so for several centuries. Then they declined, and by late mediaeval or early modern times, had disappeared altogether, perhaps reabsorbed into Jainism or the south Indian devotional cults in which Makkhali was deified. See **Sāmañña-phala S** (D 2.19/1:53) = SD 8.10. AL Basham, *History and Doctrines of the Ājīvikas*, London, 1951.

<sup>170</sup> “He asks why, when *rūpī attā* are the same grammatical form, the self is identified with material form while perception is held only to be an accessory of the self.” (Bodhi 1978:185 n2)

<sup>171</sup> “That is, if change or ‘deformation’ is attributed to the *kaṣiṇa* form identified as self, how can the self be eternal? The reply points out that eternalism does not preclude all change, but only dissolution.” (Bodhi 1978:186 n1)

<sup>172</sup> There are all rationalists.

<sup>173</sup> On these 6 classes (*abhijāti*), see **Cha-ḷ-abhijāti S** (A 6./3:383), where according to the antinomian **Pūraṇa Kassapa**, they are (1) the black class (*kaṇhābhijāti*), ie the bloody trade (butchers, fishermen, robbers, etc); (2) the

The term “**does not decay**” (*aroga*, lit “non-disease”) means that it does not experience illness, that is, does not disintegrate. It is a synonym for “permanent” (*nicca*). This is how the theorist claims the permanence of the self, by way of its “non-decay.” (DAṬ 1:222 f)

## 76.2 [The remaining 3 grounds of the first tetrad]

[Grounds (20)-(22)] Taking the signs of the formless attainments as the self, and the perception occurring therein as the self’s perception, or simply by reasoning, as in the case of the Nirgranthas (ie the Jains), etc, who proclaim: “**The self [soul], after death, does not decay, is conscious and formless.**” The third ground arises by combining the (other) grounds, and the fourth, through reasoning. (DA 1:223)

The Subcommentary explains this commentarial passage as follows.

“**[T]he signs of the formless attainments.**” The respective signs or objects of the four formless attainments are as follows:

- (1) the space left after the removal of the kasina;
- (2) the consciousness of the first formless attainment;
- (3) the non-existence of that consciousness; and
- (4) the base of nothingness.

“**[A]s in the case of the Nirgranthas (ie the Jains).**” The Nirgranthas hold that the formless self dwells in the body, extending over it like the bitter taste in a nimba leaf.<sup>174</sup>

“**[B]y combining the (other) grounds.**” By taking the signs of the form and the formless attainments together as a single self, and the perceptions occurring in these attainments as the self’s perceptions. When this theorist gains the form or the formless attainments, he takes their signs as a self with a form [physical] aspect and a formless aspect, and as such is convinced thus: “**(the self) both has form and is formless,**” as in the case of the Ajjhatta, vādins.<sup>175</sup> Or else, by taking the combination of form and formless dharmas simply through reasoning, he thinks on the ground that “(the self) both has form and is formless.”

“**[T]he fourth, through reasoning.**” This theorist reasons thus:

“The self is not physical like a bunch of posts, and wattle and daub, or of hands, feet, etc. For like the subtle residual formations (of the base of neither perception nor non-perception), it is unable to perform the specific function of form because of its very fine subtle nature.

Yet it is not formless. For it does not transcend the specific nature of form.”

Or else, the meaning can be understood through the mutual contradiction (of the first two grounds), as in the extensionist tetrad [grounds (9)-(12)]. However, there is this one distinction: in the earlier case, the third ground (11) was shown to arise through a difference in spatial direction (*desa*), and fourth ground (12), through a difference in time (*kāla*).

Here, however, they arise through a difference in time and in base (*kāla, vatthu, vasena*) respectively. For the third ground (21) arises through a difference in time: for, the signs of the form and formless attainments cannot be present simultaneously. And the fourth ground (22) arises through a difference in

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blue class (*nīlābhijāti*), ie monks who subscribe to karma; (3) the red class (*lohitaabhijāti*), ie the loin-clad Jains; (4) the yellow class (*haliddābhijāti*), ie the white-clad disciples of naked ascetics; (5) the white class (*sukkābhijāti*), ie the male and female Ājīvikas; (6) the purest white class (*parama, sukkābhijāti*), ie Nanda Vaccha, Kisa Saṅkicca and Makkhali Gosāla. The Buddha however rejects this arbitrary gesture, and teaches that it is karma that makes us, not class (A 6.57/3:383-387; also DA 1:182; MA 3:131; AA 2:342 f; SA 2:342 f). See **Apaṇṇaka S** (M 60.21-28) where this wrong view is answered.

<sup>174</sup> The leaf of the nimb or neem tree (*Azadirachta indica*), whose leaf and fruit are bitter, and its wood hard; the leaf is chewed during funeral ceremonies: V 1:152, 284, 201; A 1:32, 5:212; Vv 33.361 2:105, 106; DhA 1:52.

<sup>175</sup> “This may refer to the *adhyātma, vidyā*, ‘the knowledge of the supreme self,’ a tenet of the Vedānta. Cf Bhagavadgīta 8.3: ‘The imperishable is the supreme Brahman, its true nature is the supreme self’ (*adhyātmā*). The lines following speak of the *adhibhūta*, ‘what belongs to the elements,’ which may be the material aspect of the supposed self posited by the theorist.” (Bodhi 1978:187 n1)

base (*vatthu*); for, it maintains, through reasoning, that the combination of form and formless dharmas is a single self.<sup>176</sup> (DAṬ 1:224)

### 76.3 [The remaining tetrads]

[Grounds (23)-(26)] **The second tetrad** here should be understood in a similar way as that for the extensionists [(9)-(12)].

[Grounds (27)-(30)] In **the third tetrad** here, the following should be noted:

- (1) The ground (27) that the self is of uniform consciousness [uniform perception] (*ekatta,saññī*) pertains to one who gains the meditative attainments. This usually pertains to one who has only attained one attainment (viz, the 1<sup>st</sup> dhyana), but to anyone who perceives the attainment as unified.
- (2) The ground (28) that the self is of diversified consciousness (*nānatta,saññī*) pertains to the non-attainers. However, anyone who has one or more of the eight attainments,<sup>177</sup> who perceives the attainment in a diversified way is also included here.
- (3) The ground (29) that the self is of limited consciousness (*paritta,saññī*) pertains to one who uses a limited kasina. This may mean that the self is conscious or percipient, as in the case of views that “the self is the size of a thumb, or the size of a grain of corn, or is a mere atom,” like Kapila, Kaṇāda,<sup>178</sup> etc.
- (4) The ground (30) that the self is of boundless consciousness (*appamāṇa,saññī*) pertains to one who uses an extended kasina. This is the ground of those who view that the self is immanent or all-pervasive (*sabba,gata,bhāva*).<sup>179</sup> (DAṬ 1:224)

[Grounds (31)-(34)] **The fourth tetrad** here pertains to one who, with the divine eye, sees thus:

- (1) Having seen a being arising in planes of the first three or four dhyanas, he holds that the self is “undividedly happy” (*ekanta,sukhī*) (31).
- (2) Having seen a being reborn in hell, he holds that the self is “undividedly suffering” (*ekanta,-dukkhī*) (32).
- (3) Having seen a being reborn in the human world, he holds that the self is “both happy and suffering” (*sukhī,dukkhī*) (33).
- (4) Having seen a being reborn among the Veha-p,phala gods,<sup>180</sup> he holds that the self is “neither happy nor suffering” (*adukkham-asukhī*) (34).

KNOWLEDGE OF PAST LIVES. Generally, says Dhammapāla, those who have attained the knowledge of the recollection of past lives<sup>181</sup> speculate about the past, while those with the divine eye speculate about the future.<sup>182</sup> (DAṬ 1:225)

<sup>176</sup> “And since it is a single self, the self cannot be identified exclusively with either set, and so is ‘neither material nor immaterial [neither form nor formless].’” (Bodhi 1978:187 n2)

<sup>177</sup> That is, the 4 form dhyanas and the 4 formless attainments.

<sup>178</sup> Kapila (fl 550 BCE?) was a Vedic sage and founder of the Sāṃkhya school, and Kaṇāda (c 100-300), author of the Vaiśeṣika,sūtras and the Vaiśeṣika system. These are two of the orthodox schools (*darśana*) of Indian philosophy.

<sup>179</sup> “Most likely the Vedāntins are meant.” (Bodhi 1978:189 n2)

<sup>180</sup> The Vehapphala heaven is the first of the 4<sup>th</sup>-dhyana form world. One is reborn there through the attainment of the 4<sup>th</sup> dhyana, and it is characterized by equanimity, ie “neither pleasant nor painful feeling” (*adukkham-asukha*).

<sup>181</sup> *Pubbe,nivāsanānussati*, lit “recollection of past abiding [existence],” ie, recalling one’s own past lives. See **Sampasādaniya S** (D 27.15-17/3:107-112 = SD 10.12). Together with the “divine eye” (see foll n), are two of the 6 direct knowledges (*abhiññā*), viz, (1) psychic powers (*iddhi,vidhā*); (2) divine ear (*dibba,sota*); (3) mind-reading (*parassa ceto,pariya,ñāṇa*); (4) the divine eye (*dibba,cakkhu*); (5) recollection of past lives (*pubbe,nivāsanānussati,-ñāṇa*); (6) knowledge of the destruction of mental cankers (*āsava-k,khaya,ñāṇa*). Of these, the last is what makes one an arhat. See **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2.89-100/1:78-85) = SD 8.10.

<sup>182</sup> *Dibba,cakkhu*, clairvoyance: see **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2.97/1:82) = SD 8.10. Also called “the knowledge of the passing away and re-arising of beings” (*cutūpapāta ñāṇa*), or “knowledge of rebirth according to karma” (*yathā,kammūpaga ñāṇa*). Not to be confused with the Dharma-eye (*dharma,cakkhu*): see **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2.104/1:86) = SD 8.10 n



With the knowledge of the recollection of past lives, one is able to recall one's own past lives. The Commentary says that a sectarian of keen intelligence (*tikkha, pañña*) can recall up to 40 aeons (cycles) of the pulsating universe, but no more [Sutta §33]; one of middling intelligence (*majjhima, pañña*), up to 10 aeons [Sutta §32]; and one of weak intelligence (*manda, pañña*), up to several hundred thousand past lives [Sutta §31] (DA 1:106). Without the key direct knowledge, that is, that of the destruction of the mental cankers,<sup>183</sup> it is likely that one would speculate about the past. This is because one's defilements are still strong and one's wisdom is still weak.

