

## 8

## Cūḷa Māluṅkyaputta Sutta

The Shorter Discourse to Māluṅkyaputta | M 63

Theme: Preventing our mind from falling into a rut of views

Translated by Piya Tan ©2003

These people here, I thought  
Need to burn to death before they stop asking questions.  
Truly, friends | Unless a man feels the ground so hot underfoot that he'd | gladly  
Exchange it for any other, sooner than stay, to him | I have nothing to say.  
(Bertolt Brecht, "The Buddha's Parable of the Burning House," 1937, published 1949)<sup>1</sup>

## 1 The types and nature of questions

### 1.1 SPIRITUAL PRAGMATISM

Although Buddhist literature is vast and encompasses a wide range of human knowledge, the Buddha has only one clear and consistent message in his teachings or the Dharma: it is for the sake of awakening and liberation. **The Cūḷa Māluṅkyaputta Sutta** (M 63) is a clear statement on why the Buddha does not explain matters that are not connected with the spiritual path and the goal, namely, the ending of suffering, at least for ourselves. Like the parable of the raft,<sup>2</sup> the parable of the poisoned dart [§5.2] in **the Cūḷa Māluṅkyaputta Sutta** (M 63) shows the spiritual pragmatism of early Buddhism.<sup>3</sup>

### 1.2 WRONGLY PUT; HENCE, UNANSWERABLE

The Buddha does not answer Māluṅkyaputta's questions regarding the 10 "unexplained" or "undetermined" (*avyākata*) theses for **2 reasons**. Firstly, they are not connected with the spiritual path and goal. In fact, such speculations distract us from our spiritual development and liberation. Secondly, these theses are, by their very nature, unanswerable—they are *questions wrongly put*.<sup>4</sup> To answer either "yes" or "no" to any of such questions is to accept them as valid when they are really not.

This is like our answering "yes" or "no" to a question such as "Where does a fire go when it is extinguished?" as shown in **the Aggi Vaccha,gotta Sutta** (M 72). There, the Buddha reminds us that such a question does "not apply," it is "wrongly put" (*na upeti*).<sup>5</sup> **Rupert Gethin**, in *Foundations of Buddhism*, gives a modern example: If we answer "'yes' or 'no' to a question such as 'Are Martians green?'" we are "drawn into accepting the validity of the question" (1998:68).<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In Brecht's poem, *Gleichnis des Buddha vom brennenden Haus*, the Buddha's disciples question him regarding the nature of "nothingness" beyond nirvana. The Buddha remains silent. After a while, he explains that such questions are like those whose house is burning down, asking about what the weather outside is like and so on. Bertolt Brecht, *Kalendergeschichten*, Suhrkamp Berlin, 2013. *Bertolt Brecht; Poems 1913-1956*, ed J Willet & R Manheim (with Erich Fried), NY: Theatre Arts Books, Routledge, 1976, rev 1987.

<sup>2</sup> M 22,13/1:134 (SD 3.13).

<sup>3</sup> M 63,5.2/1:429 (SD 5.8). "Pragmatism" is used in a qualified manner: on the Dharma as truth and value, see **Notion of *ditṭhi***, SD 40a.1 (11.1). See Gethin 1998:66 f.

<sup>4</sup> Cf U 66. See **Silence and the Buddha**, SD 44.1. Readings: (1) Jayatilleke 1963:226-228, 242 ff, 334 f, 350-352, 473 ff; (2) Collins 1982:131-138 (§4.2); (3) Harvey 1995: 83-88 (*avyākatā* questions), 239-245 (on propositions 7-10 on the tathāgata); (4) Gethin 1998:66-68 (on **Cūḷa Māluṅkyaputta S**, M 63). See also: (1) Intro to **Mahāli S** (D 6) in D:RD 1:186-190; (2) Intro to **Abhaya Rāja,kumāra S** (M 58) tr in SD 7.12.

<sup>5</sup> M 72,19/1:487 (SD 6.15).

### 1.3 THE “TWIN-HORNED” QUESTION

A similar type of question is the “**twin-horned question**” or “**double-pointed question**” (*ubhato,koṭi-ka pañha*) or dilemma (where answering either way would bring an unwelcome conclusion), and as such does not have a definite or “one-sided” (*ekamśa*) answer, as recounted in **the Abhaya Rāja, kumāra Sutta** (M 58).<sup>7</sup> In **the (Asi,bandhaka,putta) Kulā Sutta** (S 42.9), however, the Buddha answers the two-horned question proposed by the Nigaṇṭhas, simply by declaring to them that it is a trick question!<sup>8</sup>

The best response to such questions is to reject them and leave them unanswered, or perhaps, to rephrase them, or even ask “Why are you asking such a question?” In this way, it is the right question that gives us a right answer, or we have some insight in what the questioner is really looking for or trying to do.

### 1.4 THE BUDDHA’S KNOWLEDGE

**1.4.1** The Buddha’s not answering these 10 questions does not mean that he lacks the knowledge of the answers (if they make sense). On the contrary, the Buddha’s knowledge is direct and vast: we might say that he fully understands what is going on after experiencing life hands-on, that is, he has both knowledge and vision (*ñāṇa, dassana*).

**1.4.2** In **the Sīmsapā Sutta** (S 56.31), the Buddha declares what he knows through self-knowledge is as vast as the leaves in the *sīmsapā* forest, but he has not taught these things “because they are not connected with the goal, have nothing to do with the fundamentals of the holy life, and do not lead to revulsion, to letting go, to cessation, to peace, to direct knowledge, to awakening, to nirvana.” What he has fully and clearly taught us, that is, the 4 noble truths, are sufficient for self-awakening.<sup>9</sup>

### 1.5 VYĀKAROTI, VYĀKATA

#### 1.5.1 Vyākaroti and avyākaroti

**1.5.1.1** There are 2 key words often used in **the Cūḷa Māluṅkya,putta Sutta** (M 63): *vyākaroti*, the opposite of *vyākaroti*, and *avyākata*, the opposite of *vyākata*. We will first discuss *avyākaroti* and *vyākaroti*; then, *vyākata* and *avyākata* [1.5.2]. All these 4 words are actually forms of the key verb *vyākaroti*, which we will examine first.

**1.5.1.2** The present tense, *vyākaroti*,<sup>10</sup> is formed from:

*vi* (prefix meaning two or divided)<sup>11</sup> + *ā* (a Class VI verb)<sup>12</sup> + √KR, to do + *ti* (denoting 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular), where *vi* + *ā* → *vyā*; and *kṛ* becomes *kar* + *o* + *ti* → *karoti* (a verb meaning “to do, act”)

<sup>6</sup> Another modern example is the Christian evangelist’s trick of drawing the unwary into a one-sided indoctrination by asking “What do you think of Christ?” (Matt 22:42). The Buddhist answer is the wise silence. Cf D 25,20/-3:53.

<sup>7</sup> M 58,6/1:393 f (SD 7.12).

<sup>8</sup> S 42.9/4:322-325 (SD 7.11). In **Milinda,pañha**, too, the twin-horned question is used skillfully by way of Buddhist apologetics. See also Jayatilleke 1963:226-228, 334 f, 350-352.

<sup>9</sup> S 56.31/5:437 f (SD 21.7).

<sup>10</sup> Also spelt as *byākaroti*, esp in Be.

<sup>11</sup> Li the Lat prefix *bi-* in bisect, bicycle. See PED 611: *vi*.

<sup>12</sup> See Perniola, *Pali Grammar*, 1997:79 f (§67).

**Vyākaroti** thus means “to explain, answer (in combination with *puṭṭha*, “asked”), declare, determine.”<sup>13</sup> Its future verb form is *vyākarissati*,<sup>14</sup> and also the related rare verb *vyakkhissati*.<sup>15</sup>

**1.5.1.3** The negative opposite of *vyākaroti* is **avyākaroti** = *na vyākaroti*, “(he) does not declare or determine.” The Pali verb is more polysemic and denotes at least the 2 key senses of taking a stand on any of the 10 theses and making a statement of such a stand [1.5.2.4]. The various usages of the verb *vyākaroti* are listed here:

<i>me ... na vyākaroti</i>	“(he) does not declared (them) to me”	§§2.2 2.3 3.2x2 3.3 3.4
<i>sace me ... vyākarissati</i> (fut)	“if (he) does declare to me”	§§2.4 3.3
<i>sace me ... na vyākarissati</i> (fut)	“if (he) does not declare to me”	§§2.5 3.4
<i>me ... vyākarotu</i>	“let (him) declare to me”	§§3.5x4 3.6x2 3.7x2 3.8x2
<i>ahaṃ te vyākarissāmi</i>	“I will declare to you”	§§4.1 4.3
<i>me vyākarissati</i>	“(he) will declare to me”	§§4.2 4.4
<i>me vyākaroti</i>	“(he) declares to me”	§§5.1 5.3

**1.5.1.4** Note that I have translated **vyākaroti** and its various verb forms as “declare,” etc. The verb “declare” has the sense of both “determine (an idea, etc)” and “declare, make known.” The participle **vyākata** and its various forms clearly refer to the 10 points and their nature. Hence, I have translated *vyākata*, etc, as “the undetermined.” [1.5.2]

A verb whose sense overlaps with *vyākaromi* as “(I) declare, let known” is **paññāpemi**, found in this Sutta in connection with suffering and its removal, mentioned 5 times in §6:

<i>diṭṭh’eva dhamme ... paññāpemi</i>	“here and now ... I declare”	§§6.1 6.2 6.3 6.4 6.5
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## 1.5.2 Vyākata

**1.5.2.1 Vyākata** is the past participle *vyākaroti* [1.5.1.2], meaning, “answered, explained, declared, determined, decided.”<sup>16</sup> Its negative opposite is *avyākata* [1.5.2.2].