The “divine eye” (*dibba, cakkhu*) or clairvoyance is also called “the knowledge of the passing away and re-arising of beings” (*cutūpapāta ñāṇa*), or “the knowledge of rebirth according to karma” (*yathā, -kammūpaga ñāṇa*). Of the 62 grounds for wrong views, 44 of them (some 70%) are speculations about the future [(19)-(62)]. Of these most of them have to do with dhyanic attainments. On attaining the fourth dhyana, one can go on to cultivate the divine eye so that one is able to recall the past lives of beings. However, without the knowledge of the destruction of the mental cankers—that is, without spiritual liberation—it is like one who is able to see the workings of a wondrous machine but lacks the understanding of how it works and how to use it profitably. Understandably, one is tempted to speculate about the future.

## 2. Doctrines of Non-conscious Survival (*asaññī, vāda*): grounds 35-42

[On the *Asañña, satta*, see 68 above]

## 3. Doctrines of Neither Conscious Nor Non-conscious Survival<sup>184</sup> (*n'eva, saññī, nāsaññī, vāda*): grounds 43-50

### 79, 82 [Grounds for conscious survival and related grounds]

“A MADMAN'S BASKET.” The doctrines of non-conscious survival and of neither conscious nor non-conscious survival should be understood in terms of the first two tetrads of the doctrine of conscious survival [76AB = (19)-(26)]. Only the first two sets of theorists hold the view that the self is percipient or conscious, while these two hold that it is non-conscious and neither conscious nor non-conscious, respectively. Buddhaghosa says that no special reason should be given for this as the theorists' assumptions are like “a madman's basket” [31.2n]. (DA 1:119)

Dhammapāla<sup>185</sup> is more accommodating and gives some discussion. The first tetrad [(35)-(38)], the grounds for doctrine of non-conscious survival, can be summarized as follows:

<u>that the self, after death, does not decay, is non-conscious and:</u>	<u>(manner of arising)</u>
(35) has form	the experience of beings reborn in the non-conscious realm;
(36) is formless	takes consciousness [perception] as the self (has no other

<sup>183</sup> *Āsava-k, khaya, ñāṇa*. The term *āsava* (lit “cankers”) comes from *ā-savati* “flows towards” (ie either “into” or “out” towards the observer). It has been variously translated (“deadly taints”, RD), corruptions, intoxicants, biases, depravity, misery, evil (influence), or simply left untranslated. The Abhidhamma lists 4 *āsava*: the canker of (1) sense-desire (*kāma'āsava*), (2) (desire for eternal) existence or becoming (*bhava'āsava*), (3) wrong views (*diṭṭh'āsava*), (4) ignorance (*avijjā'āsava*) (D 16.2.4, Pm 1.442, 561, Dhs §§1096-1100, Vbh §937). These 4 are also known as “floods” (*ogha*) and “yokes” (*yoga*). The list of three cankers (omitting the canker of views) [43] is probably older and is found more frequently in the Suttas (D 3:216, 33.1.10(20); M 1:55, 3:41; A 3.59, 67, 6.63). The destruction of these *āsavas* is equivalent to arhathood. See BDict under *āsava*.

<sup>184</sup> The use of *n'eva, saññī, nāsaññī* is “neither percipient nor non-percipient,” but here for the sake of uniformity, I have rendered it less technically.

<sup>185</sup> DAṬ 1:225 f.

- conscious property);<sup>186</sup>
- (37) both has form and is formless (a) form dharmas and perception taken as self; or  
(b) form and formless dharmas together taken as self;
- (38) neither has form nor is formless by way of reasoning (through misapprehension of meditative experience and hearsay).

The second tetrad [(39)-(42)], the grounds for doctrine of non-conscious survival, is understood in accordance with the discussion on the extensionist grounds [(9)-(12)], and can be summarized as follows:

- that the self, after death, does not decay, is *non-conscious* and: (manner of arising)
- (39) finite he perceives the kasina form as finite;
- (40) infinite he perceives the kasina form as infinite;
- (41) both finite and infinite he perceives the kasina form both as finite and infinite (in terms of time and space);
- (42) neither finite nor infinite by way of reasoning (through misapprehension of meditative experience and hearsay).

The third tetrad [(43)-(46)], the grounds for doctrine of neither conscious nor non-conscious survival, is summarized thus:

- that the self, after death, does not decay, is *neither conscious nor non-conscious* and: (manner of arising)
- (43) has form the experience of beings reborn in the realm of neither perception nor non-perception;<sup>187</sup>
- (44) is formless takes consciousness [perception] as the self (has no other conscious property);
- (45) both has form and is formless (a) form dharmas and perception taken as self; or  
(b) form and formless dharmas together taken as self;
- (46) neither has form nor is formless by way of reasoning (through misapprehension of meditative experience and hearsay).

Grounds (44)-(46) are maintained by acknowledging the specific nature of consciousness and the subtlety of consciousness, following the method for the doctrine of non-conscious survival [(39)-(42)].

AFTER-DEATH SURVIVAL OF THE SELF. The after-death survival of the self can be seen in two distinct ways, that is, by way of a rebirth theory or a one-life theory. The framework of **the rebirth theory** sees the self as migrating from one existence to another either infinitely or, more commonly, until it reaches final liberation, in accordance to the teachings of the belief-system.

In the framework of **the one-life theory**, the self will be seen as living a single mortal life on earth, and after death, faces an eternal destiny without further rebirth. The Sutta however does not draw this distinction, but we can safely argue from silence that it tacitly recognizes that both conceptions fit into the scheme. **Bodhi** makes an interesting observation here:

This leads to the interesting result that on the reincarnation theory [rebirth theory],<sup>188</sup> the mode in which the self survives in its immediately following existence might differ from the mode of its

<sup>186</sup> “Since according to this view, the self is identified with perception [consciousness], though the self continues to perceive after death, it is called ‘non-percipient’ because it does not ‘own’ another perception subordinate to itself.” (Bodhi 1978:190 n1)

<sup>187</sup> “Because perception continues to exist in that realm, it is called ‘not non-percipient’ [not non-conscious]; but because the perception is too subtle to perform the decisive function of perception, it is called ‘not percipient’ [non-conscious].” (Bodhi 1978:190 n3)

<sup>188</sup> I have used “rebirth” instead of “reincarnation” here and above, because the latter suggests a “body” that one is reborn into, whereas there are possibilities of non-physical existences here, too.

survival when it reaches final liberation. For example, [in] the Vedānta doctrine the self will remain material, finite, of diversified and limited perception, and either happy, miserable or both, or neither, so long as it is subject to transmigration. But when it attains liberation it will become, as it always is in essence, infinite, of uniform and boundless perception, and exclusively happy.

Christian eschatology also allows some variation in the nature of the self in the post-mortem condition. Immediately after death the self is immaterial and may experience happiness in heaven, misery in hell, or both in purgatory. But with the resurrection of the flesh and the reunification of body and spirit, it will become both material and immaterial, while the souls in purgatory who gain admission to paradise will become exclusively happy. (Bodhi 1978:30)

#### 4. Doctrines of Annihilationism (*uccheda, vāda*): grounds 51-57

**84** They proclaim the annihilation, destruction, non-existence of an existent being (*Sato sattassa ucchedam vināsam vibhavam paññāpentī*).

The grounds for endless hedging are shown exclusively in terms of the non-attainer, that is, a one who has not experienced the dhyanas. The tetrad of grounds for conscious survival is shown exclusively in terms of the attainer. The present doctrine of annihilationism is held by both attainers and non-attainers, just like the grounds for eternalism, partial eternalism, etc.<sup>189</sup>

[Ground 51-53] There are two types of people who hold the annihilationist view: the attainer (*lābhī*) and the non-attainer (*alābhī*).<sup>190</sup> **The attainer** takes up the annihilationist view when, with the divine eye, he sees the death of an arhat, but does not see his rebirth, or when he sees only the dying without seeing the re-arising. (DA 1:120). In the former case, he is unable to see the arhat's rebirth for the simple reason that they have destroyed the roots of rebirth. In the latter case, he is unable to see the rebirth of those who have just died because his divine eye is not well developed enough.

**The non-attainer** takes up the annihilationist view because he does not know of the world beyond, or he is greedy for sense-pleasures, or by way of reasoning, thinking, "Beings are just like leaves that fall from a tree, not to grow again." (DA 1:120).

Dhammapāla explains. The non-attainer takes up an annihilationist view because he does not understand that there is a world beyond this, because of his nihilistic view (*natthika, vāda*) or profound confusion (*mahā, mūḷha, bhāva*). Or, that his range of knowledge (*visaya*) is only as far as his sense-field. Or, that he is lustful like a king holding on to the hands of his own daughter. Or, he holds on to the view, "Just as a withered leaf falls from the branch cannot be re-attached to it; even so, beings die with no further re-birth-linking. Beings are like water-bubbles." (DAṬ 1:227)

DHAMMAPĀLA'S EXPLANATION ON SPECIFIC-NATURED DHARMAS. The specific-natured dharmas (*sabhāva, dhamma*) occurring as causes and effects within a single continuum of lives show a certain distinction insofar as they may belong to different individual continuities.<sup>191</sup> The theorist sees the distinct moments (*dharmas*) and thinks that they are absolutely distinct: he sees them as each being a totally independent atom of reality. Thus he misapplies the principle of diversity (*nanatta, -naya*).<sup>192</sup>

Secondly, although the dharmas are discrete causes and effects forming a single continuity, but he sees them as an absolutely undifferentiated whole, as a single entity (*eka, santati*). Thus he misapplies the principle of unity (*ekatta, naya*).

<sup>189</sup> The Subcomy asks, this being the case, why the method of teaching used here differs from that used in the teaching on eternalism. The reply is so that the Buddha could display the splendour of teaching (*desanā, vilāsa*) (DAT 1:228). See Bodhi 1978:194-196.

<sup>190</sup> That is, those with the divine eye and those without. See 76.3 under "Knowledge of past lives."

<sup>191</sup> On "continuum" (*santāna*) and "continuity" (*santati*), see 49 above.

<sup>192</sup> On the methods of diversity (*nanatta, naya*) and of unity (*ekatta, naya*), see 49 above.

The word “being” (*satta*) is thus used to show that it is possessed of existence which serves as the objective basis of the theorist’s doctrine. The notion of a “being” arises when the compact of aggregates occurring in the form of a continuum is not analyzed into its components.<sup>193</sup> And since it is held that “the self exists so long as it is not annihilated,” the notion of annihilationism is based on the assumption of the existence of a being.<sup>194</sup>

### 88-91 [Annihilationism: Grounds 52-57]

[Grounds 54-57] In the first three annihilationist grounds [(51)-(53)], it is proper to say “when the body breaks up” (*kāyassa bheda*), because “body” (*kāya*) here refers to an individual form (*attabhāva*) of the five-constituent existence.<sup>195</sup> This expression, however, is also used in the last four annihilationist grounds [(88)-(91)], which refers to individual forms in the four-constituent existence which is formless, that is, without a physical body. In this case, the word “body,” when applied to the formless existence, refers to the aggregation (*samuha*) of dharmas, such as contact, etc, since this has the attributes of a body in a formless existence. (DAṬ 1:229)

ANNIHILATIONISM. The most common form of annihilationism is the materialist view that death is the complete end of the self, without any surviving entity or principle of any kind. This is the notion that is gaining growing numbers today, as the human sight turns more and more away from its rich spiritual past toward the mere gratification of desire for its own sake. Scientific, medical and technological advances, by providing greater creature comfort, longer and healthier life, and more rationalistic explanations of existence, makes the quest for inner peace or spiritual knowledge less urgent, and giving one the euphoric illusion that this is heaven here and now.

Social and political ideologies that preach social wellbeing and economic security as their ideals further reinforce the annihilationist appeal. Narrow religious ideologies that promote triumphalism and tribalism can also be classed as being annihilationist when they tend to devalue this earthly human life, especially those of unbelievers, so that their end by any means is justified, even rewarded in the afterlife. In destroying the lives of unbelievers, such religious terrorists’ belief actually amounts to “**the annihilation, destruction, non-existence of an existent being**” [§84], which is the annihilationist thesis.

The two key words of the annihilationist thesis are “annihilation” and “existent being.” The annihilationist arrives at his notion through a wrong application of the method of diversity [49]. He sees beings living and dying, and other beings given birth, and concludes that they are entirely discrete entities, springing ex nihilo (out of nothing) with the very first moment of life, and with their passing way, disintegrate back into the physical elements. He fails to see how diversity works, in that the separate life-terms are really a part of a larger and beginningless life-continuum, with numerous other individual continuities, each arising (birth), stabilizing (life), and ending (death), and “annihilation.”

The annihilationist also wrongly applies the method of unity [49], mistaking the discrete interconnected dharmas within a single continuity as an undifferentiated whole, taking this to be an “existent being.” Misled by these two false views, the annihilationist commits the double error of viewing a self-identical being that arises out of nothing at birth, endures the same throughout life, and is annihilated at death. The truth, based on the correct application of the two methods, would reveal no abiding entity, but a success-

<sup>193</sup> “The dissection of the compact (*ghana,vinibbhoga*) is a technical expression for a phase in the development of insight wherein the mass of human personality, which appears to untutored perception as a uniform monolithic whole, is broken down into its components and seen ‘temporally’ as a succession of momentary factors following one another without the transmission of any enduring subject, and ‘spatially’ as an assemblage of aggregates functioning together without any unitary entity binding together the multitude of parts. When this dissection is undertaken no room remains for the assumption of a substantial being.” (Bodhi 1978:192 n2)

<sup>194</sup> This whole passage is a paraphrase of DAṬ 1:226 f. For full tr, see Bodhi 1978:191 f & the text at 350 (App 2, no 4).

<sup>195</sup> *Pañca,vokāra,bhava*, ie, realms of existence based on the 5 aggregates, with form aggregate as the foundation for the 4 mental aggregates. This refers to the sense world and the form planes. The four-constituent existence (*catu,vokāra,bhava*), which excludes the form aggregate, characterizes the formless planes. The one-constituent existence (*eka,vokāra,bhava*) refers to the non-conscious beings (*asana,satta*).

ion of mutually conditioning states. As long as ignorance and craving feed the continuum, it will survive death into further existence.

Of the seven forms of annihilationism mentioned in the Sutta [§§85-91], only one (the first one) identifies the self with the physical body and which is annihilated with the body's disintegration [§4]. The other six identify the self with the entities corresponding to the heavenly worlds, the form worlds and the four formless worlds, and that these entities, too, are annihilated at the body's destruction. This point is significant as it shows that the common practice of equating annihilationism with materialism is oversimplistic. Only the first annihilationist ground is truly materialist. The other six, however, may be said to be forms of "spiritual materialism." **Bodhi** adds a side-note:

It may be that these latter six positions do not regard annihilation as the ineluctable fate of all beings, but as the ultimate destiny and highest good of the spiritually perfected saint. They may be formulations of those mystical theologies which speak of the "annihilation of the soul in God," the "descent into the divine abyss," the "merging of the drop into the divine ocean," etc, as of the supreme goal of their contemplative disciplines.

On this interpretation, those beings who have not reached that summit will be subject to continued existence, while those who reach the peak will attain the supreme good of annihilation in the divine essence...it is quite possible that the Buddha was referring to them...

It may be significant in this respect that four of the seven annihilationist doctrines arise out of the experience of the immaterial jhānas; description of the annihilationist-type mystical experience often indicate that it is the immaterial [formless] attainments that serve as the basis for their corresponding mystical theologies. (Bodhi 1978:32 f)

## 5. Doctrines of Nirvana Here and Now (*diṭṭha, dhamma, nibbāna, vāda*): grounds 58-62

### 93 Here and now (*diṭṭha, dhammo*).

"Here and now" means a directly experienceable state (*paccakkha, dhamma*). This is the designation for the individual form in this or that states of existence. It also means the stilling of suffering in this very individual form. (DA 1:121). However, the New Subcommentary points out, it should be noted that here, "nirvana" (*nibbāna*) means only the stilling of suffering. It does not refer to the foremost fruit nor to the unconditioned element, (that is, awakening itself), for these are beyond the ken of these theorists.<sup>196</sup>

94 Good sir, when this self, endowed and replete with the five cords of sense-pleasures, revels in them (*Yato kho bho ayam attā pañcahi kāma, guṇehi samappito samaṅgi, bhūto paricāreti*).

"(He) revels in" (*paricāreti*) means that he allows his sense-faculties to roam and wander amongst the cords of sense-pleasure as he wishes, and indulges in them in various ways. There are two kinds of sense-pleasure: the human and the divine. Human pleasures are like those enjoyed by kings such as Mandhātu,<sup>197</sup> and divine pleasures, like those enjoyed by the king of the Paranimita, vasavatti gods.<sup>198</sup> The theorists declare the supreme nirvana here and now only for those who have attained such sense-pleasures. (DA 1:121)

<sup>196</sup> DAaT:CSCD 1:450.

<sup>197</sup> Mandhātu or Mandhātā was a direct descendent of the first primeval king, Mahā Sammata, and was thus an ancestor of the Sakyas (J 2:311, 3:454; SnA 1:352). He is regarded as an example of one who dies with his desires unsatisfied (Thī 486), but he is also declared the foremost of those who have given up sense-pleasures (A 2:17; AA 3:20; VbhA 2495/506). He is identified as the Bodhisattva (J 2:314).

<sup>198</sup> The Paranimita, vasavatti devas, "who lord over the creation of others," dwell in the highest of the sense-sphere heavens.

[Ground 58] Dhammapāla explains that the first theorist (58) reasons thus (summarized): “When one is deprived of sense-pleasures, one desires them even more, just as one who is overcome by hunger and thirst longs for food. When one has indulged in sense-pleasures as much as one desires, it is like one who has eaten or drunk his fill. When he has lost his desire, like a leech (fully gorged with blood), lets go of its object.” Thinking thus unwisely, the first theorist declares that samsaric suffering can only be dispelled by the satiation of sense-desires. (DAṬ 1:231)

[Grounds 59-62] The remaining four theorists here see the unsatisfactoriness of sense-pleasures, and the peaceful joy of the dhyanas. So, they declare that the ending of samsaric suffering is by being satisfied by dhyanic bliss.

Dhammapāla goes on to ask why is the doctrine of nirvana here and now included under eternalism rather than annihilationism, when it proclaims the absolute extinction (*accanta, nibbāna*)<sup>199</sup> of the self? This is so because they teach the persistence of the purified self in its own form (*saka, rūpe*) when it is freed from bondage when it finds any kind of happiness. (DAṬ 1:232)

The first, which proclaims nibbāna here and now through the enjoyment of all sense pleasures, is the position of **the hedonist**. This doctrine might also apply to the more sophisticated and pernicious school of religious thought, flowing as a dark undercurrent beneath most of the major spiritual movements of the world, that the way to be liberated from passion is to indulge in the passions. (Bodhi 1978:33)

The other four grounds are held by attainers of the four dhyanas, who mistake the zest, happiness and peace of their attainments for the highest good. From the Buddhist perspective, the dhyanas are merely a temporary suspension of mental hindrances, and not final liberation in themselves. Nirvana cannot be realized merely through the dhyanas, but through the destruction of defilements by insight wisdom.