<i>mayā vyākatam</i>	“have been determined by me”	§§9 10x2
<i>vyākatañ ca me vyākatato</i>	“determined by me as determined”	§11

**1.5.2.2** The negative word **avyākata** has 2 related senses:

- (1) (relating to the 10 theses) unexplained, undeclared, indeterminate;<sup>17</sup>
- (2) (broadly) undecided, left without a definite answer.<sup>18</sup>

The form *avyākata* with sense 1, and its plural form, are found in the following forms in the Sutta:

<i>taṃ mayā avyākatam</i>	“I have left them undetermined”	§§7.1 8x2
<i>avyākatañ ca me avyākatato</i>	“undetermined by me as undetermined”	§11
<b>avyākatāni</b>	“undeclared (theses)”	§§2.2, 3.2

<sup>13</sup> D 1:25, 58, 175, 200; Sn 510, 513 f, 1102, 1116; Miln 318 (*vyākareyya*); VvA 71.

<sup>14</sup> D 1:236; Sn 993; PvA 281.

<sup>15</sup> From *viyācchikati*, appearing only in **Vāseṭṭha S** (Sn 600a = M 98,8.1), SD 37.1.

<sup>16</sup> M 1:431; A 1:119; S 2:51, 223, 4:59, 194, 5:77; Sn 1023.

<sup>17</sup> D 1:187,22, 189,4, 3:135,27; M 1:426,11, 431,12; S 2:222,24, 4:395,15.

<sup>18</sup> V 2:91,1 f; Kvu 504,31; Vbh 3.41; Dhs 1,4

## 2 The 10 undetermined statements

**2.1** The Cūḷa Māluṅkya,putta Sutta is a discourse dealing with the well known 10 “**undetermined, unexplained, or undeclared**” (*avyākata*) theses or speculative views “set aside” (*ṭhapanīya*) by the Buddha due to their indeterminable nature and being questions wrongly put.

The 10 points are as follows:

### The world

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

### The self (or soul)

- |   |                                  |
|---|----------------------------------|
| (5) The self is the same as the body;   | <i>taṃ jīvaṃ taṃ sarīraṃ</i>     |
| (6) The self and the body are separate; | <i>aññaṃ jīvaṃ aññaṃ sarīraṃ</i> |

### The *tathāgata* [a being]<sup>19</sup>

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| (7) A <i>tathāgata</i> [a being] exists after death;               | <i>hoti tathāgato param, maraṇā</i>                               |
| (8) A <i>tathāgata</i> does not exist after death;                 | <i>na hoti tathāgato param, maraṇā</i>                            |
| (9) A <i>tathāgata</i> both exists and does not exist after death; | <i>hoti ca na ca hoti tathāgato param, maraṇā</i>                 |
| (10) A <i>tathāgata</i> neither exists nor not exist after death.  | <i>n’eva hoti na na hoti tathāgato param, maraṇā<sup>20</sup></i> |

**2.2** The Cūḷa Māluṅkya,putta Sutta is very similar to **the Aggi Vaccha,gotta Sutta**, except for the latter’s poisoned dart parable and conclusion (on the 4 noble truths). Apparently, there is only one group of suttas that shares a common topic in their origin stories (*nidāna*), that is, those concerning Vaccha,gotta.<sup>21</sup> The Chinese Āgamas place **the Aggi Vaccha,gotta Sutta** (M 72)<sup>22</sup> and **the Mahā Vaccha,gotta** (M 73)<sup>23</sup> in the Saṃyukta Āgama, together with the other Vatsa,gotra Sūtras, constituting the Vatsa,gotra cycle.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Comys generally def *tathāgata* as “being” (*satta*): in a speculative view, clearly, *tathāgata* more broadly refers to a “saint,” in a general sense of someone liberated, *not* necessarily only a buddha or an arhat. For a canonical def of *tathāgata*, see **Pāsādika S** (D 29,28 f/3:135 f); also Toshiichi ENDO 1997:195-206 (ch V). On the ineffability of the *tathāgata*, see Harvey 1995:235-245. See foll §3.

<sup>20</sup> This tetralemma is found in many places in the Canon. In **Param,marañā S** (S 16.12/2:222 f) the Buddha mentions it to Mahā Kassapa; in **Anurādha S** (S 22.86/3:116-119). The tetralemma is mentioned by lemma in 4 suttas in Saṃyutta (S 24.15-18/3:215 f). The **Avyākata Saṃyutta** contains some suttas dealing with it (S 44.2-8/4:381-397): see S:B 1080 n165. For a philosophical discussion, see K N Jayatilleke, *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*, 1963: 350 & Kügler 2003:100 f. See **The unanswered questions**, SD 40a.10.

<sup>21</sup> His Skt name is probably **Vatsa** or **Varṃśa**, rarely Vatsa,gotra (Mvst 3.364.16); Chin 婆蹉種.

<sup>22</sup> **Aggi Vaccha,gotta S** (M 72), SA 962 @ T 2.245, SA2 196 @ T2.444. See SD 6.15 (2-3).

<sup>23</sup> **Aggi Vaccha,gotta S** (M 73), SA 964 @ T 2.246, SA2 198 @ T2.446.

<sup>24</sup> This cycle is examined by Richard H Robinson, “Some methodological approaches to the unexplained points,” 1972:313-317.

2.3 The well known **10 points** are *discussed* in the following suttas:<sup>25</sup>

<b>Aggi Vaccha,gotta Sutta</b>	(M 72), SD 6.15,
<b>Cūḷa Māluṅkyaputta Sutta</b>	(M 63 <i>passim</i> /1:426-437), SD 5.8,
<b>Vaccha,gotta Sutta</b>	(M 72 <i>passim</i> /1:483-489), SD 6.15,
<b>Vacchagotta Saṃyutta</b>	(S 33/3:257-263),
<b>Abyākata Saṃyutta</b>	(S 10/4:374-403),
<b>Nānā Tittiya Sutta 1</b>	(U 6.4/66-69), SD 40a.14, and
<b>Nānā Tittiya Sutta 2</b>	(U 6.5/69 f), SD 97.2.

and also listed in a number of other places in the Pāli Canon, such as:

<b>Brahmajāla Sutta</b>	(D 1,1.29-31/1:12-39) [most detailed explanation of “the world”],
<b>Mahāli Sutta</b>	(D 6,16-19/157 f) [only on “the self” ( <i>jīva</i> )], <sup>26</sup>
<b>Poṭṭhapāda Sutta</b>	(D 9,25-30/1:187-190), SD 7.14, <sup>27</sup> and
<b>Pāsādikā Sutta</b>	(D 29,30-33/135-138) [only on the tathāgata’s state].

2.4 A different list of speculative views are given in **the Mahā Taṇhā,saṅkhaya Sutta** (M 38).<sup>28</sup> It is likely that these questions or statements formed a sort of questionnaire amongst the ancient Indian wanderers to determine a person’s position. The Buddha left these questions aside, declaring that they have nothing to do with spiritual development [§§25-26].

### 3 The meaning of *tathāgata*

#### 3.1 “BEING”

3.1.1 The Sutta’s commentary simply glosses ***tathāgata*** here as “a being” (*satta*) (MA 3:141). The Subcommentary explains that this refers to “a being” who *thus arises* here on account of karmic defilement, and then to one state after another.<sup>29</sup> The Udāna Commentary (PTS edition) gives the reading “self” (*atta*).<sup>30</sup> The Saṃyutta Subcommentary similarly defines it “here” as “self” (*attā*).<sup>31</sup> We can safely accept that here *tathāgata* has the sense of “a creature, a sentient being” (DP meaning 3), as this is well attested in the suttas and Commentaries.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>25</sup> On these 10 *avyākata*, see Ñāṇananda, *Concept and Reality*, 1971:95-99 & John Hick, *Disputed Questions*, 1993: 105-118 (ch 6).

<sup>26</sup> Where see T W Rhys Davids’ Intro to his tr (D:RD 1:186 -188).

<sup>27</sup> The *avyākata* theses in the context of **Poṭṭhapāda S** (D 9) are discussed by Ñāṇananda in his *Concept and Reality* (1971:95-99).

<sup>28</sup> M 38.23/1:264 f @ SD 7.10.

<sup>29</sup> *Yathā eko kamma,kilesa,vasena itthattam āgato, tathā aparopi aparopīti satto tathāgato vuccatīti āha “tathāgato’ti satto’ti* (MAṬ:Be 2:64).

<sup>30</sup> UA (Ce Ee) 340; but UA:Be *satto*; UA:Se *sattā*.

<sup>31</sup> *Idha tathāgato vuccamāno attā* (SAṬ:Be 2:390).

<sup>32</sup> On *tathāgata* as “a sentient being” (*satta*), see related comys: **Brahmajāla S** (D 1,2.27/1:27,24 f; DA 118.1) ≈ **Cūḷa Māluṅkyaputta S** (M 63,2/1:426,14; MA 3:141,23), **Aggi Vaccha,gotta S** (M 72.9-14/1:484-486; MA 3:199,2) ≈ **Khemā S** (S 44.1/4:376,26 f; SA 3:113,18); **Yamaka S** (S 22.85/3:111,14+112,6; SA 2:311,1), **Nānā Tittiya S 1** (U 6.4/67,14; UA 340,6 (Ce Ee) 340; UA:Be *satto*; UA:Se *sattā*) ≠ Nm 64,20 (NmA 1:193,24). Cf **Anurādha S** (S 22.86,4/-3:116), SD 21.13, where Comy explains *tathāgata* there as “your teacher” (ie the Buddha), but regarding him as a “being” (*taṃ tathāgato’ti tumhākaṃ satthā tathāgato taṃ sattaṃ tathāgataṃ* (SA 2:312). See also **Cūḷa Māluṅkyaputta S** (M 63) @ SD 5.8 (3) & **Aggi Vaccha,gotta S** (M 72), SD 6.15 (3.2).

**3.1.2** Buddhaghosa, in his commentary on **the Brahma,jāla Sutta** (D 1), for example, gives lengthy and fanciful etymologies and explanations of the word *tathāgata*.<sup>33</sup> However, it is interesting, notes Norman, that when the word *tathāgata* is used in a question directed to the Buddha, which he refuses to answer, the Commentaries still do not take the term *tathāgata* as referring to the Buddha, but explain it simply as *satta* ‘being’.” (1991a:6)

We are accustomed to take the word *tathāgata* as being synonymous with Buddha, but it is very unlikely that all those who were discussing these questions in the passages recorded in the Udāna<sup>34</sup> were actually discussing whether the Buddha lives or does not live after death. It is noteworthy that the commentarial tradition followed by Dhammapāla explains *tathāgata* as *attā*:<sup>35</sup> “Does the self exist after death?” Although the list of questions which we have is clearly a stereotyped one, we can assume that it was based upon questions which occupied the mind of the religious teachers who were contemporary with the Buddha. The four questions concerning the existence of a *tathāgata* after death are in fact included among those to which Sañjaya Belaṭṭhi-putta is reported by Ajātasattu to have given a prevaricating answer.<sup>36</sup>

(Norman 1991a:2)

### **3.1.3 Tathāgata as used in the Sutta**

In **the Cūḷa Māluṅkya,putta Sutta** (M 63), *tathāgata* has the sense of “a sentient being,” which is also attested in the following suttas:

**Brahma,jāla Sutta** (D 1,2.27/1:27,24 f; DA 118.1) ≈ **Cūḷa Māluṅkya,putta Sutta** (M 63,2/1:426,14; MA 3:141,23);

**Aggi Vaccha,gotta Sutta** (M 72,9-14/1:484-486; MA 3:199,2) ≈ **Khemā Sutta** (S 44.1/4:376,26 f; SA 3:113,-18); **Yamaka Sutta** (S 22.85/3:111,14+112,6; SA 2:311,1);

**Nānā Titthiyā Sutta 1** (U 6.4/67,14; UA 340,6 (Ce Ee) 340; UA:Be *satto*; UA:Se *sattā*) ≈ Nm 64,20 (NmA 1:193,24).

The Commentary on **the Anurādha Suttas** (S 22.86,4/3:116), SD 21.13, explains *tathāgata* there as “your teacher” (that is, the Buddha), but regarding him as a “being” (*taṃ tathāgato’ti tumhākaṃ satthā tathāgato taṃ sattam tathāgataṃ* (SA 2:312).<sup>37</sup>

## **3.2 THE BUDDHA AS TATHĀGATA**

**3.2.1** The word *tathāgata* literally means “one who has gone that way, or one who has gone to such a state” (Norman 1991a:6).<sup>38</sup> However, after the Buddha’s passing, the word *tathāgata*, like *sugata* (which

<sup>33</sup> DA 59-68. Elsewhere, he gives a shorter def: *tathāgato ti, atthahi kāraṇehi bhagavā tathāgato: tattha āgato’ti tathāgato; tathā gato ti tathāgato; tatha,lakkhaṇaṃ āgato’ti tath’āgato; tathā,dhamme yathāvato abhisambud-dho to tath’āgato, tatha,dassitāya tath’āgato; tathā,kāritāya tathāgato; abhibhavan-atthena tathāgato ti. tesam vitthāro Brahmajāla,vaṇṇanāyam pi. Mūla,pariyāya,vaṇṇanāyam pi vutto y’eva* (SA 2:287,25-32). An even shorter def: *tattha tathāgatassā ti tathā gato ti evam ādīhi kāraṇehi tathāgatassa* (SA 1:66,21-22). For a detailed discussion on *tathāgata*, see Toshiichi ENDO, *Buddha in Theravada Buddhism*, 1997:195-206 (ch 5), 305.

<sup>34</sup> **Nānā Titthiya S 1** (U 6.4/66-69), about monks embroiled in speculative arguments, and which has the famous parable of the blind men and the elephant.

<sup>35</sup> *Tathāgato param maraṇā ti ettha tathāgato ti attā. taṃ hi diṭṭhi,gatiko kāraka,vedak’ādi,saṅkhātam nicca,-dhuvaḍi,saṅkhātam vā tathāgata,bhāvaṃ gato ti, tathāgato ti vohāراتي* (UA 340,5-8 ad U 67,14).

<sup>36</sup> D 1:58,36-59,8.

<sup>37</sup> See SD 6.15 (3.2).

originally must have simply meant “one who has fared well”),<sup>39</sup> is also used specifically of the Buddha.<sup>40</sup> In some contexts, they clearly refer to the Buddha;<sup>41</sup> in others, the Buddha would use *tathāgata* reflexively, that is, when referring to himself<sup>42</sup> or generically (the buddhas).<sup>43</sup> Often enough, too, he is recorded as using the first person pronoun, *aham*.<sup>44</sup>

**3.2.2** There is a simple rule behind the Buddha’s manner of addressing himself, and this has to do with **the 2 levels of language**: the worldly (*lokiya*) and the supramundane (*lok’uttara*), or the conventional (*sammuti*) and the ultimate (*param’attha*). When the Buddha is addressing worldly situations or matters, he uses *aham* and its related forms, but when he is speaking on a supramundane level, he uses *tathāgata*. This passage from **the Mahā,parinibbāna Sutta** shows a good variety of such usages:

2.25.1 “Ānanda, what does the Order of monks expect of me? I have taught the Dharma, Ānanda, making no distinction between inner and outer: the Tathāgata has no ‘guru’s fist’ in respect of teachings.

If there is anyone who thinks: ‘I (*aham*) shall take charge of the order,’<sup>45</sup> or ‘The order should refer to me (*mam*),’<sup>46</sup> then let him make some statement about the order. But, Ānanda, it does not occur to the Tathāgata, to think, ‘I (*aham*) shall take charge of the order,’ or ‘The order should refer to me (*mam*).’ So why should the Tathāgata make a statement about the order?

2.25.2 Ānanda, I (*aham*) am now old, worn out, burdened with years, my journey done, I have reached the sum of my days, I am turning eighty. Ānanda, just as an old cart is kept going by being held together with straps, even so the Tathāgata’s body is kept going by being strapped up.

Ānanda, it is only when the Tathāgata pays no attention to all the signs and by the ending of certain feelings, enters and dwells in the signless concentration of mind, that the Tathāgata’s body knows comfort.”  
(D 16,2.25/2:99)<sup>47</sup>

<sup>38</sup> See also I B Horner’s n on *tathāgata* and *aham* at M:H 2:xxviii f.

<sup>39</sup> SED sv sugata; qu by Norman 1991a:6.

<sup>40</sup> As in **Āyācana S** (S 6.1), where Brahmā Sahampati laments: *Nassati vata bho loko vinassati vata bho loko. Yathā hi nāma tathāgatassa arahato sammā,sambuddhassa appossukatāya cittaṃ namati no dhamma,desanāyā ti* S 6.1/1:137); in **Sūkara,khatā S** (S 48.58): *Kin nu kho Sāriputta atthavasam sampassamāno khīṇāsavo bhikkhu tathāgate vā tathāgata,sāsane vā paramani,paccākāram pavattamāno pavatteti* (S 48.58/5:233-235; for the last three words of the phrase, cf **Dhamma,ceṭiya S**, M 89/2:120; **Māna-t,thaddha S**, S 7.15/1:178).

<sup>41</sup> Eg, *tathāgato vā tathāgata,sāvako vā* (**Cha-b,bisodhana S**, M 112.12/3:33), **Thera,vagga** of the Dasaka Nipāta (A 5:156-160 x15); *tathāgatassa vā tathāgata,sāvakassa vā* (**Kasi,bhāradvāja S**, Sn 1.4/p75), where *aham* is also used by the Buddha; *tathāgatassa sāvako* (**Mahā Parinibbāna S**, D 16/1:142 f).

<sup>42</sup> Eg *Idha Vāseṭṭha tathāgato loke uppajjati* (D 13,40/1:249).

<sup>43</sup> Eg *uppādā vatathāgatānam anuppādā vā tathāgatānaṃ ṭhiṭā va sā dhātu* (“whether tathagatas arise or not, this element stands,” S 12.10/2:25).

<sup>44</sup> See §4 in sutta here; and also **Vinaya: āham ... jeṭṭho seṭṭho lokassa** (“I am the eldest, supreme in the world,” V 3:4); **Dhamma,cakka Pavattana S**: *n’eva tāvāham ... anuttaram sammā,sambodhiṃ abhisambuddho ti paccañ-ñāsiriṃ* (“So long ... I did not claim to have awakened to the incomparable full awakening,” S 56.11,13/5:422).

<sup>45</sup> *Aham bhikkhu,saṅgham pariharissāmi ti*.

<sup>46</sup> *Mam’uddesiko bhikkhu,saṅgho ti*.

<sup>47</sup> See further **Aggi Vaccha,gotta S** (M 72) @ SD 6.15 (3.2): The Tathagata and tathagata.

## 4 Brahma,jāla Sutta on the 10 points

**4.1 THE BRAHMA,JĀLA SUTTA** (D 1)<sup>48</sup> gives the fullest explanation of the undetermined points 1-4 (the world)<sup>49</sup> and 5-6 (the self)<sup>50</sup> in its discussion on the 62 wrong views.<sup>51</sup> The undetermined points 1-2 are elaborated in “the eternalist view” (1-4) and “the partial-eternalist view” (5-8) of the Brahma,jāla Sutta.