According to the commentary, all the five doctrines of nibbāna here and now are comprised within eternalism. But if the first position is a form of hedonism, which sees man’s highest good in sensual indulgence, it would seem more appropriate to classify it under annihilationism. Perhaps, though, its classification under eternalism indicates that it is the antinomian type of spirituality that is intended. The four doctrines based on the jhānas are all appropriately categorized, for such doctrines invariably recognize a purified self persisting in its own nature following the dissolution of the body. (Bodhi 1978:34)

### 100-101 Summary of speculations about the future.

Of the 62 grounds, 7 belong to annihilationism, and the remainder (55) to eternalism. In analyzing these forty-four grounds...” [§100a], the Buddha reveals his omniscience; in declaring that they “are deep... [§100c], he asks in reference to omniscience; and in answering the question, he does so by means of his omniscience. (DA 1:122)

**102** [T]hey all do so on these sixty-two grounds, or on any one of them. There is none beyond this (*sabbe te imeh ’eva dvā, satṭhiyā vatthūhi etesam vā aññatarena, n ’atthi ito bahiddhā*).

SUMMARY. Dhammapāla shows how various wrong views fall into one or other of the 62 grounds (DAṬ 1:232-234), and are here summarized with additional notes [within square brackets]:

<sup>199</sup> *Nibbāna* here has the literal sense of “extinction.”

Standpoints & grounds	Includes
<b>Eternalism</b> (1-4)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <u>The doctrine of non-action</u> (<i>akiriya,vāda</i>), or amoralism, because it denies the moral efficacy of deeds, holding them to be “barren, standing like a peak” [§31, 62.1(1)].</li> <li>2. <u>Pakudha Kaccāyana’s atomism</u>, that “these seven substances...are barren, stable as a mountain-peak” (D 2.26).<sup>200</sup></li> <li>3. “The Tathagata exists after death.” [1.6.2]</li> <li>4. “There are spontaneously-born beings.” [1.6.2]</li> </ol>
<b>Partial eternalism</b> (5-8)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. “The Tathagata both exists and does not exists after death.” [1.6.2]</li> <li>2. “There both are and not not spontaneously-born beings.” [1.6.2]</li> <li>3. <u>Theism</u>, ie the belief in God, Creator, Primordial Spirit, and Time (<i>Kāla</i>). [38.1]</li> <li>4. <u>Kanāda’s teachings</u>. [38.1]</li> </ol>
<b>Endless hedging</b> (13-16)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <u>Jainism</u>, because of the evasiveness in its method of the 7 predicables [38.1].</li> <li>2. <u>Sañjaya’s agnosticism</u> (D 2.58) [§1.5, 1.5-6]<sup>201</sup></li> <li>3. “The Tathagata neither exists nor does not exists after death.” [1.6.2]</li> <li>4. “There neither are nor are not spontaneously-born beings.” [1.6.2]</li> </ol>
<b>Fortuitous arising</b> (17-18)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <u>Moral acausality</u> (<i>ahetu,paccaya</i>), because it asserts, “There is no cause or condition for the defilement (or purification) of beings,” such as Makkhali Gosāla’s view of fatalism or determinism (D 2.19). [76.1n]</li> </ol>
<b>Annihilationism</b> (51-57)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <u>Nihilism</u>, because it asserts, “There is no world beyond” (<i>n’atthi para,loko</i>), such as <u>Ajita Kesakambala’s</u> amoralist materialism (D 2.23).<sup>202</sup></li> <li>2. “The Tathagata does not exists after death.” 1.6.2]</li> <li>3. “There are no spontaneously-born beings.” 1.6.2]</li> </ol>
<b>Conscious survival</b> (19-20, 35-36, 43-44), that the self, after death, does not decay, and has form...is formless.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. “The self/soul and the body are the same.” 1.6.2]</li> <li>2. “The self/soul and the body are different.” 1.6.2]</li> <li>3. <u>Makkhali Gosāla</u> and the <u>Ājīvikas</u>. [76.1n]</li> <li>4. <u>Pūrāna Kassapa</u> and his 6 classes. [76.1n]</li> <li>5. <u>Jains</u>. [76.2n]</li> </ol>

IS THE NET REALLY COMPREHENSIVE? The Brahma,jāla Sutta claims to be nothing less than a comprehensive “perfect net” of views—“There is none beyond this”—sounded in all the refrains and section summaries, a total of thirteen times.<sup>203</sup> But is the perfect net really comprehensive as it claims? The context of the Sutta is clearly the religious and philosophical milieu of the Buddha’s times. At the end of each section of standpoints (sets of grounds), the claim is made that whatever views the theorists proclaim, “they do so on these <so many> grounds, or on any one of them.” To this extent, the net clearly catches all the current speculative doctrines and views.

However, the perfect net also targets whatever views “which have come to expression in the course of man’s intellectual history, [and] all that are capable of coming to expression whether they have actually appeared or not,” says Bodhi, and he further notes,

Whether the sutta, in its present form, really does succeed in matching this claim is difficult to assess. On reflection it seems that many views from the history of philosophy and theology can be called to mind which resist being neatly classified into the scheme the sutta sets up, while other views can be found which agree in their basic credo with those given in the sutta but appear to spring from causes other than the limited number the sutta states they can be ultimately traced to....

<sup>200</sup> D 2.26/1:56 = SD 8.10.

<sup>201</sup> D 2.32/1:58 = SD 8.10.

<sup>202</sup> D 2.23/1:55 = SD 8.10.

<sup>203</sup> §§35, 50, 58, 66a, 70a, 71, 76, 80a, 82b, 92, 99a,100a, 102.

The subcommentary attempts to widen the scope of several views to show that they include more than they appear on first glance, but even then instances crop up which are not handled by the subcommentary and yet seem to constitute exceptions to the pronouncements of the sutta. Perhaps with greater insight into the range of each view the apparent exceptions could be shown to fit in.

Or perhaps the sutta is, after all, only intended to show a selection of instances, and to allow the thoughtful reader to fill in the lacuna by himself. The solution to this particular problem, however, is not so pressing, and certainly does not detract from the truth of the central principles the sutta proposes in its project of encompassing the range of man's speculative thought.

(Bodhi 1978:5 f)

Whether the Brahma.jāla Sutta is comprehensive in its coverage of the various grounds for wrong views does not matter very much. As a historical document in itself produced over two and a half millennia ago, it is simply remarkable in its analysis and insight. All views are rooted in greed, hate and delusion. The bottom line is that all views, especially religious ideologies and dogmas, are rooted in feeling and contact (or sense-stimulus) [Sutta §118]. This is in itself, in its stark simplicity, is a supreme truth, unchallenged by any other to this day.

### 104 [The sequence of meaning (*anusandhi*)]

Buddhaghosa, in his Commentary, notes that the Brahma.jāla Sutta has transmitted by way of a meaning-sequence (or connection of ideas) dictated by “the natural structure of the teaching” (*yathā'nusandhi*), and goes on to explain that there are three kinds of meaning-sequences (*anusandhi*) in the suttas.<sup>204</sup>

- (1) the meaning-sequence based on a question (*pucchā'nusandhi*);
- (2) the meaning-sequence dictated by inclination (*ajjhāsayānusandhi*); and
- (3) the meaning-sequence dictated by the natural structure of the sutta (*yathā'nusandhi*).

**(1) The meaning-sequence based on a question (*pucchā'nusandhi*).** This meaning-sequence is found in the Buddha's teachings in response to questions asked, such as this from **the Dāru,k-khandhoppama Sutta 1** (S 35.242):

What, venerable sir, is the near shore? What is the far shore? What is sinking in mid-stream?  
What is being cast up on dry land? What is being caught by humans; what is being caught by non-humans; what is being caught in a whirlpool? What is inner rottenness? (S 35.242/4:180)

**(2) The meaning-sequence dictated by inclination (*ajjhāsayānusandhi*).** This meaning-sequence can be understood by way of the Buddha's teachings given in accordance to the inclinations of others, as illustrated in this passage from **the Mahā Puṇṇama Sutta** (M 109):

Then this thought arose in the mind of a certain monk:

“So it seems, sir, that form is not self, feeling is not self, perception is not self, formations are not self, consciousness is not self. What self, then, will deeds done without a self affect?”<sup>205</sup>

Then the Blessed One, discerning with his own mind the monk's thought, addressed the monks, thus:

“It is possible, bhikshus, that some misguided person here, not knowing, ignorant, with his mind dominated by craving, might think that he could overshoot the Teacher's Teaching, thus: ‘So it seems, sir, that form is not self, ... What self, then, will deeds done without a self affect?’ ... What do you think, bhikshus, is form permanent or impermanent?...” (M 109.14/3:19)

<sup>204</sup> DA 1:122; MA 1:2.

<sup>205</sup> *Anatta, katāni kira kammāni kam-attānani phusissanti ti*. Dhammapāla explains that this monk has misapplied the method of unity (*ekatta, naya*), and concludes that there must be a single self-identical agent (*kāraka*) and experiencer (*vedaka*) (in order to connect a karma to its fruit). Thus he thinks that he could overshoot the Teacher's Teaching, which clarified the emptiness of a self and of any property of a self. (DAṬ 1:235). See Bodhi 1978:203.



(3) **The meaning-sequence dictated by the natural structure of the sutta (*yathā'nusandhi*).** This meaning-sequence can be understood by way of those suttas where the teaching progresses from its initial subject to its culmination by way of the counterpart (*anurūpa,dhamma*), or by way of the opposite (*paṭi-pakkha*), or by way of the initial subject. For example:<sup>206</sup>

<b>Ākaṅkheyya Sutta</b> (M 6)	the teaching arises on account of moral virtue, and culminates in the six direct knowledges ( <i>abhiññā</i> );
<b>Vattha Sutta</b> (M 7)	the teaching arises on account of defilements, and culminates in the divine abodes ( <i>brahma,vihāra</i> );
<b>Kosambiya Sutta</b> (M 48)	the teachings arises on account of a schism, and culminates in the conditions for conciliation ( <i>sāraṇīya,dhamma</i> );
<b>Kakacūpama Sutta</b> (M 21)	the teachings arises on account of impatience, and culminates in a simile; and in
<b>Brahma,jāla Sutta</b> (D 1)	<u>the teaching arises on account of views, and culminates in the exposition on emptiness (<i>suññatā</i>).</u> (DA 1:122 f)

Dhammapāla adds that **the Ākaṅkheyya Sutta** shows the meaning-sequence by way of *counterparts*, and the other three suttas, by way of *opposites*. In the case of **the Brahma,jāla Sutta**, the teaching begins with speculative views proclaiming a permanent entity, etc, and concludes with the exposition on the emptiness of any permanent essence. (DAṬ 1:236)

## V. SAMSARA AND LIBERATION

### 1. Agitation and Vacillation (*paritassita,vipphandita*)

**105** that is only the feeling of those who know not, who see not, merely the agitation and vacillation of those overcome by craving (*tad api tesam...ajānataṃ apassataṃ vedayitaṃ taṇhā,gatānaṃ paritassita,vipphanditaṃ*).