### 4.2 THE ETERNALIST VIEW

The first set of wrong views (1-4) listed in the Brahmajāla Sutta are of those speculating about the past (*pubb’anta,kappa*) by way of “**the eternalist view**” (*sassata,vāda*). This wrong view regards “the self and the world are eternal,” that is, holding the view that

the self and the world are eternal, barren, steadfast as a mountain peak, as a pillar firmly fixed, and though these beings roam and wander in samsara, pass away and re-arise, yet they (the self and the world) exist just like eternity itself. (D 1,1.32/1:14), SD 25<sup>52</sup>

Such a wrong view, says the Brahma,jāla Sutta, may arise through anamnesis or recollection of past lives in any of the 4 following ways:

- (1) based on one’s recollecting of up to 100,000 past lives;
- (2) based on one’s recollecting of up to 10 aeons (*kappa*) or world cycles (“contraction and expansion”);
- (3) based on one’s recollecting of up to 40 aeons or world cycles;
- (4) based on reasoning (*takka*).

### 4.3 THE PARTIAL-ETERNALIST VIEW

The second set of wrong views (5-8) listed in the Brahma,jāla Sutta are those speculating about the past by way of “**the partial-eternalist view**” (*ekacca,sassata,vāda*). This wrong view regards “the self and the world are both eternal and not eternal,” based on the speculation that some beings (like Brahmā or Creator) are eternal and some (like the speculator himself) are not (D 1,2.1-15/1:17-22), or, if he is a logician (*takkī*) or one who relies on reasoning alone (that is, who think along a rationalist dualism), he may think thus (wrong view 8):<sup>53</sup>

That which is called “eye,” or “ear,” or “nose,” or “tongue,” or “body”—that self is impermanent, unstable, not eternal, subject to change. But that which is called “mind,” or “mentality,” or “consciousness”—that self is permanent, stable, eternal, not subject to change, and it will remain the same just like eternity itself. (D 1,2.13/1:21)<sup>54</sup>

<sup>48</sup> SD 25.

<sup>49</sup> That is, the 4 extensionist views (*antānanta,vāda*) [9-12] (D 1,2.16-21/1:22-24).

<sup>50</sup> That is, the first 4 eternalist views (*sassata,vāda*) [1-4] (D 1,1.30-35/1:12-17) and other speculations about the past [5-18] (D 1,2.1-15/1:17-22): see also the 39 views [19-57] regarding the self (speculations about the future) (D 1,3.38-41/1:40 f).

<sup>51</sup> See R H Robinson’s “Some methodological approaches to the unexplained points,” 1972:318 f.

<sup>52</sup> *Sassato attā ca loko ca vañjho kūṭa’ṭṭho esika-ṭ,ṭhāyi-ṭ,ṭhito, te ca sattā sandhāvanti saṃsaranti cavanti upapajjanti, atthi tv-eva sassata,samaṃ.*

<sup>53</sup> Wrong views 5-7 due to partial-eternalism are respectively as follows: (5) theism; (6) the polytheism of beings who were gods corrupted by play; (7) polytheism of beings who were gods corrupted by mind.

<sup>54</sup> *Yaṃ kho idaṃ vuccati cakkhun ti pi sotān ti pi ghānaṃ ti pi jivhā ti pi kāyo ti pi ayaṃ attā anicco addhuvo asassato vipariṇāma,dhammo. Yaṃ ca kho idaṃ vuccati cittaṃ ti vā mano ti vā viññāṇaṃ ti vā ayaṃ attā nicco dhuvo sassato avipariṇāma,dhammo sassata,samaṃ tath’eva ṭhassatī ti.*

#### .4 THE EXTENSION VIEW

**4.4.1** The undetermined points 3-4 are elaborated in “**the extension views**”<sup>55</sup> (*antānanta, vāda*) (9-12) of the **Brahmajāla Sutta**, that is,

- (1) this view that the world is finite;
- (2) this view that the world is infinite;
- (3) this view that the world is finite in a *vertical* direction but infinite *across*;
- (4) this view that the world is neither finite nor infinite. (D 1,2.16-21/1:22-24) [4.6.1]

**4.4.2** The 1<sup>st</sup> three wrong views here are those of **meditators** who have reached a certain level of mental concentration, but not beyond, perceiving only up to that level, thus holding the above respective views.

In the case of (1), one speculator thinks, “This world is finite and bounded (by a circle)” (*antavā ayaṃ loko parivaṭṭamo*), basing his wrong view on his limited meditation concentration. The 2<sup>nd</sup> speculator similarly thinks, “This world is infinite and unbounded” (*anantavā ayaṃ loko aparivāṇṇo*). The 3<sup>rd</sup> thinks, “This world is finite and infinite” (*antavā ca ayaṃ loko ananto ca*), that is, finite upward and downward, but infinite across (horizontally).

**4.4.3** The 4<sup>th</sup> wrong view is based on reasoning:

Here, bhikkhus, some recluse or brahmin is a **rationalist** [logician, *takkī*], an investigator (*vīmaṃsī*). He declares his view, shaped by reason, deduced from his investigations, following his own mental genius, thus: “The world is neither finite nor infinite. Those recluses and brahmins who declare it to be infinite and bounded speak falsely. Those who declare it to be infinite and boundless speak falsely. Those who declare it to be both finite and infinite speak falsely. The world is neither finite nor infinite.” (D 1,2.20/1:23 f)<sup>56</sup>

#### 4.5 THE EEL-WRIGGLER

**4.5.1** The 4<sup>th</sup> view here—that of the rationalist or investigator—appears simply to be the denial of the preceding 3 propositions based on speculator’s reasoning and argumentation. As Robinson, points out (1972), this last view’s “formal structure is the same as that of the eel-wriggler’s case” (wrong views 13-16) (1972:318 f). Of the first type of **eel-wriggling** (*amarā, vikkhepa*), the Buddha declares,

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

<sup>55</sup> The term “extensionists” was first used by T W Rhys Davids, D:RD 1:35 ff. The Pāli *antānanta* = *anta* (finite) + *ananta* (infinite); *antānanta, vādī* = “those who hold that the world is finite and those who hold that the world is infinite,” a dvandva.

<sup>56</sup> *Idha bhikkhave ekacco samaṇo vā brāhmaṇo vā takkī hoti vīmaṃsī. So takka, pariyāhataṃ vīmaṃsā’ nucaritaṃ sayamaṃ, paṭibhānaṃ evam āha: n’ evāyaṃ loko antavā na panānanto. Ye te samaṇa, brāhmaṇā evam āhaṃsu: antavā na panānanto. Ye te samaṇa, brāhmaṇā evam āhaṃsu: antavā ayaṃ loko parivaṭṭamo ti tesam pi musā. Ye pi te samaṇa, brāhmaṇā evam āhaṃsu: ananto ayaṃ loko aparivāṇṇo to tesam pi musā. Ye pi te samaṇa, brāhmaṇā evam āhaṃsu: antavā ca ayaṃ loko ananto cāti tesam pi musā. N’ evāyaṃ loko antavā na panānanto ti.*

And when questioned about this or that point, he resorts to evasive statements and to endless equivocation, “I do not take it thus, nor do I take it in that way, nor do I take it in some other way. I do not say that it is not, nor do I say that it is neither this nor that.”

(D 1,2.23/1:25-27)

**4.5.2** While this **1<sup>st</sup> eel-wiggler** fears being troubled by failure (D 1,2.24), **the 2<sup>nd</sup>** fears that “desire, lust, hate or ill-will” (*tattha me assa chando vā rāgo vā doso vā paṭigho vā*) might arise in him (D 1,2.25). **The 3<sup>rd</sup>** fears that he would be outwitted or left dumbfounded by clever debaters and hair-splitters (D 1,2.-26). And **the 4<sup>th</sup>** is simply dull and stupid (*mando hoti momūho*) (D 1,2.27). In every case, they resort to equivocation. In the light of this discussion, Robinson concludes:

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

(1972:318 f)

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

This [each of the 62 wrong views], the tathāgata understands. And he understands, “These standpoints, thus grasped and thus misapprehended, will lead to such a future destination, to such a state in the world beyond. And the tathāgata understands what transcends them, yet even that understanding he does not misapprehend. And because he is free from misapprehension, he has known for himself [within himself, *paccattam*] the cool [happy] state. Having understood as they really are the arising and passing away of feelings, their satisfaction, their dangers, and the escape from them, the tathāgata, bhikshus, is freed through non-clinging.

These, bhikshus, are those truths that are deep, difficult to see, difficult to understand, peaceful, sublime, beyond the ken of reasoning, subtle, to be understood by the wise, which the tathāgata, having realized for himself through direct knowledge, expounds to others; and it is concerning these that those who rightly praise the tathāgata in accordance with reality would speak.

(D 1,1.36/1:16 f, *passim*)

## 4.6 THE SPATIAL VIEW

**4.6.1** The last 4 speculative questions concern **the state of a tathāgata**, here referring to a sentient being [1.2], that is, which of these 4 statements is true: [4.4.1]

- (7) A tathāgata [one thus gone or the self]<sup>57</sup> exists after death;
- (8) A tathāgata does not exist after death;
- (9) A tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death;
- (10) A tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death.

**4.6.2** These speculative questions belong to the same category as the question asked by a “certain monk” in **the Kevaḍḍha Sutta**,<sup>58</sup> as regards to “Where do these 4 primary elements—earth, water, fire, air—

<sup>57</sup> On the tr, see above (3).

<sup>58</sup> D 11,67.2-85/1:215-223.

cease without remainder?” The *where* of this question should be well noted. While the ancient Indian sages and seekers generally discuss existence in outer *spatial* terms,<sup>59</sup> the Buddha speaks in terms of inner space, of the 6 senses.<sup>60</sup> This *spatial* notion is clearly evident in the certain monk’s question.

Similarly, we have to understand the underlying notion (the unspoken assumptions) behind the 4 speculative questions, that is, “Does the deceased tathāgata have a spatial location, and is he *perceptible* to the senses?”

Early Upaniṣadic asseverations place the realm of the immortal, the liberated, variously in the *brahmaloka*, *svargaloka*, or the trans-solar region. It is quite literally and spatially the highest cosmic plane.  
(R H Robinson 1972:321)

**4.6.3** Obviously, the answer has to lie outside of such a universe, as something non-temporal and non-spatial, or what is sometimes called “the realm of cessation” (*nirodha, dhātu*),<sup>61</sup> that is, a non-spatial (*apatiṭṭhita*) realm.<sup>62</sup>

This problem posed by these 4 speculative questions is also answered in **the Kaccāyana, gotta Sutta** (S 12.15), which opens with the Buddha declaring:

“This world, Kaccāna, mostly<sup>63</sup> depends upon a duality: upon [the notion of] existence and [the notion of] non-existence.<sup>64</sup>

But for one who sees **the arising of the world**<sup>65</sup> as it really is with right wisdom, there is [no notion of] non-existence regarding the world.

<sup>59</sup> See eg S Schayer, “Das mahāyānistische Absolutum nach der Lehre der Mādhyamikas,” *Orientalische Literaturzeitung*, 1935:401-415; and R H Robinson, “Some methodological approaches to the unexplained points,” 1972:321 f.

<sup>60</sup> See eg E J Thomas, *The History of Buddhist Thought*, London: Routledge & KeganPaul, 1933:128.

<sup>61</sup> D 33,1.10(14)/3:215.

<sup>62</sup> See R H Robinson 1972:322 f. On the connection of this discussion to the state of the tathāgata after death, see **Cūḷa Māluṅkyaputta S** (M 63), SD 5.8 (3.6).

<sup>63</sup> “Mostly,” *yebhuyyena*, here refers to ordinary beings (ie, excluding noble saints) who hold on to the extreme notions that either something exists (*atthitā*) (eternalism, *sassata*) or that it not exist (*n’atthitā*) (annihilationism, *uccheda*) (SA 2:32). See foll n.

<sup>64</sup> Bodhi: “In view of these explanations [see prec n] it would be misleading to translate these two terms, *atthitā* and *natthitā*, simply as ‘existence’ and ‘non-existence’ and then to maintain (as is sometimes done) that the Buddha rejects all ontological notions as inherently invalid. The Buddha’s utterances at **22:94 [Puppha S]**, see Intro above], for example, show that he did not hesitate to make pronouncements with a clear ontological import when they were called for. In the present passage *atthitā* and *natthitā* are abstract nouns formed from the verbs *atthi* and *natthi*. It is thus the metaphysical assumptions implicit in such abstractions that are at fault, not the ascriptions of existence and nonexistence themselves.” (S:B 734 n29). Here I have followed Bodhi in rendering *atthitā* as “the notion of existence” and *n’atthitā* as “the notion of non-existence.”

<sup>65</sup> The terms *samudaya* and *nirodha* are commonly tr respectively as “origin” and “cessation.” However, from the teachings of this Sutta, which underlies the Buddha’s Teaching as a whole, they are better rendered as “arising” and “non-arising.” Payutto: “Generally speaking, the word ‘cease’ [or ‘end’] means to do away with something which has already arisen, or the stopping of something which has already begun. However, **nirodha** in the teaching of Dependent Origination (as also in *dukkhanirodha*, the third of the Noble Truths) means non-arising, or non-existence, of something because the cause of its arising is done away with. For example, the phrase ‘when *avijjā* is *nirodha*, *saṅkhārā* are also *nirodha*,’ which is usually taken to mean, “with the cessation of ignorance, volitional impulse ceases,” in fact means that ‘when there is no ignorance, or no arising of ignorance, or when there is no longer any problem with ignorance, there is no volitional impulses, volitional impulses do not arise, or there is no longer any problem from volitional impulses.’ It does not mean that ignorance already arisen must be done away with before the volitional impulses which have already arisen will also be done away. Where *nirodha*

And for one who sees **the ending of the world** as it really is with right wisdom, there is no notion of existence regarding the world.<sup>66</sup> (S 12.15,4-5/2:17)

**4.6.4** If it is impossible to speak of the state of a “sentient being” (*tathāgata*), especially a true saint—that is, such as the Buddha or an arhat—even while he is living. In that case, after death, it is even more so true of an awakened saint. Since the state of a saint in nirvana is beyond words, it cannot be described in terms of any of speculative statements of epistemology, nor in terms of the being and non-being of ontology, nor in terms of any other philosophical category.

## 5 Māluṅkya,putta

**5.1** The unawakened monk **Māluṅkya,putta** (Māluṅkyā,putta)<sup>67</sup> represents the modern intellectual who is more interested in speculative notions and philosophical arguments than in personal development and people-helping. The Buddha, through his wisdom, realizes the true purpose of the spiritual life, and what the real and immediate questions of life are. Māluṅkya,putta appears again in the following **Mahā Māluṅkya,putta Sutta** (M 64), where he is the occasion for the Buddha’s teaching on the 5 lower fetters<sup>68</sup> and on the latent tendency (*anusaya*) of wrong views (M 64).<sup>69</sup>

**5.2** Although this sutta does not mention Māluṅkya,putta’s fate, **the (Arahatta) Māluṅkya,putta Sutta** (S 35.95) records how Māluṅkya,putta, in his old age, approaches the Buddha for a “teaching in brief” to go for a solitary retreat. The Buddha light-heartedly reproaches him for doing it so late, yet praises him as an example to other monks.<sup>70</sup>

**5.3** The Saṃyutta Commentary says that in his youth, Māluṅkya,putta has been negligent and wallowed in sensual pleasures (SA 2:382). Now in his old age, he decides to dwell in the forest and meditate. After receiving a brief discourse on the 6 sense-bases from the Buddha, Māluṅkya,putta goes into solitary retreat and attains arhathood. His verses are found in **the Thera, gāthā** (Tha 399-404, 794-817). A shorter version of this story is found in **the (Taṇhā) Maluṅkyā,putta Sutta** (A 4.254) without the verses.<sup>71</sup>

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should be rendered as cessation is when it is used in reference to the natural way of things, or the nature of compounded things ... There is no need [here] to try to stop them, they cease of themselves.” (Payutto 1994:106 f)

<sup>66</sup> The 2 sentences of this verse are the 2 extremes rejected by the Buddha in **Lokāyatika S** (S 12.48/2:77), including 2 more: that all is unity and that all is plurality. Comy: In terms of dependent arising, “the origin of the world” is the direct conditionality (*anuloma paccayākāra*), “the ending of the world” is the reverse conditionality” (*paṭiloma paccayākāra*). Here the world refers to formations (*saṅkhāra*). In reflecting on the direct-order dependent arising, (seeing the rise of phenomena) one does not fall into the notion of annihilationism; reflecting on the reverse dependent origination, (seeing the ending of phenomena) one does not fall into the notion of eternalism. (SA 2:33). The Buddha’s teaching on the origin and ending of the world (in terms of the five aggregates) is found in **Loka S** (S 12.44/2:73 f).

<sup>67</sup> The name means “son of Māluṅkyā,” who is his mother, a matronym. In a sandhi, the final long vowel (fem) can be shortened. On Māluṅkya,putta’s personal details, see SD 5.9 (1).

<sup>68</sup> There are **the 10 fetters** (*saṃyojanā*), namely: Self-identity view (*sakkāya,diṭṭhi*), spiritual doubt (*vicikicchā*), attachment to rules and rites (*sīla-b,bata,parāmāsa*), sensual lust (*kāma,rāga*), repulsion (*paṭigha*), greed for form existence (*rūpa,rāga*), greed for formless existence (*arūpa,rāga*), conceit (*māna*), restlessness (*uddhacca*), ignorance (*avijjā*) (S 5:61, A 5:13, Vbh 377). In some places, no 5 (*kāma,rāga*) is replaced by ill will (*vyāpāda*). The first 5 are the lower fetters (*oram,bhāgiya*), and the rest, the higher fetters (*uddham,bhāgiya*). The lower fetters are so called because they lead to birth in the sense-spheres.

<sup>69</sup> M 64/1:432-437 (SD 21.10).

<sup>70</sup> S 35.95/4:72-76 (SD 5.9).

<sup>71</sup> A 4.254/2:248 f (SD 84.10).

## 6 The parable of the physician

**6.1 The parable of the physician** not only illustrates the pragmatism of early Buddhism, that is, reminding us not to be caught up with speculative thoughts and neglect the real issues of our lives [2]. There is another, equally important, meaning of the parable. And this concerns the nature of the Buddha as our teacher. If the Buddha is our doctor, then the Dharma is our medicine and healing plan, and the sangha are our healthy nurses.

**6.2** Even when such a **physician** passes away, he has passed on to us sufficient healing knowledge, tools and skills, which we must apply to ourselves. It is unhelpful, even unhealthy, to go on mourning his loss, or replace him with some fabulous doctors from some far away place, and to worship such doctors.

The point is that no amount of worshipping of doctors or mentioning their names would help or heal us. We need to take the medicine and live spiritually healthy lives. And, in due course, we may learn and excel as qualified and skilled doctors, or at least as nurses ourselves. Or, at least, we should keep to the rules of personal and mental hygiene.