The meaning here is this:

Those recluses and brahmins delightedly proclaim the self and the world to be eternal on account of the gratification in regards to views (*diṭṭhi,assāda*), the pleasure of views (*diṭṭhi,sukha*), and the feeling of views (*diṭṭhi,vedayita*).

This is clearly only the feeling of those who do not know and do not see the true nature of things as they really are. It is only the feeling of those who are totally drowned in craving. (DA 1:123 f)

By “**feeling**” (*vedayita*) here is meant the affective tone of the experience that goes with the proclamation of the view regarding the self and the world, and which is experienced with that view. This feeling of exhilaration, the bait of the rounds (*vaṭṭā,misa*), is fickle, arising, as of one pierced by the thorns of craving and views. It does not persist with a steady tone like the joyful feeling of the noble path and fruits.

By those “**who do not know, do not see**” (*ajānataṃ apassataṃ*) here is meant as follows:

- they do not know, do not see, the true nature of conditioned states;
- they do not know, do not see, as it really is, that their wrong view leads to such a future destiny, to such a state in the next world;
- they do not know, do not see, as they really are, the arising and passing away of that feeling on account of which, in their craving for feeling, they cling to such a speculative view.

All this only shows the clear distinction, the boundaries, between the theorists’ not knowing and not seeing, and the Buddha’s knowledge and vision.

<sup>206</sup> DA 1:122 f.

By “**agitation and vacillation**” (*paritassita, vipphanditam*) here is meant the trembling and wavering on account of craving and views. It is like a stake planted into a heap of chaff: it is not unshakable like the vision (*dassana*) of a stream-winner. (DAṬ 1:236).

## 2a. Conditioned by Contact Sequence (*phassa, paccaya vāra*)

**118** [T]his is conditioned by contact (*tad api phassa, paccayā*).

This teaching is to show the succession of conditions (*parampara, paccaya*), that is, the gratification, pleasure, or feeling of views on account of which these theorists delightedly proclaim the self and the world to be eternal, is a “trembling” [disturbance] (*pariphandita*) of craving and views, a feeling conditioned by contact [sense-stimuli]. (DA 1:124)

These speculative views arise due to the agitation of craving. Craving is conditioned by feeling, and feeling is conditioned by contact. (DAṬ 1:237). The vision of true reality, however, is that phenomena arises from conditions, and as such are a series of impermanent moments, without any abiding entity in between.

## 2b. Conditioned by Contact (Negative Sequence)

**131** [I]t is indeed impossible that they would experience anything other than contact (*te vata aññatra phassā paṭisaṃvedissantī ti n’etaṃ thānaṃ vijjati*).

This statement is to show the strength of the condition (ie contact) for the feeling of views. Just as a prop is the strength that supports a dilapidated house, unable to stand on its own, even so, contact is the strength of the condition for feeling, and without contact there would be no feeling of views. (DA 1:124)

By “feeling of views” (*diṭṭhi, vedayita*) here is meant the delight accompanying such a wrong view. “The strength of the condition” (*balava, paccaya*) here refers to how not understanding the workings of sense-contact, as in the teaching:<sup>207</sup>“Dependent on the eye and forms, eye-consciousness arises.... **The meeting of the three is contact**”<sup>208</sup>

The meeting of eye, form, and eye-consciousness is called contact. Contact, according to dependent origination [*paṭicca, samuppāda*], is the principal condition for feeling. Feeling and perception are inseparable [M 43.9/1:293].<sup>209</sup> What is perceived as “this” is thought about in its differences and is thus diversified from “that” and from “me.” This diversification—involving craving for form, wrong view about permanence of form, etc, and the conceit “I am”—leads to preoccupation with calculating the desirability of past and present forms with a view to obtaining desirable forms in the future. (M:ÑB 1205 n232)<sup>210</sup>

<sup>207</sup> M 18.16/1:112 f = SD 6.14, *Cakkhuñ ca āvuso paṭicca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhu, viññānaṃ, tiṇṇaṃ saṅgati phasso, phassa, paccayā vedanā, yaṃ vedeti taṃ sañjānāti, yaṃ sañjānāti taṃ vitakketi, yaṃ vitakketi taṃ papañceti, yaṃ papañceti tato, nidānaṃ purisaṃ papañca, saññā, saṅkhā samudācaranti atītānagata, paccuppannesu cakkhu, viññeyyesu rūpesu*. A passage similar to this section is found in **the Pariññā S** (S 35.60) where, however, the learned noble disciple becomes disillusioned (*nibbindati*) with the contact arising from sense-organ, sense-object and sense-consciousness (also using the sentence, *tinnaṃ saṅgati phasso* [16]), and as such “becomes dispassionate (*virajjati*); through dispassion, he is liberated (*vimuccati*); through liberation, he understands, ‘Clinging has been fully understood by me.’” (S 35.60/4:32 f). **The Mahā Hatthi, padōpama S** (M 28) closes with a similar, beginning with the statement: “If, friends, internally the eye is unimpaired [intact] but no external forms come into its range, and there is no appropriate conscious engagement [appropriate act of attention] (*tajjo samannāhāro hoti*), then there is no appearance of that class of consciousness” (M 28.27-38/1:190 f). On Nānananda’s notion of the 3 phases of mental proliferation, see **Madhu, piṇḍika S** (M 18/1:108-114) = SD 6.14 Introd (2).

<sup>208</sup> *Tiṇṇaṃ saṅgati phasso*. For a discussion on this passage, see Bucknell 1999:318 f f.

<sup>209</sup> **Mahā Vedalla S**.

<sup>210</sup> See **Madhu, piṇḍika S** (M 18/1:108-114) = SD 6.14.

### 3. Exposition on the Rounds of Views (*diṭṭhi,gatikā,diṭṭhāna,vatṭa kathā*)

**144.1** [T]hey all (those brahmins and recluses) experience these feelings by way of repeated contacts through the six bases of contacts (*sabbe te chahi phassa'-āyatanehi phussa phussa paṭisaṃvedenti*).

Here the Buddha presents together all the “feelings of views” (*diṭṭhi,vedayita*) to relate them once again to contact. The six bases of contact are the eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue, the body, and the mind. The word “base” (*āyatana*), as noted by the Commentaries, occurs in the texts in four senses:

- |                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| (1) “place of origin”            | as in “Kamboja is the base for horses, Dakkhīṇa, patha the base for cows” ( <i>Kambojo assānam āyatanam, gunnam dakkhīṇa,-patho ti</i> ) [untraced]; |
| (2) “place of convergence”       | as in “The birds resort to that delightful base” ( <i>manorame āyatane, sevanti nam vihaṅgamā ti</i> , A 3:43);                                      |
| (3) “cause”                      | as in “when there is suitable basis (for meditative attainment)” ( <i>sati sati, āyatane ti</i> ); <sup>211</sup>                                    |
| (4) “mere designation for place” | as in “They lived in leaf-huts in a forest base” ( <i>araññ'āyatane paṇṇa, kuṭṭisu sammantī ti</i> , S 1:226). <sup>212</sup>                        |
- (DA 1:124 f; AA 2:272)

We might add this important canonical sense, not mentioned by the Commentary:

- |              |   |
|--------------|---|
| (5) “sphere” | as in “The two spheres are the sphere of the non-percipient beings, and the sphere of the neither-percipient-nor-non-percipient beings as the second ( <i>dve ca āyatanāni asañña, sattāyatanam n'eva, sañña, nāsaññāyatanam eva dutiyaṃ</i> , D 2:69). |
|--------------|---|

The first three meanings apply here. For the contact pentad<sup>213</sup> arises in and converges upon the sense faculties, and these latter are its cause; thus, they are called “bases.”

Here, the bases of contact, etc, are mentioned to show the succession of conditions that make contact the starting point, in accordance with the method of this passage: “Dependent on the eye and forms, eye-consciousness arises.... The meeting of the three is contact.” [131]<sup>214</sup>

#### **144.2** [C]onditioned by feeling, craving arises (*vedanā, paccayā taṇhā*).

“Feeling” (*phassa*) here is the feeling that arises through the six bases of contact. It is a condition for craving—that is, craving for forms, feeling, perception, formations, and consciousness—under the heading of the decisive-support condition (*upanissaya, koṭi, paccaya*).<sup>215</sup>

<sup>211</sup> M 1:494, 495, 496 x2, 3:96, 97 x2; A 1:255 x4, 256 x3, 258 x2.124 f

<sup>212</sup> Also *araññāyatane paṇṇa, kuṭṭisu jhāyanti*, etc (D 3:78 x4); *araññāyatane paṇṇa, kuṭṭisu sammantānam* (M 2:154, 155, 156). For fig usages and other refs, see CPD sv.

<sup>213</sup> *Phassa, pancake dhammā* (“the dharmas with contact as the fifth”): consciousness, feeling, perception, volition, and contact.

<sup>214</sup> M 18.16/1:112 f = SD 6.14. See also *Sañña* = SD 17.4(3.4).