**6.3** The same **parable of the doctor** and **the wounded man** recurs in **the Sunakkhatta Sutta** (M 105). While the physician parable of the Cūḷa Māluṅkyā,putta Sutta warns us against having useless speculative thoughts, the same parable in the Sunakkhatta Sutta exhorts us to understand the true nature of our body, mind and existence, so that we know how to identify our suffering and end it, or begin to do so, *right away*—as if we are pierced by a poisoned dart, which we should remove immediately.<sup>72</sup>

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# Cūḷa Māluṅkyaputta Sutta

## The Shorter Discourse to Māluṅkyaputta

M 63

1 Thus have I heard.

At one time the Blessed One was staying in Anātha,piṇḍika's Park in Prince Jeta's grove near Sāvathī.

### The 10 undeclared theses

2 Now, while the venerable **Māluṅkyaputta** was alone in meditation, this thought<sup>73</sup> arose in his mind:

2.2 "These **speculative views**<sup>74</sup> have been left undetermined [unexplained] by the Blessed One, set aside<sup>75</sup> and rejected by him, namely:

<sup>72</sup> **Sunakkhatta S** (M 105,24-28), SD 94.3. See also **Mahā'padāna S** (D 14) @ SD 49.8 (12.4.2.5).

<sup>73</sup> *Parivattakka*.

<sup>74</sup> *Diṭṭhi,gatāni*. These 10 theses are better known as *avyākata*, "the unexplained" or questions "set aside" (*tha-panīya*) by the Buddha. They are listed in a number of suttas: **Poṭṭha,pāda S** (D 9), SD 7.14, **Pāsādikā S** (D 29), Cūḷa Māluṅkyaputta S (M 63), **Aggi Vaccha,gotta S** (M 72), SD 6.15, **Vaccha,gotta Saṃyutta** (S 3:257 ff); **Abyākata Saṃyutta** (S 4:374-403); etc; for philosophical discussions, see Jayatilleke 1963:242-276, 473-476. See U 66. In

## HE WORLD

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

## THE SELF (OR SOUL)

- |   |                                  |
|---|----------------------------------|
| (5) The self is the same as the body;   | <i>taṃ jīvaṃ taṃ sarīraṃ</i>     |
| (6) The self and the body are separate; | <i>aññaṃ jīvaṃ aññaṃ sarīraṃ</i> |

A TATHĀGATA<sup>76</sup>

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| (7) A tathāgata [“thus come”] <sup>77</sup> exists after death; | <i>hoti tathāgato param, maraṇā</i>                  |
| (8) A tathāgata does not exist after death;                     | <i>na hoti tathāgato param, maraṇā</i>               |
| (9) A tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death;     | <i>hoti ca na ca hoti tathāgato param, maraṇā</i>    |
| (10) A tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death. | <i>n’eva hoti na na hoti tathāgato param, maraṇā</i> |

The Blessed One does not declare them to me.

2.3 I’m not pleased that *the Blessed One does not declare them to me*; I’m dissatisfied with that.<sup>78</sup>  
So, I shall go to the Blessed One and ask him the meaning of this matter.<sup>79</sup>

2.4 If the Blessed One declares to me, thus:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <i>The world is eternal, or</i>                          | <i>the world is not eternal;</i>                         |
| <i>the world is finite, or</i>                           | <i>the world is infinite;</i>                            |
| <i>the self is the same as the body, or</i>              | <i>the self and the body are separate;</i>               |
| <i>a tathāgata exists after death, or</i>                | <i>he does not exist after death;</i>                    |
| <i>he both exists and does not exist after death; or</i> | <i>he neither exists nor does not exist after death—</i> |

then, I will live the holy life under the Blessed One.

2.5 If the Blessed One does not declare to me, thus:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <i>The world is eternal, or</i>                                   | <i>the world is not eternal;</i>                                  |
| <i>the world is finite, or</i>                                    | <i>the world is infinite;</i>                                     |
| <i>the self is the same as the body, or</i>                       | <i>the self and the body are separate;</i>                        |
| <i>a tathāgata exists after death, or</i>                         | <i>a tathāgata does not exist after death;</i>                    |
| <i>a tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death; or</i> | <i>a tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death—</i> |

then, I will give up the training and return to the lay life!<sup>80</sup> [427]

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**Milinda, pañha**, the twin-horned question is used skillfully by way of Buddhist apologetics: see Jayatilleke 1963: 226-228, 334 f, 350-352. See also **Abhaya Rāja, kumāra S**, SD 7.12 Intro. See above (2).

<sup>75</sup> *Thapitāni* can also be “proved or demonstrated,” ie, “by other schools” (see Jayatilleke 1963:242).

<sup>76</sup> This tetralemma is found in many places in the Canon: see Intro (2) n.

<sup>77</sup> See (3.1.3)

<sup>78</sup> *Yāni me bhagavā na vyākaroti tam me na ruccati, tam ne na khamati.*

<sup>79</sup> *So’haṃ bhagavantaṃ upasaṅkamtivā etam atthaṃ pucchissāmi.*

<sup>80</sup> *Hīnāy’āvattissāmi*, lit “return to what is low.”

## Māluṅkyaputta meets the Buddha

3 Then, when it was evening, the venerable Māluṅkyaputta rose from meditation and approached the Blessed One. Having approached, he saluted him, and sat down at one side.

Seated at one side, the venerable Māluṅkyaputta said this to the Blessed One:

3.2 “Here, bhante, while I was alone in solitary retreat, the following thought arose in my mind.<sup>81</sup>

‘These speculative views have been left undetermined by the Blessed One, set aside and rejected by him, namely, [*the 10 theses*:]

<i>The world is eternal, or</i>	<i>the world is not eternal;</i>
<i>the world is finite, or</i>	<i>the world is infinite;</i>
<i>the self is the same as the body, or</i>	<i>the self and the body are separate;</i>
<i>a tathāgata exists after death, or</i>	<i>he does not exist after death;</i>
<i>he both exists and does not exist after death; or</i>	<i>he neither exists nor does not exist after death—</i>

The Blessed One does not declare them to me.

I’m not pleased that *the Blessed One does not declare them to me*; I’m dissatisfied.

*So, I shall go to the Blessed One and ask him the meaning of this matter.* [§2.3]

3.3 *If the Blessed One declares me, thus:*

<i>The world is eternal, or</i>	<i>the world is not eternal;</i>
<i>the world is finite, or</i>	<i>the world is infinite;</i>
<i>the self is the same as the body, or</i>	<i>the self and the body are separate;</i>
<i>a tathāgata exists after death, or</i>	<i>he does not exist after death;</i>
<i>he both exists and does not exist after death; or</i>	<i>he neither exists nor does not exist after death—</i>

*then I will live the holy life under the Blessed One.*

3.4 *If the Blessed One does not declare to me, thus:*

<i>The world is eternal, or</i>	<i>the world is not eternal;</i>
<i>the world is finite, or</i>	<i>the world is infinite;</i>
<i>the self is the same as the body, or</i>	<i>the self and the body are separate;</i>
<i>a tathāgata exists after death, or</i>	<i>he does not exist after death;</i>
<i>he both exists and does not exist after death; or</i>	<i>he neither exists nor does not exist after death—</i>

*then, I will give up the training and return to the lay life!*

<sup>81</sup> *Idha mayham, bhante, raho, gatassa paṭisallīnassa evaṃ cetaso parivitakko udapādi.* This is stock. Those who speak to the Buddha after such a reflection incl: Māluṅkyaputta in **Cūḷa Māluṅkyaputta S** (M 63,3/1:427); Udāyī in **Laṭṭhikōpama S** (M 66,6/1:448); Pasenadi Kosala in **(Pasenadi) Piya S** (S 3.4/1:71, qu in Nett 174), in **Atta Rakkhita S** (S 3.5/1:72), in **Appaka S** (S 3.6/1:73), & in **(Kalyāṇa.mitta) Appamāda S** (S 3.18/1:87); a certain monk in **Raho, gata S** (S 36.11/4:216); the monk Uttiya in **Uttiya S** (S 45.30/5:22); **Sāriputta** in **Sakkacca S** (A 7.66,2/4:121), in **Pār 1** (V 3:7,21); Vaṅgīsa in **Nigrodha, kappa S** (Sn 2.12/60,2); Dabba Malla,putta in **Culla, vagga** (V 2:74,30) & **Saṅgh 8** 3:158,7), Seniya Bimbisāra in **Mahā, vagga** (V 1:101,8). Those who report to someone other than the Buddha incl: the layman Soṇa Kuṭṭhaka to Mahā Kaccāna in **Soṇa S** (U 57,7, 58,8, 58,17); the monk Soṇa to Mahā Kaccāna in **Vinaya** (V 1:195,9).

3.5 (1) If the Blessed One **knows**: *'The world is eternal,'*  
 then, let the Blessed One declare to me: *'The world is eternal.'*  
 (2) If the Blessed One **knows**: *'The world is not eternal,'*  
 then, let the Blessed One declare to me: *'The world is not eternal.'*  
 (3) If the Blessed One **knows**: *'The world is finite,'*  
 then, let the Blessed One declare to me: *'The world is finite.'*  
 (4) If the Blessed One **knows**: *'The world is infinite,'*  
 then, let the Blessed One declare to me: *'The world is infinite.'*

If the Blessed One **knows not** whether  
*'The world is eternal'* or *'The world is not eternal,'*  
 then, it is only right [honest] for one who neither knows nor sees to say so,  
*'I do not know. I do not see.'*  
 If the Blessed One **knows not** whether  
*'The world is finite'* or *'The world is infinite,'*  
 then, it is only right for one who neither knows nor sees to say so, *'I do not know. I do not see.'*

3.6 (5) If the Blessed One **knows**: *'The self is the same as the body,'*  
 then, let the Blessed One declare to me: *'The self is the same as the body.'*  
 (6) If the Blessed one **knows**: *'The self and the body are separate,'*  
 then, let the Blessed One declare to me: *'The self and the body are separate.'*

If the Blessed One **knows not** whether  
*'The self is the same as the body,'* or  
*'The self and the body are separate,'*  
 then, it is only right for one who neither knows nor sees to say so, *'I do not know. I do not see.'*

3.7 (7) If the Blessed One **knows**: *'A tathāgata exists after death,'*  
 then, let the Blessed One declare to me: *'A tathāgata exists after death.'* [428]  
 (8) If the Blessed one **knows**: *'A tathagata does not exist after death,'*  
 then, let the Blessed One declare to me: *'A tathagata does not exist after death.'*

If the Blessed One **knows not** whether  
*'A tathāgata exists after death,'* or  
*A tathāgata does not exists after death,'*  
 then, it is only right for one who neither knows nor sees to say so, *'I do not know. I do not see.'*

3.8 (9) If the Blessed One **knows**: *'A tathāgata both exists and does not exists after death,'*  
 then, let the Blessed One declare to me: *'A tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death.'*  
 (10) If the Blessed One **knows**: *'A tathāgata neither exists nor does not exists after death,'*  
 then, let the Blessed One declare to me: *'A tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death.'*

If the Blessed One **knows not** whether  
*'A tathāgata both exists and does not exists after death,'* or  
*'A tathāgata neither exists nor does not exists after death,'*  
 then, it is only right for one who neither knows nor sees to say so, *'I do not know. I do not see.'*

## The Buddha's reply

4 (1) “Now, Māluṅkyaputta, have I ever said to you:

‘Come, Māluṅkyaputta, lead the holy life under me and I will declare to you:

<i>The world is eternal, or</i>	<i>the world is not eternal;</i>
<i>The world is finite, or</i>	<i>the world is infinite;</i>
<i>The self is the same as the body, or</i>	<i>the self and the body are separate;</i>
<i>A tathāgata exists after death, or</i>	<i>a tathāgata does not exist after death;</i>
<i>a tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death; or</i>	<i>a tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death’?”</i>

“No, bhante.”

4.2 “Have **you** ever said to me:

‘I, bhante, will lead the holy life under the Blessed One and the Blessed One will declare to me:

<i>The world is eternal, or</i>	<i>the world is not eternal;</i>
<i>The world is finite, or</i>	<i>the world is infinite;</i>
<i>The self is the same as the body, or</i>	<i>the self and the body are separate;</i>
<i>A tathāgata exists after death, or</i>	<i>a tathāgata does not exist after death;</i>
<i>a tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death; or</i>	<i>a tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death’?”</i>

“No, bhante.”

4.3 It is agreed, then, Māluṅkyaputta, that **neither did I say:**

‘Come, Māluṅkyaputta, live the holy life under me and I will declare to you:

<i>The world is eternal, or</i>	<i>the world is not eternal;</i>
<i>The world is finite, or</i>	<i>the world is infinite;</i>
<i>The self is the same as the body, or</i>	<i>the self and the body are separate;</i>
<i>A tathāgata exists after death, or</i>	<i>a tathāgata does not exist after death;</i>
<i>a tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death; or</i>	<i>a tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death;</i>

4.4 and that **neither did you say:**

‘I, bhante, will live the holy life under the Blessed One and the Blessed One will declare to me:

<i>The world is eternal, or</i>	<i>the world is not eternal;</i>
<i>The world is finite, or</i>	<i>the world is infinite;</i>
<i>The self is the same as the body, or</i>	<i>the self and the body are separate;</i>
<i>A tathāgata exists after death, or</i>	<i>a tathāgata does not exist after death;</i>
<i>a tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death; or</i>	<i>a tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death;</i>

4.5 “That being the case, hollow man,<sup>82</sup> **who is there to abandon what?**<sup>83</sup>

<sup>82</sup> *Mogha, purisa*, lit “empty person,” sometimes tr “foolish one.” See *Alagaddūpama S* (M 22,6/1:132), SD 3.13 n: “hollow man.”

<sup>83</sup> *Ko santo kaṃ paccācikkhasi*, rendered by Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi as “who are you and what are you abandoning?” (M:ÑB 534). This I think is Sutta’s crux (or thesis), where the Buddha’s answer could be taken to be a hint at the

## The parable of the poisoned dart

5 If anyone, Māluṅkya,putta, should say thus:

‘I will not lead the holy life under the Blessed One until the Blessed One declares to me,

*The world is eternal, or*

*the world is not eternal;*

*The world is finite, or*

*the world is infinite;*

*The self is the same as the body, or*

*the self and the body are separate;*

*A tathāgata exists after death, or*

*a tathāgata does not exist after death;*

*a tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death; or*

*a tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death?’”*

[429]

that would still remain undetermined by a tathāgata and, meanwhile, the person would die.

5.2 Suppose, Māluṅkya,putta,  
a man were **wounded by a dart** [arrow],<sup>84</sup> thickly smeared with poison,  
and his friends and companions, his kinsmen and blood relatives,  
brings a **physician** who is *a dart-remover*<sup>85</sup> to treat him.

If he were to say,<sup>86</sup> ‘I will not let this dart be drawn out

until I know whether **the man** who wounded me is

a kshatriya [noble] or a brahmin [priest] or a vaishya [merchant] or a shudra [worker].’

Or, if he were to say, ‘I will not let the dart-removing physician pull out this dart  
until I know **the name** and **the clan** of the man who wounded me.’

Or, if he were to say, ‘I will not let this dart be drawn out:

until I know whether the man who wounded me is tall or short or of medium height.’

until I know whether the man who wounded me is dark or brown or yellow-skinned.’<sup>87</sup>

until I know whether the man who wounded me lives in such and such a village or town [market-town] or city.’

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higher purpose of the spiritual life, namely, the realization of non-self and dependent arising. This very same remark is made by the Buddha to Sunakkhata on his leaving the order (**Pāṭika S**, D 3:3), rendered by Walshe as “who are you and what are you giving up?” (D:W 534). Thanissaro’s rendition “who are you to be claiming grievances/-making demands of anyone?” makes the Buddha sound somewhat arrogant! (Similarly Rhys Davids in **Pāṭika S**, D:RD 3:8). This interpretation *might* apply there but certainly not in our sutta.

<sup>84</sup> *Salla*, “dart,” sometimes rendered as “arrow” (*sara*). I’ve used “dart” which is also an archaic word for “arrow” (Webster’s 3<sup>rd</sup> New International Dictionary). Apparently, a dart is smaller than an arrow but still shot from a bow (*dhanu*). Perhaps, *salla* may also refer to the barb or arrow-head, since the dart-remover has to probe for it. On *salla*, see SD 52.13 (2.1.2).

<sup>85</sup> *Salla,katta*, “one who works on (removes) a dart.” *Bhisakka* means “physician, doctor.” The Buddha is said to be “an unsurpassed barb-remover” (Sn 560). The word is often tr as “surgeon” but which has a broader connotation than *salla,katta*, which could also be rendered as “one who works with a dart” but still has a restricted sense than “surgeon.”

<sup>86</sup> *Vadeyya* is optative or “potential” (*sattamī*) tense, usually rendered “would say.” I have rendered all the optatives in these sentences freely to keep to idiomatic English rather than reflect the Pali syntax.

<sup>87</sup> *Maṅkura-c,chavī*: see **Mahā Saccaka S** (M 36,29.1)n, SD 49.4.

*Or, if he were to say, 'I will not let this dart be drawn out*

until I know whether **the bow**<sup>88</sup> with which I am wounded is a longbow or a kodanda [a Munda bow].<sup>89</sup>  
 until I know whether the bowstring with which I am wounded is fibre or reed or sinew or hemp or bark.'  
 until I know whether the shaft with which I am wounded is wild or cultivated.'  
 until I know whether the feathers fitted to the shaft with which I am wounded is  
 from a vulture or a heron or a hawk or a peacock or a stork.<sup>90</sup>  
 until I know whether the sinew that binds the shaft with which I am wounded is  
 that of an ox or a buffalo or a deer or a monkey.'

*If he were to say, 'I will not let this dart be drawn out*

until I know whether **the dart** that wounded me is  
 an ordinary dart, or razor-tipped, or barb-tipped, or iron-tipped, or tipped with calf-tooth, or with  
 a tip shaped like oleander-leaf.<sup>91</sup> **[430]**

All this, Māluṅkyaputta, would still not be known to that man and meanwhile he would die.<sup>92</sup>

5.3 So, too, Māluṅkyaputta, if anyone were to say thus:

'I will not lead the holy life under the Blessed One until the Blessed One declares to me,

<i>The world is eternal, or</i>	<i>the world is not eternal;</i>
<i>The world is finite, or</i>	<i>the world is infinite;</i>
<i>The self is the same as the body, or</i>	<i>the self and the body are separate;</i>
<i>A tathāgata exists after death, or</i>	<i>a tathāgata does not exist after death;</i>
<i>a tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death; or</i>	<i>a tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death?'</i>

that would still remain undetermined by a tathāgata and, meanwhile, the person would die.

<sup>88</sup> *Dhanu*, see §5.2 n on *salla*.