<sup>215</sup> *Upanissaya, koṭiyā paccayo*, “the heading [crest] of decisive-support condition.” Bodhi: “The word *koṭi*, here translated ‘crest,’ is used technically in Pāli commentarial literature to signify that the term it follows is the principal member of a group of factors, all of which should be understood to be implied under the key-term. Thus ‘decisive-support’ is only one, though the primary condition of a group of conditions relating feeling to craving, as the Subcomy [DAT 1:237-239] will show. The conditions are selected from the twenty-fourfold scheme of the Paṭṭhāna. Their full application to dependent origination is given in Vism ch XVII. Much of the following discussion will be unintelligible to one not familiar with this chapter.” (1978:210 n)

Hence, it is said, “For them, conditioned by feeling, craving arises” (*tesaṃ vedanā, paccayā taṇhā ti*).

Craving (*taṇhā*), in turn, is a condition for the four types of clinging under the headings of decisive-support (*upanissaya*) and consciousness (*sahajāta*).

Clinging (*upādāna*) is a condition for existence, in the same way.

Existence (*bhava*) is a condition for birth under the heading for decisive-support.

Birth (*jāti*) here is the five aggregates together with their transformations (*savikārā pañca-k, khandhā*). Birth is a condition for decay and death.

This is a brief explanation, which is sufficient: the details are found in the discussion on dependent arising in **the Visuddhi, magga**.<sup>216</sup> (DA 1:125 f)

Dhammapāla explains the meanings of these terms as follows:

**Feeling** (*vedanā*) is sixfold, by way of the six types of contacts, that is, feeling born of eye-contact, of ear-contact, of nose-contact, of tongue-contact, of body-contact, and of mind-contact. They form a total of 108 kinds, thus:

Pre-occupation ( <i>upavicāra</i> )	Support ( <i>nissita</i> )	Time ( <i>kāla</i> )
Desirable	<u>6 internal sense-faculties (self)</u>	Past
Undesirable	Eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind	Present
Neutral	<u>6 external sense-objects (other)</u>	
	Form, sound, smell, taste, touch, mind-objects	Future
3 × 12		36 × 3 = <b>108</b>

**Table 144.2 The 108 feelings** (DAaT:CSCD 1:463)

**Craving** (*taṇhā*) similarly is sixfold by way of six types of objects, that is, craving for forms, for sounds, for smells, for tastes, for touches and for mind-objects. In detail, there is 108 types of craving.<sup>217</sup>

Dhammapāla asks, “Isn’t craving the same as clinging to sense-pleasures?”<sup>218</sup> This is true, but one sees a distinction between them. Here, weak craving refers to craving itself, and strong craving refers to clinging to sense-pleasures.

Or, craving is the longing for an object that has not been acquired; clinging is the holding on to the object one has obtained.

Craving is opposed to the fewness of wants, clinging to contentment.

Craving is the root of suffering involved in searching for what one wants; clinging is the root of the suffering involved in guarding what one has found.

**Existence** (*bhava*) is karma existence (*kamma, bhava*) and rebirth-existence (*upapatti, bhava*). Here, karma-existence is all the karma that leads to existence, that is, volition and its concomitants. In the statement, “**conditioned by existence, birth arises**,” existence refers to karma-existence alone; for, it alone is the condition for birth.

Rebirth-existence is birth itself (that is, a state of being), and refers to the nine states of existence.<sup>219</sup> This is because birth (*jāti*) comprises of the aggregates that are first produced at the initial moment of re-

<sup>216</sup> Vism 17/592-678.

<sup>217</sup> Vism 17.234-235/655 f.

<sup>218</sup> Both craving and clinging to sense-pleasures are ultimately the same mental factor, namely, greed (*lobha*).

<sup>219</sup> *Nava, vidha upapatti, bhava*. The 9 states of existence are obtained by dividing the realms into 3 divisions according to the 3 alternative methods: (1) sense-realm, form realm, and formless realm; (2) five-constituent, one-constituent, and four-constituent existence; and (3) percipient, non-percipient, and neither percipient nor non-percipient existence.

birth. Hence, it is said here, “Birth is here the five aggregates together with their transformations (*sa-vikārā pañca-k, khandhā*).”

These aggregates are the rebirth-existence itself, which cannot be its own cause. Karma-existence is a condition for rebirth-existence (that is, for birth), as a karma-condition and decisive-support condition. Thus it is said, “Existence is a condition for birth under the heading of decisive support.”

And since decay and death arise when there is birth, not otherwise, and since sorrow, etc, arise in one afflicted by decay and death, etc, birth is the condition for decay and death, etc. (DAT 1:239-242)

### 144.3 [The Buddha’s themes for teaching]

When the Buddha gives teachings about the rounds (*vivaṭṭa, kathā*),<sup>220</sup> he does so using various headings (*sīsa*) or themes, such as ignorance, craving, existence, or views.

<u>Ignorance</u>	“ <b>No first point of <u>ignorance</u> (<i>avijjā</i>) can be discerned</b> , bhikshus, before which there was no ignorance, and after which it arose. And though this is said, bhikshus, nevertheless it can be discerned that ignorance has a specific condition ( <i>idap,-paccaya</i> ).” (A 10.61/5:113)
<u>Craving</u>	“ <b>No first point of <u>craving for existence</u> (<i>bhava, taṇhā</i>) can be discerned</b> , bhikshus, before which there was no ignorance, and after which it arose. And though this is said, bhikshus, nevertheless it can be discerned that ignorance has a specific condition.” (A 10.62/5:116)
<u>Existence</u>	“ <b>No first point of <u>craving for existence</u> (<i>bhava, diṭṭhi</i>) can be discerned</b> , bhikshus, before which there was no ignorance, and after which it arose. And though this is said, bhikshus, nevertheless it can be discerned that ignorance has a specific condition.” (untraced)

Here, he discusses the rounds under the heading of views. First, he explains the views that arise through lust for feeling, then he speaks on the dependent arising rooted [beginning] in feeling.<sup>221</sup> Thus he shows:

Thus these theorists [those driven by views] roam and wander here and there, to and fro, through the three realms of existence, the four modes of birth, the five destinies, the seven stations of consciousness, and the nine abodes of beings. Like an ox yoked to a millwheel, like a dog leashed to a post, or like a ship tossed about in a storm, they revolve in the round of suffering, unable even to lift their heads up from suffering’s round. (DA 1:125 f)

Here are the definitions of some key terms:

<b>the 3 realms of existence (<i>bhava</i>)</b>	(1) sense existence ( <i>kāma, bhava</i> ), (2) form existence ( <i>rūpa, bhava</i> ), and (3) formless existence ( <i>arūpa, bhava</i> ) (D 3:215; M 1:294)
<b>the 4 modes of birth (<i>yonī</i>)</b>	(1) the womb-born (viviparous) ( <i>jalābu, ja</i> ), (2) the egg-born (oviparous) ( <i>aṇḍa, ja</i> ), (3) the moisture-born ( <i>samseda, ja</i> ), (4) the spontaneously born ( <i>opapātika</i> ) (D 3:230; M 1:73).
<b>the 5 destinies (<i>gati</i>)</b>	(1) the hells ( <i>niraya</i> ), (2) the animal kingdom ( <i>tiracchāna, yonī</i> ), (3) departed ghosts ( <i>petti, visaya</i> ), (4) human beings ( <i>manussa</i> ), and (5) gods ( <i>deva</i> ). <sup>222</sup> (D 3:234; M 1:73; A 4:459)

<sup>220</sup> The “rounds” (*vaṭṭa*) refers to dependent arising.

<sup>221</sup> *Vedanā, mūlakam paṭicca, samuppādam kathesi.*

<sup>222</sup> **The asura demons** are traditionally included in the deva realm (whence they originated), but later in the 6-realm scheme, they form a separate realm.

**the 7 stations for consciousness**  
(*viññāna-ṭṭhiti*)

(D 2:68 f, 3:253; A 4:39), see this table:

<b>The 7 stations for consciousness &amp; the 2 spheres</b>	
<b>Formless realm</b>	
Sphere only	The sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception
7 <sup>th</sup> station for consciousness	The sphere of nothingness
6 <sup>th</sup> station for consciousness	The sphere of infinity of consciousness
5 <sup>th</sup> station for consciousness	The sphere of infinity of space
<b>Form realm</b> <sup>223</sup>	
Sphere only	The sphere of non-percipient beings ( <i>asañña,satta</i> )
4 <sup>th</sup> station for consciousness: <i>beings same in body, same in perception</i>	Gods of Abundant Fruit ( <i>Vehapphala</i> ) Gods of Radiant Glory ( <i>Subha.kiṇṇa</i> ) Gods of Boundless Glory ( <i>Appamāṇa,subha</i> ) Gods of Limited Glory ( <i>Paritta,subha</i> )
3 <sup>rd</sup> station for consciousness <i>beings same in body, different in perception</i>	Gods of Streaming Radiance ( <i>Ābhassara</i> ) Gods of Boundless Radiance ( <i>Appamāṇ'ābha</i> ) Gods of Limited Radiance ( <i>Paritta,subha</i> )
2 <sup>nd</sup> station for consciousness <i>beings different in body, same in perception</i>	Great Brahmā ( <i>Mahā Brahmā</i> ) Gods of Brahmā's Ministers ( <i>Brahmā,purohitā</i> ) Gods of Brahmā's Host ( <i>Brahmā.parisajjā</i> )
<b>Sense realm</b>	
1 <sup>st</sup> station for consciousness: <i>beings different in body, different in perception</i>	Gods of the 6 sense-sphere heavens <sup>224</sup> Human beings Some beings in the lower worlds ( <i>āpaya</i> )
2 <sup>nd</sup> station for consciousness <i>beings different in body, same in perception (lower realms, āpaya)</i>	The host of titans ( <i>asura,kāya</i> ) The realm of the departed [ghosts] ( <i>pitti,visaya</i> ) The animal kingdom ( <i>tiracchāna,yoni</i> ) The hells ( <i>niraya</i> )

**Table 144.3a The seven stations of consciousness and the two spheres.**

**the 9 abodes of beings**  
(*satt'āvāsa*)

The 9 states of existence are obtained by dividing the realms into 3 divisions according to these 3 alternative methods:  
(1-3) the sense-realm, form realm, and formless realm;  
(4-6) five-constituent, one-constituent, and four-constituent existences; and  
(7-9) percipient, non-percipient, and neither-percipient-nor-non-percipient existences.