<sup>89</sup> *Ko, daṇḍa*, a native Munda bow. In the Rāmāyaṇa, Rāma uses his great W-shaped bow, *ko, daṇḍa*, when he battles Paraśu, rāma. This is not a hunting bow, but a composite angular bow, appearing in 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium, used specially by mobile warriors (on horseback or in chariots), and which was known for its power and accuracy: see M B Emeneau, "The composite bow in India," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Soc* 97,1 14 Feb 1953:77-87. On *etym*, see F B J Kuiper, *Proto-Munda Words in Sanskrit*, Verhandeling der Koninklijke Nederlandsche Akademie Van Wetenschappen, Afd Letterkunde, Nieuwe Reeks Deel Li, no 3. Amsterdam: NV Noord-Hollandsche Uitgevers Maatschappij, 1948:78. On *daṇḍa*, see M Witzel, "Substrate languages in Old Indo-Aryan (R̥gvedic, Middle and Late Vedic)," *Electronic Journal for Vedic Studies* 5 1999:16:

<http://www.ejvs.laurasianacademy.com/ejvs0501/ejvs0501article.pdf>. See also A C Woolner, "Prakritic and non-Aryan strata in the vocabulary of Sanskrit," *Sir Asutosh Memorial Vol*, Patna, 1926:1-7, 1928:65-71. (Based on Brian Levman, email 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2012)

<sup>90</sup> "From a vulture ... or a stork," *yadi vā kulalassa yadi vā morassa yadi vā sithila, hanuno'ti. Sithila, hanu*, lit, "open-billed" seems to appear only here. Comy: "The name of a kind of bird" (*evam, nāmakassa pakkhino*) (DA 3:-142). Subcomy: "A silly angular winged being" (?) (*sithila, hanu nāma dattā kaṇṇo pataṅgo* (DAṬ:Be 2:65). The descriptions suggest a stork. Chin (MĀ 221) has 鶴 (*hè*) which means "crane" (T1.26.805a11). However, the word is unattested in any dictionary.

<sup>91</sup> *Yadi vā sallam yadi vā khurappam yadi vā vekaṇḍam yadi vā nārācam yadi vā vaccha, dantam yadi vā karavira, -pattan'ti. Kurappa* (Skt *khurapra*, a razor-tipped arrow): V 2:134; S 4:169 (*tiṅha* a sharp razor); DhA 2:257.

<sup>92</sup> For a similar parable, see **Sunakkhatta S** (M 105,19), SD 94.3.

## The true nature of the holy life

6 (1) Māluṅkya,putta,  
when there is the view, *'The world is eternal,'* there is no living of the holy life.<sup>93</sup>

(2) Māluṅkya,putta,  
when there is the view, *'The world is not eternal,'* there is no living of the holy life.

Māluṅkya,putta,  
whether or not there is the view *'The world is eternal,'*  
or the view *'The world is not eternal,'*  
there *is* **birth**, there *is* **decay**, there *is* **death**,

there *are* sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain, and despair—  
**the removal of these I declare here and now.**<sup>94</sup>

6.2 (3) Māluṅkya,putta,  
when there is the view, *'The world is finite,'* there is no living of the holy life.

(4) Māluṅkya,putta,  
when there is the view, *'The world is infinite,'* there is no living of the holy life.

Māluṅkya,putta,  
whether or not there is the view, *'The world is finite,'*  
or the view *'The world is infinite,'*

there *is* **birth**, there *is* **decay**, there *is* **death**,  
there *are* sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain, and despair—  
**the removal of these I declare here and now.**

6.3 (5) Māluṅkya,putta,  
when there is the view, *'The self [soul] is the same as the body,'* there is no living of the holy life.

(6) Māluṅkya,putta,  
when there is the view, *'The self and the body are separate,'* there is no living of the holy life.

Māluṅkya,putta,  
whether or not there is the view, *'The self is the same as the body,'* or  
or the view, *'The self and the body are separate,'*

there *is* **birth**, there *is* **decay**, there *is* **death**,  
there *are* sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain, and despair—  
**the removal of these I declare here and now.**

6.4 (7) Māluṅkya,putta,  
when there is the view, *'A tathāgata [saint] exists after death,'* there is no living of the holy life;

(8) Māluṅkya,putta,  
when there is the view, *'A tathāgata does not exist after death,'* there is no living of the holy life.

Māluṅkya,putta,  
whether or not there is the view, *'A tathāgata exists after death,'*  
or the view, *'A tathāgata does not exist after death,'*

<sup>93</sup> *Sassato loko'ti māluṅkya,putta diṭṭhiyā sati brahma,cariya,vaso abhavissāti evaṃ no.* Speculation is not the purpose of the Dharma-life, as it is in, eg, academia.

<sup>94</sup> *Yesā'haṃ diṭṭh'eva dhamme nighātaraṃ paññāpemi.*

there is **birth**, there is **decay**, there is **death**,  
 there are sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain, and despair—  
**the removal of these I declare here and now. [431]**

(9) Māluṅkyaputta,  
 whether or not there is the view, **‘A tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death,’**  
there is no living of the holy life.

6.5 (10) Māluṅkyaputta,  
 whether or not there is the view, **‘A tathāgata neither exist nor does not exist after death,’**  
there is no living of the holy life.

Māluṅkyaputta,  
 whether or not there is the view, **‘A tathāgata neither exist nor does not exist after death,’**  
 or the view, **‘A tathāgata neither exist nor does not exist after death,’**  
 there is **birth**, there is **decay**, there is **death**,  
 there are sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain, and despair—  
**the removal of these I declare here and now.**

## The undetermined

**7** Therefore, Māluṅkyaputta, remember what I have left undetermined<sup>95</sup> as undetermined, and remember what I have determined as determined.

And what have I left **undetermined**?

- |   |                                   |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| (1) ‘The world is eternal,’ Māluṅkyaputta,                        | I have left <i>undetermined</i> ; |
| (2) ‘The world is not eternal,’                                   | I have left <i>undetermined</i> ; |
| (3) ‘The world is finite,’  | I have left <i>undetermined</i> ; |
| (4) ‘The world is infinite,’                                      | I have left <i>undetermined</i> ; |
| (5) ‘The self [soul] is the same as the body,’                    | I have left <i>undetermined</i> ; |
| (6) ‘The self and the body are separate,’                         | I have left <i>undetermined</i> ; |
| (7) ‘A tathāgata exists after death,’                             | I have left <i>undetermined</i> ; |
| (8) ‘A tathāgata does not exist after death,’                     | I have left <i>undetermined</i> ; |
| (9) ‘A tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death,’     | I have left <i>undetermined</i> ; |
| (10) ‘A tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death,’ | I have left <i>undetermined</i> ; |

## The true purpose of the holy life

**8** **Why**, Māluṅkyaputta, have I left them<sup>96</sup> *undetermined*?

Because it is unbeneficial [not connected with the goal];

it is not connected with the Dharma;

it does not belong to the fundamentals of the holy life,<sup>97</sup>

<sup>95</sup> “Undetermined,” *avyākata* or *abyākata*, (1) undefined, unexplained, left without an answer; (2) indeterminate (neither *kusala* nor *akusala*); here sense (1) applies.

<sup>96</sup> The Pali text uses *taṃ*, “that,” but I have rendered in the idiomatic plural in English, since “that” refers to the 10 undetermined theses, which the Pali refers to as a set.

<sup>97</sup> “Belonging to the fundamentals of the holy life” (which leads to the highest purity of the holy life), *ādi, brahma, cariyika* (also *~cariyaka*), a reference to the moral virtue fundamental to the holy life: M 3:192,27, 200,30 (MA 5:5,18); S 2:75,21, 4:91,11 (SA 2:75,22); A 4:166,13 (AA 4:73,22). See CPD:ādi-brahmacariyaka. See **(Sekha) Uddesa S** (A 3.85), SD 3.3.

it does not lead to revulsion,  
to dispassion, to cessation [of suffering], to inner peace, to direct knowledge, to awakening, to nirvana.<sup>98</sup>  
That is why I have left them *undetermined*.

## The determined

**9** And what, Māluṅkya,putta, have I **determined**?

THE 4 NOBLE TRUTHS<sup>99</sup>

‘This is **suffering**,’ Māluṅkya,putta,

has been *determined* by me;

‘This is **the arising of suffering**,’

has been *determined* by me;

‘This is **the ending of suffering**,’

has been *determined* by me;

‘This is **the path leading to the end of suffering**,’

has been *determined* by me.

**10** And why, Māluṅkya,putta, have I **determined** that?

Because, Māluṅkya,putta, it is beneficial,

it belongs with the fundamentals of the holy life,

it leads to revulsion,

to dispassion, to cessation (of suffering), to inner peace, to direct knowledge,

to awakening, to nirvana.

That is why they have been *determined* by me.

**11** Therefore, Māluṅkya,putta, **[432]**

remember what have been undetermined by me as *undetermined*, and

remember what have been determined by me as *determined*.”

**12** This is what the Blessed One said. Satisfied, the venerable Māluṅkya,putta<sup>100</sup> rejoiced in the Blessed One’s word.

— tatiyaṃ —

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<sup>98</sup> *Etam nibbidāya virāgāya nirodhāya upasamāya abhiññāya sambodhāya nibbānāya samvattati*. This is the nibbidā formula which lists the process of transformation from just before the attainment of the supramundane path to arhathood. See *Nibbidā*, SD 20.1, esp (2.2.2).

<sup>99</sup> See *Dhamma, cakka Pavattana S* (S 56.11,5-8), SD 1.1.

<sup>100</sup> *Māluṅkya,putta S* (S 35.95/4:72-76 @ SD 5.9) records how Māluṅkya,putta, in his old age, approaches the Buddha for a “teaching in brief” to go for a solitary retreat. The Buddha gently reproaches him for doing it so late, yet praises him as an example to other monks. After receiving a brief discourse on the 6 sense-bases from the Buddha, Māluṅkya,putta goes into solitary retreat and attains arhathood.

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