<sup>223</sup> It is interesting to note that the Pure Abodes (*suddh'āvāsa*), the 5 highest heavens of the form world (*rūpa-loka*), are not listed as "stations for consciousness." The Pure Abodes are inhabited only by non-returners who assume their last birth to become arhats and attain nirvana. These Pure Abode worlds are Āviha ("Non-declining"), Ātappa ("Unworried"), Sudassā ("Clearly Visible"), Sudassī ("Clear-visioned") and Akaññitthā ("Highest") (D 3:237, M 3:103, Vbh 425, Pug 42-46). See **Mahā Nidāna S** (D 15.33/2:68 f = SD 5.17); also D 3:253; A 4:39.

<sup>224</sup> The gods of the 6 sense-spheres are: (1) *Para,nimmīta,vasavattī* (who lord over the creation of others; (2) *Nimmāṇa,raṭṭī* (who delight in creating); (3) *Tusita* (contented gods); (4) *Yāma* devas; (5) *Tāvatisīsa* (gods of the 32); (6) *Cātum,mahārājikā* (gods of the 4 Great Kings).

The 9 abodes of beings	The 7 stations for consciousness & 2 spheres
(1) Beings different in body, different in perception	1 <sup>st</sup> station for consciousness
(2) Beings different in body, same in perception	2 <sup>nd</sup> station for consciousness
(3) Beings same in body, different in perception	3 <sup>rd</sup> station for consciousness
(4) Beings same in body, same in perception	4 <sup>th</sup> station for consciousness
(5) Beings without perception and feeling	The sphere of the non-percipient
(6) Beings of the infinite-space realm	5 <sup>th</sup> station for consciousness
(7) Beings of the infinite-consciousness realm	6 <sup>th</sup> station for consciousness
(8) Beings of the nothingness realm	7 <sup>th</sup> station for consciousness
(9) Neither percipient nor non-percipient beings	The sphere of the neither-percipient-nor-non-percipient

Table 144.3b The nine abodes and the seven stations

It should be noted here that the nine abodes of beings (*nava satt'āvāsa*) and the seven stations of consciousness (*satta viññāṇa-t,thiti*) are essentially the same, except that the nine abodes includes the two “spheres” or “bases” (*āyatana*),<sup>225</sup> namely, of the non-percipient beings and of the neither-percipient-nor-non-percipient beings. The Aṅguttara Commentary says that the brahmas of the Pure Abodes (*suddh'āvāsa*) are not mentioned here because they exist only during in those world-period when Buddhas appear.<sup>226</sup>

#### 144.4 [“No first point of ignorance (*avijjā*) can be discerned.”]

Ñāṇābhivamsa, in his New Subcommentary, explains the meaning of this sentence. “**No first point of ignorance can be discerned**” because no first limit [initial boundary] (*ādi, mariyāda*) exists, not even the Buddha’s unimpeded omniscience can discern a first limit of ignorance so that it can be said, “Ignorance arose in the time of such and such a Buddha, or of such and such a world monarch. It did not exist before that.”

Although it is said to lack an initial boundary, “nevertheless,” in temporal terms (*kāla, niyāmena*), “ignorance has a specific condition,” that is to say, ignorance arises with the five hindrances (*pañca, nīvaraṇa*)<sup>227</sup> as its condition. Therefore, a first point of ignorance *can* be discerned in terms of the natural order of things (*dhamma, niyāmena*). For it is said in the same Sutta,

“And what is the food for ignorance? It should be said: the five hindrances.” (A 10.61/1:113)

(DAaṬ:CSCD 1:467)

#### 4. Ending of the Round, etc (*vivaṭṭa kathādi*)

**145** Bhikshus, when a monk understands according to reality the arising and ending of the six bases of contact, and their gratification, and their dangers, and the escape from them, then he indeed understands what transcends all these views (*Yato kho bhikkhave bhikkhu channaṃ phass'āyatanānaṃ samudayaṃ ca atthagamaṃ ca assādaṃ ca ādīnavaṃ ca nissaraṇaṃ ca yathā, bhūtaṃ pajānāti, ayaṃ imehi sabbeḥ'eva uttaritaraṃ pajānāti*).

<sup>225</sup> The Abhidhamma counterpart here is *avacara*. Both these terms, however, are more common used in term of meditative states. As locational spheres, the canonical term *bhava* (M 43.15/1:294) or commentarial *loka* are used.

<sup>226</sup> AA 4:28, 190.

<sup>227</sup> See 7.3n.

Having discussed the round (*vaṭṭa*) in terms of the those driven by views, the Buddha goes on to show the ending of the round in terms of one devoted to meditation.

“**The six bases of contact**” (*cha phass’āyatana*) here are the same as those on which the theorists, experiencing feelings through contact, revolve in the round. The origin of the sense-bases should be understood in the same way as that for the meditation-subject of feeling, as stated in **the Paṭisambhidā,-magga** [36.5], thus.<sup>228</sup>

What five characteristics are seen by one who sees the arising of the feeling aggregate?

He sees **the arising of the feeling aggregate** by way of conditioned arising thus:

- (1) with the arising of ignorance, there arises feeling.
- (2) ...with the arising of craving, there arises feeling.
- (3) ...with the arising of karma, there arises feeling.
- (4) ...with the arising of contact, there arises feeling.
- (5) He who sees the characteristic of production (*nibbatti,lakkhaṇa*) see the arising of feeling aggregate. (Pm 1.288/56)

While it is said above that feeling arises and ends through the arising and ending of contact, here it should be noted that the eye and the other physical sense-bases arise and end through the arising and ending of food (*āhāra*). The mind-base<sup>229</sup> however arises and ends through the arising and ending of name-and-form (*nāma,rūpa*). (DA 1:126)

Dhammapāla adds that by “food” here is meant edible food. Since edible food is the nutriment-condition (*āhāra,paccaya*) for this body, it follows that edible food is a supporting condition (*upatthambhaka,-paccaya*) (for the physical sense-bases, that is, the eye, etc) that arises from karma. (DAṬ 1:242)<sup>230</sup>

“**[H]e indeed understands what transcends all these views.**” [36.3] Those who are view-driven knows only their own view (that is, theoretically and in a speculative manner), but the monk (or practitioner) understands these views *and* also what transcends them, namely, moral virtue, concentration, wisdom, and liberation, ending in arhathood. Who understands this? The one canker-free (the arhat), the non-returner, the once-returner, the stream-winner, the monk learned in the texts, and the one who has effected insight (*āraddha,vipassaka*). (DA 1:127)

Dhammapāla adds that although the stream-winners and the other saints understand all this according to reality, the teaching concludes in arhathood to show the supremacy of the arhat’s understanding. (DAṬ 1:242)

**146.1** [T]hey are all caught in this net. When they emerge, they do so caught right here (in this net) (*Ettha pariyāpannā anto,jālīkatā ’va ummujjamānā ummuj-janti*).

Having discussed the ending of the round, the Buddha now shows that no one who is view-driven is free from the net of this teaching (*desanā,jāla*).

“**When they emerge...**” (*ummujjamānā*) here means whether they sink downwards (by way of rebirth in a suffering plane) or rise upwards (by way of rebirth in a happy plane)—that is, wherever they arise—they do so still caught in the Buddha’s net of teaching. No one who is view-driven is excluded here. (DA 1:127; DAṬ 1:242)

The word *ummujjamānā* is used in **the Ṭhānāni Sutta** (A 4.192) in a similar context, in its discussion of four ways of truly knowing a person, that is, through living together with another, through dealing with another, through adversities, and through discussing with another. The fourth point is illustrated by

<sup>228</sup> See Bodhi 1978:151-154.

<sup>229</sup> “The mind-base (*manāyatana*) is the same as consciousness, which is conditioned by both mentality and materiality [name-and-form] together.” (Bodhi 1978 217 n1)

<sup>230</sup> “The sensitive material of the sense organs, called *pasāda,rūpa*, is originated by past kamma, but is maintained and strengthened by physical food.” (Bodhi 1978:217 n2)



these two “emergence” (*ummagga*) parables, showing how the wise discern foolishness or wisdom in another through discussion, thus:

THE PARABLE OF THE SMALL FISH. Just as if, bhikshus, a man with eyes, standing on the bank of a pool of water, were to see a small fish emerging [moving underwater] (*ummuja-mānaṃ*),<sup>231</sup> he would think:

‘From the emergence [underwater movement] (*ummagga*)<sup>232</sup> of this fish, from the size of the ripple it makes, from its speed, this is a small fish, this is not a big fish’<sup>233</sup>—

in the same way, bhikshus, through discussing with another, one knows thus:

‘From this venerable one’s’<sup>234</sup>

approach to a problem [manner of examining a problem],  
defining the problem [formulating of the question], and  
discussion of the question,

this venerable one is unwise, this venerable one is not wise.

THE PARABLE OF THE BIG FISH. Just as if, bhikshus, a man with eyes, standing on the bank of a pool of water, were to see a big fish emerging [moving underwater], he would think:

‘From the emergence [underwater movement] of this fish, from the size of the ripple it makes, from its speed, this is a big fish, this is not a small fish’—

in the same way, bhikshus, through discussing with another, one knows thus:

‘From this venerable one’s’<sup>235</sup>

approach to a problem [manner of examining a problem],  
defining the problem [formulating of the question], and  
discussion of the question,

this venerable one is wise, this venerable one is not unwise. (A 4.192.5/2:189) = SD 14.12

These parables gain greater significance here in connection with the Brahma,jāla Sutta’s parable of the fisherman, which follows.

## 146.2 [The parable of the fisherman]

The Buddha is like the fisherman; the teaching, the net; the ten-thousandfold world-system [the galaxy] is like the small pool of water; the view-driven are like the sizeable water creatures. Just as the fisherman, standing on the shore, examining the net, sees all the sizeable water creatures trapped in his net, even so the Buddha sees all the views and theories caught within the net of his teaching.

**147.1** The Tathagata’s body, bhikshus, remains cut from the leash of existence. So long as the Tathagata’s body stands, gods and humans will see him. After the breaking up of the body and the exhaustion of the life-faculty, gods and humans do not see him. (*Evam eva kho bhikkhave ucchinna,bhava,nettiko tathāgatassa kāyo tiṭṭhati. Yāvassa kāyo ṭhassati, tāva naṃ dakkhinti deva,manussā. Kāyassa bhedaṃ uddham jīvita,pariyādānā na naṃ dakkhinti deva,manussā*)

Having shown that all the views are found in these sixty-two grounds and all those who are view-driven are caught in the net of the teaching, the Buddha makes this statement to show that he himself is not contained anywhere.

<sup>231</sup> The imagery here I think means that the observer is able to allow for water reflection and reflexion, so that he is able to size the fish correctly.

<sup>232</sup> vī *ummaṅga*.

<sup>233</sup> *Yathā kho imassa macchassa ummaggo yathā ca ūmi,ghāto yathā ca vegāyittam paritto ayam macho nāyam macho mahanto ti.*

<sup>234</sup> See §5(4)a.

<sup>235</sup> See §5(4)a.

In the phrase, “**the leash of existence**” (*bhava,netti*), the leash (*netti*) is so called because they lead one by this (*etena nayanti*). This is the name for a rope tied around an animal’s neck and it is dragged along by it. Here “leash” refers to the craving for existence (*bhava,tanhā*), since craving is similar to a leash. For the craving for existence, tying itself around the neck of the populace, leads and drags it to this or that existence.

For the Buddha, however, the “leash of existence” has been cut with the sword of arhathood. Thus, “the Tathagata’s body, bhikshus, remains cut from the leash of existence.”

By “**the exhaustion of the life-faculty**” (*jīvita,pariyādānā*) means when he has reached the state where there is no more rebirth-linking (*puna appaṭisandhika,bhāva*).

“**Gods and humans do not see him**” (*na nañ dakkhinti deva,manussā*) because he will go to the indefinable state (*apaññattika,bhāvañ gamissati*) (ie final nirvana). (DA 1:127 f)

### 147.2 [The mango simile]

The Buddha’s body is the mango tree.<sup>236</sup> The craving that occurred in the past supported by that body is like the great stalk growing on the tree. The bunches of mangoes connected to the stalk, numbering five, twelve or eighteen fruits, are the five aggregates, twelve bases, and eighteen elements, connected with craving, which would have been further produced if the craving were to continue.

But just as when the stalk is cut, all those mangoes, cut off, go along with the stalk, even so, all those dharmas—the five aggregates, twelve bases, and eighteen elements—that would have arisen further if the stalk of the “leash of existence” (ie craving for existence) were not cut off, all go along with the leash of existence. When the leash is cut, they are cut, too. The tree dies in due course, and is no more seen, but people will still say, “Here stood such and such a tree,” using the word “tree” merely as an expression (*voḥāra,matta*).

Even so, when the Buddha’s body touches the noble path, it gradually withers and breaks up through the exhaustion of the craving’s moisture, so that with the body’s break-up and the exhaustion of the life-faculty, gods and men shall no more see the Buddha. People will say “This is the dispensation of such and such a Teacher” merely as an expression.

Thus the Buddha ends the teaching climaxing it with the nirvana-element without remains (*anupādisesa,nibbāna,dhātu*). (DA 1:128). Bodhi, in his introductory essay in his Brahma,jāla Sutta translation, remarks, “This is the certification of authority for his teaching: it is an emancipating teaching because it is taught by one who has attained emancipation, and recognizes his attainment with complete certitude.” (1978 38)

### 148 As such, Ānanda, this Dharma exposition here:

remember it as the net of the true goal (*attha,jāla*), or

remember it as the Dharma net (*Dharma,jāla*), or

remember it as the perfect net (*brahma,jāla*), or

remember it as the net of views (*ditthi,jāla*), or

remember it as the supreme victory in battle (*anuttara saṅgāma,vijaya*).

In reply to Ānanda’s question about the title of the teaching, the Buddha in reply gives five alternative titles. Buddhaghosa gives the meaning of each of the titles as follows (with the alternative meanings given by Dhamma,pāla):

“**The true goal**” (*attha,jāla*)

This is because the good pertaining to the present world (*idh’attha*) and the good pertaining to the world beyond (*par’attha*) have been analyzed in this Dharma exposition.

<sup>236</sup> Also at **Anicca,saññā S** (S 22.102/3:155 f) = SD 12.12 & **Appamāda S** (A 6.53.3/3:365)

- Alternatively, it is so called because it is perfect in meaning.<sup>237</sup>
- “The Dharma net” (*Dharma,jāla*) This is because many threads of the Dharma has been discussed here.  
Alternatively, it is so called because it is perfect in phrasing (*vyañjana*) and because it expounds blameless teachings, such as moral virtue, etc.
- “The perfect net” (*brahma,jāla*) This is because the omniscience called “Brahma,” in the sense of supreme (*seṭṭha*), has been analyzed here.  
Alternatively, it is so called because it analyzes the paths, fruits, and nirvana, which are called “Brahma” in the sense of supreme.
- “The net of views” (*ditthi,jāla*) This is because the sixty-two grounds for views have been analyzed here.  
Alternatively, it is so called because it demonstrates right view by elucidating emptiness through the refutation of wrong views.
- “The supreme victory in battle” This is because, after listening to this exposition, one is able (*anuttara saṅgāma,vijaya*) to crush Māra, namely, the deity Māra, the Māra of the aggregates, the Māra of death, and the Māra of the defilements.<sup>238</sup>  
Alternatively, it is so called because it provides the means for crushing the doctrines of the sectarians.  
(DA 1:129; DAṬ 1:243)

### 149 The Blessed One said this (*Idam avoca Bhagavā*).

THE BUDDHA QUARRELS NOT WITH THE WORLD. From §5 right up to the end (§149) (except for Ānanda’s question, §148), the Buddha himself speaks this teaching; as such, this is Buddha Word. As long as the Brahma,jāla Sutta and similar teachings are remembered and understood, there is the possibility of falling into the pond of views.

One should note that throughout the Brahma,jāla Sutta there is actually no specific criticism of any of the grounds or views it describes. Nor does it even try to refute the general principles underlying the various standpoints (sets of views). Although Buddhaghosa (the commentator) and Dhammapāla (the subcommentator) attempts such refutations, the Sutta itself explains each ground or standpoint simply to show the conditions from which it arises. **Bodhi** gives a helpful summary on why the Buddha refuses to engage in argumentation:

First, the disposition to argue and find flaws except when pressed betrays an unwholesome state of mind, a tendency towards aversion and hostility. Since an enlightened sage like the Buddha or an arahat has extricated the root of aversion, he has no inclination to quarrel over differences in doctrine.

As a second reason, it might be held that since conflicting opinions on each of the major doctrinal issues already existed, it was unnecessary for the Buddha to devise his own refutations. All he had to do was to show the contradictory tenets in their mutual opposition to reveal that no

<sup>237</sup> “The word *attha* can mean ‘meaning’ as well as ‘good’ or ‘goal.’ The Dhamma, or doctrine, as expounded, is said to be perfect (*paripuṇṇa*) insofar as it is perfect in meaning, which is also the good or goal towards which the doctrine points, and perfect in its phrasing, which is the formulated expression of that meaning.” (Bodhi 1978 n)

<sup>238</sup> A better known commentarial list gives “the 5 Māras” (*pañca,māra*): (1) the Māra of the defilements (*kilesa,māra*), (2) the Māra of the aggregates (*khandha,māra*), (3) the Māra of karma-formations (*abhisaṅkhāra,-māra*), (4) the deity Māra (*deva,putta Māra*), (5) Māra as Death (*maccu,māra*). (Vism 211; ThaA 2:16, 46; VAṬ:Se 1/481; DAaṬ:Be 1:22, 17:6)

satisfactory solution could be obtained within the limits of the instruments available to the contestants. (Bodhi 1978:8 f; emphases added)

In short, the Buddha has no quarrel with the world [1(7)].

THE PERFECT NET TODAY. The Brahma<sub>2</sub>jāla Sutta shows how we can become what we know, so that we create the world around us, but a very private and limited one. As **RH Robinson** notes:

The Brahmajāla account reveals why the Gotama is said to have disapproved of the points on which he refused to declare an answer. “The Tathāgata knows that these view-points (*diṭṭhi-~~thānā~~*)...will have such and such a result, such and such an effect on the future conditions of those who trust in them” [D:RD 1:40]. Thus the question is not whether these views are true or false, but whether they lead to good or evil rebirth, or to freedom from rebirth. The underlying principle, one often overlooked by modern investigators, is that you become what you know, that what happens in thought affects what happens in existence. (1972b:319)

With the passing of the Buddha and the early generations of his saints, surely after the emperor Asoka, when Buddhism grew into a world religion (and the first to do so, too) the Buddhists became empire-builders and Buddhism a tool of empire-builders. While the Buddha lives, the Wheel of Dharma (*dhamma, cakka*) clearly shines on its own quite separately from the Wheel of Power (*āṇā, cakka*), but as Buddhist history shows the wheels often merge, so that the perfect net begins to rent. All it needs is just a small hole for the fishes and water creatures to slip through. Buddhist modernism and materialism have effectively relegated what is left of the net to its attic, and woven its own net of worldliness with the sophisticated silken threads of greed, hate, and delusion.

Buddhism without the perfect net can only be a Buddhism of greed, a Buddhism of hate, a Buddhism of delusion.

Yet, if we do not lose ourselves in the sprawling estate of the great Buddhist mansion, amongst its relics, riches and royalty, but if we carefully and humbly seek in its attic or cellar, we may still find the ancient formula for weaving the perfect net. The formula’s wording may be somewhat faded and its meaning more elusive with time, but whatever the seeker can glean from it gives him a window with a view of true reality. If we look through the mansion’s maze and magic, we can still find the path leading to the ancient forest city of expert net-weavers. This perfect net can be rewoven, but only with the still point of inner silence and insight. There is still the chance for us not to be caught in the perfect net, but to freely swim in the stream towards the ocean of the deathless.

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